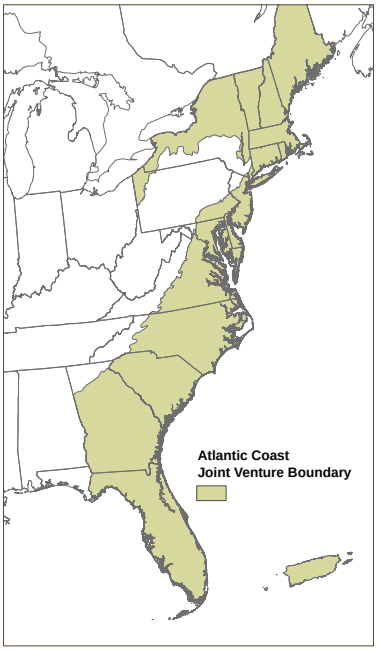
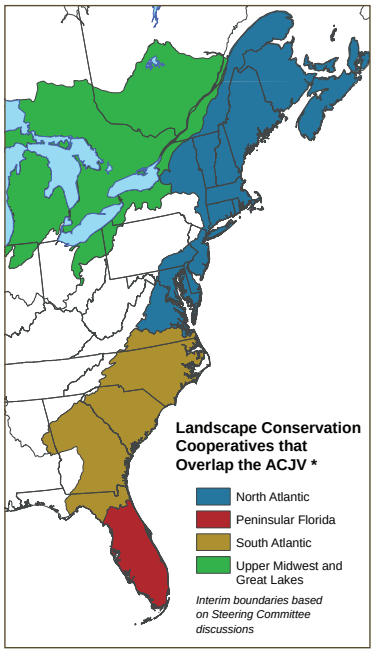
The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives

Working Together for Effective Conservation





When the concept of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) was first announced, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (ACJV) staff and partners wondered what it would mean to our partnership. Would "the way we do business" be affected? We were asked how are LCCs different than bird habitat Joint Ventures (JVs)? We wondered, would partners be engaged with our JV and an LCC? How might JV funding be affected? We hope to help answer these questions below, to clarify how JVs and LCCs are distinct from--and complementary to--each other. Together we will continue to play a critical role in delivering the most effective habitat conservation now and in the future.

Defining the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture

The ACJV is a partnership focused on the conservation of habitat for native birds in the Atlantic Flyway of the United States from Maine south to Puerto Rico. The partnership consists of 16 states and commonwealths plus key federal and regional conservation agencies and organizations. Originally focused on the conservation of waterfowl and wetlands, our mission has broadened to include the conservation of habitats for all native birds, consistent with the continental bird conservation plans.

The ACJV provides a forum for federal, state, regional and local partners to coordinate and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of bird habitat conservation planning, implementation, and evaluation of progress throughout the Atlantic Flyway. Core functions include:

- **Conduct biological planning** to prioritize the status and needs of bird species.
- Identify **priority geographic areas** and determine habitat conservation actions needed and **evaluate progress** through monitoring and research.
- Collaborate to **implement priority conservation projects** and leverage matching funds in pursuit of these common goals.

Over five million acres of habitat have been protected, restored, and enhanced for migratory birds by ACJV partners in 20 years.

Coastal mist. Keith Carver

Defining Landscape Conservation Cooperatives

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC) are landscape-scale science-management partnerships, focused on developing science-based recommendations and decision-support tools to guide on-the-ground conservation to sustain land, water, fish, wildlife, plant and cultural resources. LCCs consist of federal agencies, states, tribes, universities and organizations, and existing partnerships.

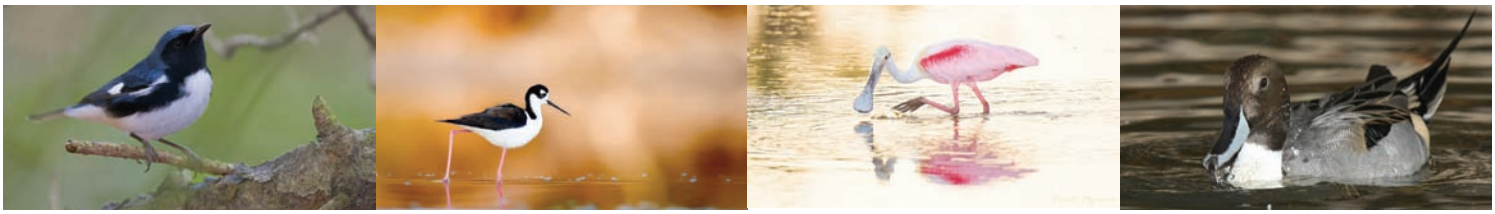
LCCs seek to integrate priority needs across species groups, identify the most effective conservation approaches to achieve common goals, connect efforts, identify gaps, and avoid duplication through improved conservation planning and design. This integrated approach is needed to address increasing land use pressures and widespread resource threats and uncertainties amplified by a rapidly changing climate. Core functions include:

- Developing **integrated** conservation goals, priorities and science needs **across taxonomic groups**.
- Developing **science-based tools and solutions** to meet shared conservation goals.
- **Increasing partners' capacity** for adaptive management at landscape scales, including biological planning, conservation design, monitoring and evaluation.
- **Facilitating optimal conservation decisions** that consider and balance trade-offs among taxa.
- **Testing scientific assumptions** underlying models, and evaluating the effectiveness of conservation actions.

LCCs rely on existing partnerships like the ACJV to bring their science needs to the table, to provide technical expertise that is taxon-specific, and to coordinate delivery of conservation with partners and programs on the ground.

The LCCs are integrated with Department of Interior regional Climate Science Centers. These centers will provide the basic science to support landscape-scale conservation planning including studies to understand climate impacts to ecosystems and their magnitude and potential interactions with other major stressors.

The twenty-one LCCs collectively form a national network of land, water, wildlife, and cultural resource managers, scientists, and interested public and private organizations—within the U.S. and across our international borders—that share a common need for scientific information and interest in conservation.



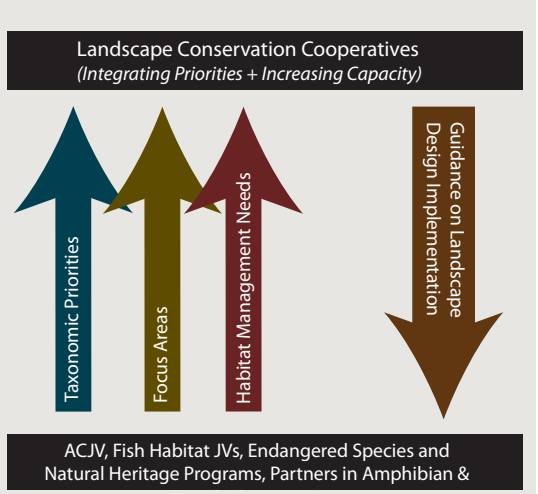
The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture partnership works together to achieve common goals for bird conservation and implement on the ground conservation in the Atlantic Coast region that represents the four major bird conservation plans. Black-throated Blue Warbler, Bill Hubrick; Blac-necked Stilt, William Majoros; Roseate Spoonbill, William Majoros; Northern Pintail, William Majoros.

Making "Adaptive Management" a Reality

The business model of the bird habitat joint ventures is an iterative conservation approach. Our biological planning is resulting in goals and priorities for conservation action. The next step, called "conservation design," is to develop habitat models at landscape and regional scales, which can be used to examine trade-offs among avian species and habitats, and optimize landscapes to meet population and habitat objectives for a host of different species. As our partners implement the recommended conservation activities on the ground, monitoring and research are used to evaluate their effectiveness, test the assumptions behind (and provide data to improve) the models, and measure progress towards objectives.

The iterative conservation approach taken by the ACJV uses science-based planning and tools to set prioroties for conservation action and monitoring and research to evaluate effectiveness.

As agencies and organizations began to realize the increasing conservation challenges and complexity, the joint ventures were looked at as a model to build upon. The need to integrate across taxonomic groups, incorporate a future-looking component, and a ground swell of support within the FWS (given its emphasis on Strategic Habitat Conservation) led to the Landscape Conservation Cooperative concept.



Conservation partnerships feed into the LCC which then increases science capacity and integrates aross taxa and habitats. LCCs then provide guidance for these partnerwhips to implement landscape design.

The idea being that LCCs would leverage, integrate and add capacity to existing partnerships. The Department of Interior has championed this concept by providing the initial investment in LCCs to facilitate and increase the scientific capacity of the entire conservation community, to make holistic landscape conservation a reality across multiple taxa, in an efficient and comprehensive way. The LCCs rely upon the expertise and build upon the existing collaborations that the bird and fish joint ventures represent, as well as many other conservation partnerships. LCCs represent a new model of intentional engagement and cooperation across federal and state agencies, tribes, academic institutions, and NGOs, to ensure that the highest priorities are addressed in the most efficient manner possible, while avoiding any duplication of efforts. The LCCs will ensure that the highest-priority applied-science needs are met, providing information to help partners and partnerships meet the largest challenges facing the conservation community, including climate change, habitat loss, land-use change (e.g., urban growth), and natural disturbances.

ACJV and LCCs Working Together for Effective Conservation

The ACJV is a long-standing partnership with a proven track record of conserving significant migratory bird habitat in the Atlantic Flyway. The ACJV is limited by lack of capacity for research and science to guide conservation across large landscapes.

The LCCs are designed to use input from the ACJV, fish habitat JVs, State Wildlife Action Plans, and other conservation partnerships to increase and integrate their collective scientific capacity. This collaboration will produce the science that will guide landscape conservation now and into the future, for a full complement of natural and cultural resources. The LCCs rely on the expertise, leadership, and coordination of conservation implementation that the ACJV provides for all bird species and their habitats; other partnerships will be expected to play a similar role for fisheries, reptiles & amphibians, threatened and endagered species, and cultural resources. Working together, all these programs can coordinate effective, efficient, conservation for all wildlife, fish, and plant species at the landscape scale, across the region.

LCCs work to address major environmental and human-related factors that limit fish and wildlife populations at regional scales. New England Cottontail, Pamela Wells; Karner blue butterfly, USFWS; Brook trout, USFWS; Canada Lynx, USFWS