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This letter is a follow-up response to our letter dated July 15, 2013, regarding the *National Fish, Wildlife & Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy* (NFWPCAS or Strategy), and the potential role that Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) might provide in its successful implementation. The Gulf Coastal Plains & Ozarks LCC Steering Committee very much appreciated the presentation on the Strategy during our August 4, 2013, webex meeting, and has discussed the intersections of the Strategy and the ongoing conservation planning work of the GCPO LCC.

The GCPO LCC Steering Committee has recently adopted its Strategic Plan, which articulates the goals, priorities and directions that the GCPO LCC intends to undertake in the next 5 years. The Steering Committee has also reviewed the Goals, Strategies and Actions outlined in the NFWPCAS, and identified those Strategies and Actions that are most reflective of the goals outlined in our Strategic Plan. Those Strategies and Actions are identified in the attached table. As we mentioned in our first response letter to the Management Team, there are substantial areas of intersection between the priorities of the Strategy and the ongoing work of the GCPO LCC. For instance, our draft Integrated Science Agenda, which guides our scientific research support, has already identified knowledge gaps, with one focus being adaptation to change. The GCPO LCC Steering Committee is committed to providing the leadership needed to support the Strategy's successful implementation in our region. With the GCPO LCC's involvement in the Southeastern Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS), we anticipate that our work with our sister LCCs in the southeast will provide substantial value and leadership in implementing the NFWPCAS.

Again, we applaud the work of the committee of scientists and managers that were involved in developing this ambitious Strategy. It is indeed an impressive body of work, and we in the Gulf Coastal Plains & Ozarks LCC look forward to working in support of its implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenny Ribbeck".

Kenny Ribbeck
Chair, Gulf Coastal Plains & Ozarks LCC
Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries

Cc:

Steve Patrick, Vice-chair, GCPO LCC, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Greg Wathen, Coordinator, GCPO LCC
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GCPO LCC Steering Cmte Members

Gulf Coastal Plains & Ozarks LCC Strategic Plan	National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy
<p>Our vision is to ensure natural and cultural landscapes capable of sustaining healthy ecosystems, clean water, fish, wildlife, and human communities in the 180-million-acre Gulf Coastal Plains & Ozarks region through the 21st century.</p>	<p>Our Vision: Ecological systems will sustain healthy, diverse, and abundant populations of fish, wildlife, and plants. These systems will provide valuable cultural, economic, and environmental benefits in a world impacted by global climate change.</p>
<p>Our Long-range Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboratively identify and agree on the best and most representative examples of healthy ecosystems as priorities for conservation and management. • Analyze impacts to degraded systems to identify the best opportunities and the best means of restoring ecosystems to health. • Develop effective ways of managing, mitigating, and adapting to changes driven by climate and the intensive human use of land, waters and oceans. <p>Organizational representation and function</p> <p>The GCPO LCC will continue to maintain a broad based partnership represented by the federal, state, tribal, and non-governmental organizations whose missions align with that of the LCC.</p> <p>The GCPO LCC Steering Committee will target new member organizations to develop a full suite of federal, state, tribal, and private organizations with responsibility for our GCPO landscape.</p> <p>The GCPO LCC will maintain a strong Conservation Science Team, Advisory Council, and Adaptation Science Management Team, to develop innovative science-based solutions for our future conservation landscape. Tools that provide spatial visualization and analysis, regularly updated, will be developed and applied in collaboration with a wider conservation network to achieve seamless conservation across LCC borders. Our LCC network includes neighboring LCCs, USGS Regional Climate Science Centers, National Fish Habitat Partnerships, Bird Conservation joint Ventures, and other partnerships that operate within or across the GCPO region. In particular, the GCPO will work with the Southeastern Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies and the Southeast Natural Resources Leadership Group and others leading development of a Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS).</p> <p>Conservation Science</p> <p>The GCPO LCC will work with our partners and other</p>	<p>Goal 1: Conserve habitat to support healthy fish, wildlife, and plant populations and ecosystem functions in a changing climate.</p> <p>Strategy 1.1: Identify areas for an ecologically-connected network of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine conservation areas that are likely to be resilient to climate change and to support a broad range of fish, wildlife, and plants under changed conditions.</p> <p>Actions 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.1.4</p> <p>Strategy 1.2: Secure appropriate conservation status on areas identified in action 1.1.1 to complete an ecologically connected network of public and private conservation areas that will be resilient to climate change and support a broad range of species under changed conditions.</p> <p>Strategy 1.4: Conserve, restore, and as appropriate and practicable, establish new ecological connections among conservation areas to facilitate fish, wildlife, and plant migration, range shifts, and other transitions caused by climate change.</p> <p>Actions 1.4.1, 1.4.2, 1.4.3, 1.4.5</p> <p>Goal 2: Manage species and habitats to protect ecosystem functions and provide sustainable cultural, subsistence, recreational, and commercial use in a changing climate.</p> <p>Strategy 2.1: Update current or develop new species, habitat, and land and water management plans, programs and practices to consider climate change and support adaptation.</p> <p>Actions 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.9</p> <p>Strategy 2.2: Develop and apply species-specific management approaches to address critical climate change impacts where necessary.</p> <p>Actions 2.2.1</p> <p>Goal 3: Enhance capacity for effective management in a changing climate.</p> <p>Strategy 3.1: Increase the climate change awareness and capacity of natural resource managers and other decision</p>

<p>organizations (such as Climate Science Centers) to develop a robust science agenda that employs the principles of adaptive management on a landscape scale, and which defines a future conservation landscape capable of sustaining natural and cultural resources at desired levels.</p> <p>Natural resources – the GCPO LCC will define the amount, configuration and condition of functional terrestrial, aquatic, subterranean, and marine ecosystems to meet the needs of the full suite of flora and fauna that are representative of and reliant on those ecosystems.</p> <p>Cultural resources – the GCPO LCC will identify and define cultural landscapes within our geography that are historically or culturally significant, and develop appropriate scientific processes to ensure their sustainability in the 21st century.</p> <p>Global change – the GCPO LCC will incorporate future global changes, including population growth, land use change, urbanization, energy development, and climate change, into our conservation planning. We seek to enable our partners to assess the vulnerability of ecosystems and species to global change and to develop adaptation strategies that will increase their resilience.</p> <p>Conservation Delivery</p> <p>The GCPO LCC will develop the appropriate tools, decision support, and communications platforms to facilitate strategic and coordinated conservation delivery on both public and private lands by individual LCC member organizations, LCC partners and stakeholders. Priorities include:</p> <p>Ecosystem Services – the GCPO LCC will develop appropriate metrics that establish the values people place on ecosystem services provided by healthy natural and cultural landscapes in the GCPO geography.</p> <p>Private lands – the GCPO LCC will develop appropriate means and strategies for achieving conservation by working with private landowners on private lands, focusing on agricultural, forest industry, and non-industrial forestlands. Initiatives will be strategically designed to provide sustainable and functional systems and landscapes within the GCPO region.</p> <p>Non-conservation sector – the GCPO LCC will work with non-conservation sectors (such as, highway planning departments, community planners, marine shipping and fisheries interests, developers, energy development community) to develop appropriate and targeted</p>	<p>makers and enhance their professional abilities to design, implement, and evaluate fish, wildlife, and plant adaptation programs.</p> <p>Actions 3.1.3, 3.1.7</p> <p>Strategy 3.2: Facilitate a coordinated response to climate change at landscape, regional, national, and international scales across state, federal, and tribal natural resource agencies and private conservation organizations.</p> <p>Action 3.2.1</p> <p>Goal 4: Support adaptive management in a changing climate through integrated observation and monitoring and use of decision support tools.</p> <p>Strategy 4.1: Support, coordinate, and where necessary develop distributed but integrated inventory, monitoring, observation, and information systems at multiple scales to detect and describe climate impacts on fish, wildlife, plants, and ecosystems.</p> <p>Actions 4.1.1, 4.1.8, 4.1.9</p> <p>Strategy 4.2: Identify, develop, and employ decision support tools for managing under uncertainty (e.g., vulnerability and risk assessments, scenario planning, strategic habitat conservation approaches, forecasting, and adaptive management evaluation systems) via dialogue with scientists, managers (of natural resources and other sectors), economists, and stakeholders.</p> <p>Actions 4.2.3, 4.2.6, 4.2.7, 4.2.8</p> <p>Goal 5: Increase knowledge and information on impacts and responses of fish, wildlife, and plants to a changing climate.</p> <p>Strategy 5.1: Identify knowledge gaps and define research priorities via a collaborative process among federal, state, tribal, private conservation organization, and academic resource managers and research scientists.</p> <p>Action 5.1.1</p> <p>Strategy 5.2: Conduct research into ecological aspects of climate change, including likely impacts and the adaptive capacity of species, communities and ecosystems, and their associated ecosystem services, working through existing partnerships or new collaborations as needed (e.g., USGCRP, NCA, CSCs, RISAs, and others).</p> <p>Actions 5.2.3, 5.2.5</p> <p>Strategy 5.3: Advance understanding of climate change impacts and species and ecosystem responses through modeling.</p>
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<p>conservation delivery strategies to facilitate the development, restoration, and maintenance of functional systems and landscapes within the GCPO geography.</p> <p>Monitoring</p> <p>The GCPO LCC will develop the appropriate metrics and methodologies that enable our member organizations and partners to collaboratively evaluate our collective progress in delivering sustainable natural and cultural resources.</p> <p>Monitoring capacity – we will lead and facilitate a collaborative monitoring approach, working with our partners to develop explicit landscape monitoring objectives, share monitoring procedures and increase efficiencies among our various organizations working across the landscape.</p> <p>Monitoring landscape change – the GCPO LCC will develop innovative solutions to monitoring landscape changes within the GCPO geography, through improved geospatial processes and methodologies. Landscape change will be monitored on an ongoing and regular basis, to provide partners with the most up to date information possible.</p> <p>A voice for monitoring - to promote the feedback loop of adaptive management, which encourages the design of management projects as assumption-based research, the GCPO LCC will advocate and support the need for outcome-based monitoring of on-the-ground project results as well as landscape scale monitoring of changing conditions.</p> <p>Communications</p> <p>The GCPO LCC will develop communications platforms and processes that effectively serve the needs of the partnership, including both in-reach strategies targeted at LCC partners, and outreach to the larger conservation community and other sectors that influence use of the lands, waters, and caves of the GCPO region.</p> <p>Understanding the conservation community - the GCPO geography easily has more than 225 federal, state, university, and non-governmental organizations that have conservation delivery or related missions. The conservation community of the GCPO is complex, with multiple, and overlapping missions, priorities, and governance structures. The GCPO LCC will seek to untangle this web of competing and overlapping institutions, and develop a communications database, platforms and strategies that effectively communicate our priorities to our partners and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Actions 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3, 5.3.4, 5.3.5</p> <p>Goal 6: Increase awareness and motivate action to safeguard fish, wildlife, and plants in a changing climate.</p> <p>Strategy 6.1: Increase public awareness and understanding of climate impacts to natural resources and ecosystem services and the principles of climate adaptation at regionally- and culturally-appropriate scales.</p> <p>Strategy 6.3: Coordinate climate change communication efforts across jurisdictions.</p> <p>Actions 6.3.1, 6.3.3</p> <p>Goal 7: Reduce non-climate stressors to help fish, wildlife, plants, and ecosystems adapt to a changing climate.</p> <p>Strategy 7.1: Slow and reverse habitat loss and fragmentation.</p> <p>Actions 7.1.4, 7.1.5, 7.1.7</p> <p>Strategy 7.2: Slow, mitigate, and reverse where feasible ecosystem degradation from anthropogenic sources through land/ocean- use planning, water resource planning, pollution abatement, and the implementation of best management practices.</p>
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Reaching out to other sectors that affect the landscape - long-term sustainability of resources constitutes common ground for collaboration with community planners, resource-based industries and others. Long-term success will also require outreach to actors on the landscape who may not share conservation goals, but who have the power to influence land use decisions. To effectively target our conservation outreach, we will improve our understanding of how and by whom conservation decisions are made across the landscape and incorporate human dimensions and social sciences into our communications program.