

CHARTER FOR THE

NORTHWEST BOREAL LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVE

The Northwest Boreal Landscape Conservation Cooperative (NWB LCC) is a voluntary effort of United States (U.S.) and Canadian federal, state, provincial and territorial agencies; Alaska Tribes and Canadian First Nations; and non-government organizations (NGOs), including industry and private landowners, who share:

1. A vision of a dynamic landscape that maintains functioning, resilient boreal ecosystems and critical cultural resources; and
2. A commitment to work together to enhance the ability of agencies, organizations and all people to understand, manage, and adapt to our changing landscape.

BACKGROUND

We live in an era of rapid changes to the natural landscapes we depend on for our livelihoods. The effects of a rapidly changing climate are evident in melting permafrost, changes in water resources, wildfire regimes outside the historic range, increasing invasive species, and other disruptions. In these circumstances, it is imperative that natural resource management agencies, science providers, Tribes and First Nations, conservation organizations, and other stakeholders – including industry and private landowners – work together in common cause across the northwest boreal forest ecosystem to understand and adapt to the impacts of climate change and other stressors.

In response to the foregoing challenges, on September 14, 2009, U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar issued Secretarial Order No. 3289. This Order called for the establishment of a network of “Landscape Conservation Cooperatives” (LCCs). LCC Information Bulletins 1 & 2 issued in 2010 provided guidance and a framework to define the focus, membership, and scope of LCCs and directed LCCs to provide managers with the necessary tools and information to do their jobs more effectively in the face of impending and difficult-to-predict change.

The Northwest Boreal LCC (NWB LCC) was one of 22 LCCs established across North America under Sec. Order 3289. The NWB LCC included Department of Interior agencies, other U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, the state of Alaska, one Canadian province, two territories, Alaska Native and Canadian First Nations entities, non-governmental organizations, and universities. These partners worked together from 2009 through 2017 under the framework of the LCCs, with administrative, logistic, and financial support provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

In 2017, the U.S. President’s proposed 2018 budget eliminated staff and funding for LCCs. In view of the uncertain future of financial support, the USFWS invited other interested entities to assume responsibility for promoting collaborative conservation at the landscape scale. In response, members of the former NWB LCC have come together under the terms of this Charter to continue their collective efforts. In recognition of the changed circumstances, the NWB LCC has been renamed the “Northwest Boreal Landscape Conservation Cooperative.”

This partnership is created to support co-production of knowledge to inform and promote integrated stewardship of natural and cultural resources in response to the impacts of climate change and other stressors within and across the boreal ecosystems of Alaska and northwestern Canada. Members include entities that steward, use, or manage natural or cultural resources; conduct related science; and possess or gather indigenous or traditional ecological knowledge (IK/TEK).

Achieving our shared vision of a dynamic landscape that maintains functioning, resilient boreal ecosystems and critical cultural resources will require climate adaptation, mitigation and conservation strategies. We will be most successful when members bring their unique skills and knowledge together to inform this effort. This includes human and financial resources; communication and information; relevant science-based understanding of social, economic, and environmental conditions of the landscape, and integration of IK/TEK.

Charter Purpose

This Charter documents how the NWB LCC will promote planning, research, inventory and monitoring programs, communication, adaptive management, and other activities of the partners. The Charter is intended to serve as a model for multiple agency and NGO cooperation and achievement.

Geographic Scope

The NWB LCC includes lands within the boreal forest biome of Southcentral and Interior Alaska, most of Yukon, and parts of British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories (**Figure 1**). The area includes over 330 million acres (147.5 million ha), and encompasses large portions of the Yukon, Kuskokwim, Susitna, Copper River, Liard and Peel River drainages. The NWB LCC landscape spans international boundaries. Significant portions fall within each of the U.S. and Canada, and are subject to differing constitutional systems and requirements under law.

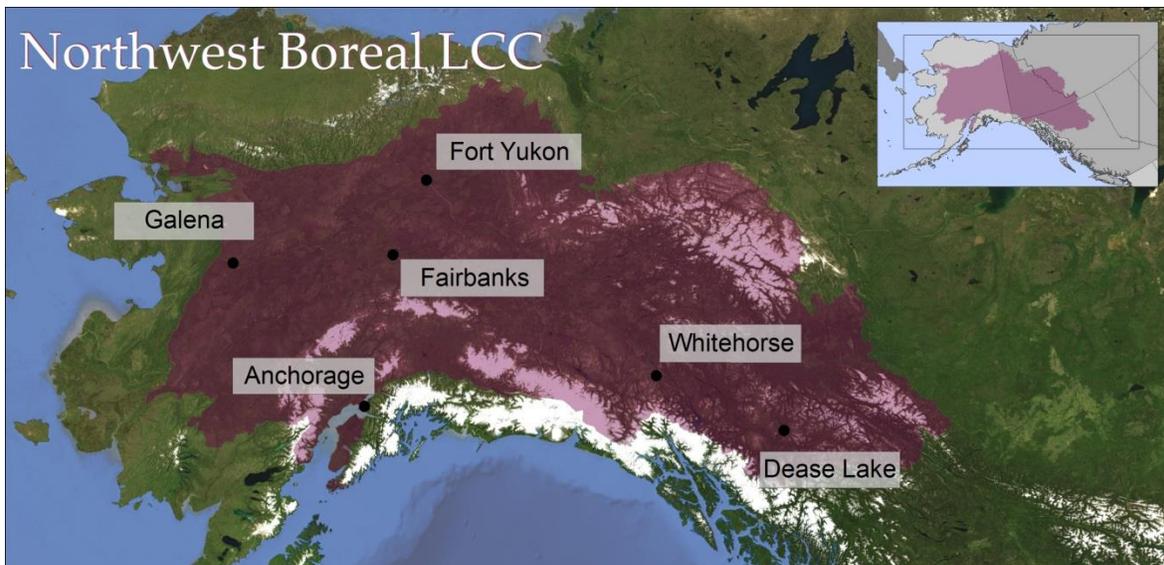


Figure 1. The geographic area of the Northwest Boreal Landscape Conservation Cooperative is

shown in purple. The NWB LCC includes the boreal forests of Alaska, Yukon, Northern British Columbia, and a portion of the Northwest Territories, including traditional land of hundreds of indigenous communities.

Partners

The NWB LCC includes those agencies, organizations, and individuals with management, research, scientific, IK/TEK and/or conservation activities and responsibilities regarding land, water, climate, and cultural or natural resources within the NWB LCC geographical region listed in Appendix I. Other agencies, organizations, and individuals with similar knowledge and activities/responsibilities may join the NWB LCC if they are committed to the principles and agree to the terms and conditions of this Charter. Agencies, organizations, and individuals with interested in joining the NWB LCC may self-nominate after consultation with NWB LCC Core Staff and Co-chairs. The NWB LCC will review nominations and determine membership on a case-by-case basis.

Principles

The NWB LCC's role is to help identify and fill the shared need among partners for the co-production of knowledge using science and IK/TEK to guide efficient and effective strategies for climate adaptation and mitigation, and stewardship of natural and cultural resources at the landscape scale. By working together, partners can find common goals, enhance program delivery, avoid duplication of effort, and leverage resources to benefit wildlife and human communities.

To fulfill its role, the NWB LCC partners agree to apply the following principles to their efforts:

1. Working together strengthens planning, research, inventory and monitoring programs, communication, and adaptive management by leveraging the collective human and financial resources to provide quality science and IK/TEK to address shared information needs.
2. Working together strengthens and enhances capabilities to plan, design, and deliver strategies in response to changes in climate, land use, ocean conditions and other environmental factors.
3. Cooperation and consistency among partners improves communication and messaging, and is critical for the development of rigorous science, IK/TEK, and tools that support sound, outcome-based, stewardship of fish and wildlife, habitats, and critical cultural resources.
4. Each partner is committed to understanding the opportunities and constraints of one another's independent authorities and regulatory responsibilities, which will not be compromised through participation in the partnership described in this Charter.
5. Each partner will consider and respect each participating organization's unique mandates and jurisdictions.

6. The NWB LCC will respect social, political and legal limitations while promoting landscape-level solutions that benefit the larger community.
7. The NWB LCC will be transparent in operations and ensure full public access to the NWB LCC process and products.

Term and Conditions

A. Non-political Nature:

The NWB LCC is established for the purposes of developing integrated science and IK/TEK to inform stewardship of natural and cultural resources in response to impacts of climate change and other stressors. The NWB LCC will promote the use of science and IK/TEK in decision-making, but will not advocate for or against any specific public policy decision. Individual partners are free to advocate independent of, and without reference to, the NWB LCC.

B. Relationship of Partners:

This Charter does not create a new legal entity with a separate existence from the individual partners. The NWB LCC is not a federal, state, provincial or territorial entity taking agency actions subject to the U.S. National Environmental Policy Act or Administrative Procedure Act, or their state or Canadian equivalents. The NWB LCC is not an “advisory committee” as that term is defined in the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended (Pub. L. 92-463). This Charter does not result in the joint exercise of powers. This Charter neither expands nor is in derogation of those powers and authorities vested in the partners by applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or Executive Orders, nor does it modify or supersede any other applicable interagency agreements.

A. Non-binding Nature:

Participation in the NWB LCC in no way: (i) impairs any partner from continuing its own planning or project implementation; (ii) limits a partner from exercising its regulatory authority in any matter; (iii) implies that a partner’s governing body or management will act in any particular manner on a project; or (iv) gives any of the partners any authority over matters within the jurisdiction of any other partner. Participation does not create any legal rights, obligations, benefits, or trust responsibilities, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, by a partner against any other partner, a partner’s officers, or any person.

B. Effective Period and Termination:

The NWB LCC shall continue to operate under the terms of this Charter unless terminated by mutual agreement of the partners. Any partner may withdraw from the NWB LCC at any time by notifying all other partners in writing.

C. Amendments:

This Charter shall be subject to review at least once every five years. Modifications or amendments to the terms or content of the Charter may be proposed by any partner. Amendments shall be in writing and will become effective upon approval by all partners.

D. Principle Contacts.

Each partner shall designate a primary point of contact and alternate for participation in the activities specified under this Charter in Appendix II and shall provide and keep current the names and contact information of its designated representatives to all other partners.

E. Responsibilities.

The partners will manage their own activities and utilize their own resources, including expenditures of funds, if any, in pursuing the goals and objectives of the NWB LCC. Although partners will carry out such activities independently, each partner intends to coordinate and cooperate with the other partners to promote successful implementation of this Charter including the commitment of staff, within the budget constraints of individual partner agencies or organizations.

F. Data Sharing and Disposition.

The ability to share data and metadata are fundamental to collaborative science. At the same time, agencies or organizations may have important proprietary or other interests in data they have acquired that must be respected. To the extent possible, and subject to the terms or limits of other agreements or obligations, the partners agree to share data at no cost to other partners. Formal requests for exchange of data between partners shall be made in writing to the partner holding the data. Subject to applicable law, partners shall not sell, assign, convey or otherwise transfer to any other person or entity data received from another partner without prior written consent.

G. Funding and Fund Management:

Funding by any partner toward any partnership effort is subject to the requirements of any and all applicable laws, regulations, and procedures. Nothing in this Charter is intended or shall be construed to authorize or require the obligation, appropriation, reprogramming, or expenditure of any funds by any partner except as permitted by applicable law. Any funding commitment or services, if pursued, will be handled in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and procedures.

The NWB LCC may take advantage of the capacity of any of its partners to receive and expend funds on behalf of the NWB LCC. Any entity providing such service to the NWB LCC shall manage funds in a manner consistent with any and all applicable laws, regulations, and procedures and maintain accounting records according to standard practices. Accounting records for funds received and expended on behalf of the NWB LCC shall be available to the NWB LCC partners for inspection.

H. Membership Categories:

The NWB LCC shall include the following membership categories:

1. **Voting Members** are regularly engaged with the partnership (including attending meetings, participating in teleconferences, joining working groups, etc.); provide substantial input and leadership on various aspects of the partnership including determining program priorities and organizational structure; and to the extent possible provide in-kind support, funding or other capacity to the partnership. Each voting member shall have one representative on the NWB LCC Steering Committee.
2. **Associate Members:** Associate Members are regularly engaged with the partnership but do not participate in votes of the Steering Committee, either due to constraints within the member organization or because the organization does not have the capacity to provide in-kind support, funding or other capacity to the partnership.

3. **Collaborating Members** engage with the partnership as a collaborator on one or more projects, or on a non-regular basis at partnership meetings as determined appropriate by the NWB LCC Steering Committee and collaborator.

I. Governance and Meetings:

The NWB LCC will be governed by a Steering Committee that consists of the voting members and is led by two Co-chairs, one from U.S. partners and one from Canadian partners. Each Co-chair shall serve a term of two years. At the beginning of each Co-chair's term, the partners shall select two Vice Chairs, one from the U.S. and one from Canada. The Vice Chairs shall assist the Co-chairs, fill in for Co-Chairs as necessary, and upon completion of the Co-chairs' terms, shall ascend to their respective country's Co-chair seat. The partners may fill a vacancy in either a Vice Chair or Co-chair seat at any time.

The Co-chairs, or Vice Chairs acting in the place of Co-Chairs, shall jointly preside over NWB LCC meetings, provided that, in the event that one country's Co-chair and Vice Chair are absent, the attending Co-chair or Vice Chair may preside over the meeting. In the event that both country's Co-chair and Vice Chair are absent, the Co-Chairs may appoint another partner representative to lead the meeting. Meetings must have a quorum, defined as a simple majority (over half) of current voting members (one vote per organization), to engage in decision-making, provided that partners may participate in-person or via telecommunication. Partners may designate an alternate as their representative to participate in a meeting provided the alternate has been fully informed about and empowered to take action on any items on the agenda for their organization.

NWB LCC meetings will be held quarterly, or as called by the Co-chairs. The Partnership will strive to have one face-to-face meeting in Canada and one face-to-face meeting in the United States each year. Other meetings will usually be via teleconference with sharing of content over the web. NWB LCC meetings will be open to the public and observers will be welcome to attend the meetings.

J. Decision-making:

The value of the NWB LCC comes from the combined efforts of its partners. To that end, decision-making by the NWB LCC will be based on consensus among the partners to the greatest extent possible. If a consensus cannot be reached, the Steering Committee may make decisions using a three quarters majority vote of the Voting Members present at a meeting, provided that no vote may be taken to compel or preclude any action by any NWB LCC partner.

K. Staffing and Support:

The NWB LCC will be supported by a full-time Partnership Director who may be employed by one of the partners. The NWB LCC Partnership Director shall serve as the leader of the NWB LCC office and shall:

- Lead NWB LCC staff;
- Develop, administer, and oversee program budgets and funding;
- Maintain administrative and fiscal records;
- Document and convey NWB LCC activities and accomplishments;
- Ensure meeting minutes are taken, reviewed, approved, and posted;
- Coordinate with NWB LCC partner entities and other interested parties;
- Assist the NWB LCC in preparing for, and conducting its meetings;

- Assist in the development of methods to communicate with, and receive input from, the Science and Knowledge Community and community at large;
- Seek external funding opportunities and other available resources that could support NWB LCC activities and projects; and
- Facilitate NWB LCC meetings.

The NWB LCC will be supported by a Science Coordinator and an IK/TEK Coordinator who may be employed by one of the partners and assigned at least part time to work with the Partnership Director and others to identify and address science and IK/TEK needs of the NWB LCC. The Coordinators shall assist with:

- Designing scientific investigations, gathering of IK/TEK, and implementation approaches for NWB LCC consideration;
- Coordinating existing inventory and monitoring programs;
- Coordinating, reviewing, and providing technical support and administration of projects implemented with NWB LCC funds;
- Identifying sources of IK/TEK within indigenous communities relevant to the impacts of climate change and other ecological factors;
- Supporting projects designed to gather IK/TEK on a voluntary basis from the individuals and communities that hold the knowledge;
- Facilitating co-production of science and IK/TEK for NWB LCC partners;
- Managing and integrating scientific and IK/TEK data;
- Facilitating information exchange and feedback among scientists and holders of IK/TEK within and outside the NWB LCC;
- Presenting results of studies at professional meetings; and
- Conducting public outreach and communications relative to science, technology, and IK/TEK issues and accomplishments.

The NWB LCC will be supported by a Communications Specialist who may be employed by one of the partners and assigned at least part time to work with the Partnership Director, Science Coordinator, IK/TEK Coordinator and others to identify and address communications needs of the NWB LCC. The Communications Specialist shall:

- Create communication strategies, products, and targeted outreach for a variety of different audiences;
- Contribute to communication aspects of internal and external partnership activities;
- Support partnership branding, identity, and related assets;
- Maintain the partnership's media properties including website, newsletter, social media, etc.;
- Help manage and document partnership assets (data and other products).

The NWB LCC may be supported by other positions based on needs identified by the partners, subject to the availability of funds or assignment of personnel employed by partners. Such positions could include a liaison to Alaska Tribes or Canadian First Nations.

L. Working Groups:

The NWB LCC may form working groups *ad hoc* comprised of individuals with skills that can meaningfully inform decisions related to the NWB LCC. These individuals may come from any organizational entity with natural or cultural resource conservation and management responsibilities or with organizations possessing science capacities in the geographic area. The partners of working groups shall have expertise appropriate to that working group. Working groups will report findings and /or recommendations to the NWB LCC for further action.

M. Science and Knowledge Community:

The Science and Knowledge Community is the combined capacity for accumulation and dissemination of scientific information and IK/TEK within the NWB LCC. This includes university, governmental and nongovernmental scientists, independent researchers, and individuals with specialized science and technical expertise. This also includes elders and others who hold IK/TEK within the NWB LCC region. The role of the Science and Knowledge Community is to provide its scientific expertise or IK/TEK to NWB LCC activities as appropriate and requested. Individuals from the Science and Knowledge Community may participate, as permitted through their respective organizations, in working groups and in the review of the science strategy for the NWB LCC.