
South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative

Charter

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Background

The South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative is part of an international network of 22 Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs). Landscape Conservation Cooperatives are public-private partnerships composed of states, tribes, federal agencies, regional management and non-governmental organizations, universities, international jurisdictions, and others working together to address landscape and seascape scale conservation issues. Within each LCC, partners work collaboratively to identify best practices, connect efforts, identify science gaps, and avoid duplication through conservation planning and design. By building a network that is holistic, collaborative, adaptive, and grounded in science, LCCs are working to ensure the sustainability of our economy, land, water, wildlife, and cultural resources.

LCCs within the Network help develop a common scientific understanding of the impacts of climate change and other stressors on natural and cultural resources. They develop shared landscape-scale conservation objectives and strategies, facilitate implementation of those strategies, and evaluate their effectiveness.

The South Atlantic LCC covers parts of six southeastern states, from southern Virginia to northern Florida and the adjacent US Exclusive Economic Zone. It is a partnership of federal, regional, state, and local organizations committed to sustaining the region's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. The South Atlantic LCC is a forum for collective conservation action in the face of landscape-scale changes like climate change, urbanization, water scarcity, and invasive species. The cooperative focuses on collaborative efforts such as developing indicators of ecosystem health, tracking progress toward improving indicator condition through the *State of the South Atlantic* assessment, and designing and implementing a blueprint for the future of the region's lands and waters.

Mission

The mission of the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative is to facilitate conservation actions that sustain natural and cultural resources, guided by a shared adaptive blueprint.

Guiding Principles

The South Atlantic LCC will:

- Avoid duplicating the effective work of others;
- Consider and respect each participating organization's unique mandates and jurisdictions;

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- Add value to landscape-scale conservation by integrating across partnerships and organizations, identifying and filling gaps, and avoiding redundancies;
- Conduct open and frequent communications within the South Atlantic LCC network and operate transparently in deliberations and decision-making;
- Focus on developing shared landscape-level priorities that lead to implementable strategies;
- Develop and rely upon best available science;
- Understand the attitudes, values and beliefs of stakeholders, partners and publics; and
- Continuously improve and refine products to ensure ongoing effectiveness.

Overall Structure

The South Atlantic LCC functions through a Steering Committee, an Executive Committee, and other committees and work teams appointed to address specific issues. The governance structure of the South Atlantic LCC is reflective of the operational needs of the partnership, but is expected to change and evolve as the partnership develops. The South Atlantic LCC structure will be reviewed as needed to evaluate whether structural change would be beneficial (e.g., a committee to assist with operational oversight or a Partnership-At-Large committee to provide opportunities for a broader set of partners to participate). Any changes to the South Atlantic LCC structure will be approved by the Steering Committee.

As an established entity with significant conservation accomplishment, the South Atlantic LCC has reached a maturation stage and a level of complexity which can benefit from regular examination of its governance structure. This revision of the Charter reflects approximately five years of evolution, growth, and development of the South Atlantic LCC partnership since its inception. It incorporates organizational and operational changes that are intended to enhance efficiency and to align with approved and established governance procedures.

I. Steering Committee

A. Membership and Organization

1. The composition of the South Atlantic LCC Steering Committee is intended to be as broad as necessary to effectively carry out its mission. Membership consists of executive level representatives from organizations that collectively have the following characteristics, particularly at a regional level:

- jurisdictional responsibility for natural and/or cultural resource management
- significant capacity for achieving the vision of the South Atlantic LCC
- active engagement in addressing significant natural and/or cultural resource

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management issues

-providing direct links and communication with other conservation organizations or land managers involved in conservation delivery, particularly those operating at local levels.

2. Composition of the South Atlantic LCC Steering Committee will include one primary and one alternate representative from partner organizations that accept an invitation to participate at the Steering Committee level. Those partner organizations include, but are not limited to:

- *State Agencies:*
 - Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
 - Georgia Department of Natural Resources
 - North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
 - South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
 - Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- *Non-governmental Organizations:*
 - National Council for Air and Stream Improvement
 - The Longleaf Alliance
 - The Nature Conservancy
 - Southeast Land Trust Alliance
- *Regional Organizations and Partnerships*
 - South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
- *U.S. Federal Agencies:*
 - Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
 - Department of Defense
 - Environmental Protection Agency
 - Fish and Wildlife Service
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 - National Park Service
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - U.S. Forest Service
 - U.S. Geological Survey
- *Native American Tribes:*
 - To be determined

3. Steering Committee members are expected to represent their agency or organization at an administrative and policy level on matters pertaining to allocating human and financial resources that are inherent to sustained, long-term landscape conservation planning and implementation. They should be sufficiently knowledgeable about landscape-scale conservation and climate change to make informed decisions regarding South Atlantic LCC recommendations on priority projects and activities.

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4. Member organizations are expected to commit resources (human and financial) to achieving the shared vision of landscape sustainability for the South Atlantic LCC and coordinating their otherwise independent actions in the cooperative design, refinement, and implementation of that vision consistent with member authorities, appropriations, and available resources.
5. New members will be considered by the Steering Committee upon receipt of a written request to the Chair from the agency or organization that documents its interest in participating and identifies the individual who will be representing that organization. A majority vote of the Steering Committee, with a quorum (simple majority of members) required for the vote to proceed, is required for acceptance of membership. Removal of Steering Committee seats is determined by the Steering Committee in a like manner.
6. Activities of the Steering Committee are administered by an elected Chair and Vice Chair, each of whom is elected for a two-year term with no term limit. One of these positions should be non-federal. The Chair will organize and conduct the business meetings of the Steering Committee. The Vice Chair shall preside in the absence of the Chairperson. The LCC Coordinator will assist the Chair and Vice Chair in the preparation and conduct of Steering Committee meetings.
7. The Steering Committee will conduct at least one in-person meeting per year. One additional in-person Steering Committee meeting may be held in conjunction with an established conference or professional meeting (e.g., SEAFWA) likely to be otherwise attended by Steering Committee members. Additional meetings, either electronic, telephonic, or in-person, may be called by the Chair, and additional Steering Committee business may be conducted by e-mail, teleconference and/or web conference. If a Steering Committee member is unable to attend a meeting or teleconference, he/she should delegate representation to an informed alternate from his/her organization with full authority for that representation.
8. For actions that require Steering Committee approval, decisions will be made through consensus. For purposes of South Atlantic LCC business, “consensus” means votes of affirmation or no objection by members present at the time of the vote. For issues directly affecting the programs or prerogatives of one or more entities not present at the time of the vote, votes of affirmation or no objection shall be obtained from each such entity prior to the proposal being placed into effect. The presence of at least 60% of the primary or alternate designees from participating entities shall constitute a quorum. Steering Committee membership shall be maintained and recorded in meeting summaries and notes by the South Atlantic LCC Coordinator or administrative designee of the Coordinator.
9. All partners and interested parties are welcome to attend Steering Committee meetings, and opportunity will be provided for comment during the Steering Committee deliberations.

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B. Responsibilities

The Steering Committee of the South Atlantic LCC has the following collective responsibilities:

1. Serve as the South Atlantic LCC's executive body for decision making, providing guidance on policy and actively engaging in development of operational and strategic plans.
2. Consider whether additional organizations should be engaged to participate on the Steering Committee and develop appropriate mechanisms for communicating with and receiving input from organizations not represented on the Steering Committee.
3. Promote cooperation, coordination, consolidation of information, and collaboration among partner organizations to support the mission, goals, and objectives of the South Atlantic LCC.
4. Determine the coordination, planning and science activities that the South Atlantic LCC will undertake. Approve prioritized South Atlantic LCC-recommended projects and related activities for implementation.
5. Work collectively to identify funding opportunities and other available resources (e.g., staff, in-kind services) for supporting South Atlantic LCC priority projects and activities. Actively seek additional resources to augment existing base funding in order to support the activities of the South Atlantic LCC.
6. Establish standing and ad-hoc committees or work teams as necessary to carry out the functions of the South Atlantic LCC, define the initial purpose and responsibilities of each committee or work team, provide direction to committees or work teams and facilitate their progress on action items.
7. Assure regular, clear communication with and among existing conservation partnerships, other LCCs, and the Southeast Climate Science Center. Maintain transparency in South Atlantic LCC decision-making.
8. Provide input on the South Atlantic LCC Coordinator position description and selection as Coordinator position reopens.
9. Avoid conflicts of interest in the conduct of Steering Committee business. In the event a conflict of interest, or the appearance of a conflict of interest, should arise, it is the duty of each Steering Committee member to notify the Steering Committee Chair of such conflict and recuse himself/herself from further consideration in the matter. A Steering Committee member shall recuse herself/himself from funding decisions if the organization he/she represents is under consideration to receive such funds.

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II. *Executive Committee*

A. Membership and Organization

An Executive Committee is established consisting of eight (8) members selected from the membership of the South Atlantic LCC Steering Committee. Executive Committee members serve two-year terms, which may be renewed. Membership selection shall be as follows:

1. The current South Atlantic LCC Steering Committee Chair.
2. The current South Atlantic LCC Steering Committee Vice Chair.
3. One current Steering Committee member representing a State agency.
4. One current Steering Committee member representing a Federal agency or quasi-governmental agency or organization.
5. Two Steering Committee members representing a non-governmental organization (NGO) or private sector group.
6. Two At-Large members selected from among all current South Atlantic LCC Steering Committee members.

B. Duties

The Executive Committee is an integral component of the South Atlantic LCC leadership and functions to address a subset of the Steering Committee and is selected and appointed by the Steering Committee. Executive Committee members are expected to perform all duties of Steering Committee members and:

1. Be willing to serve actively for a full two-year term. Terms begin immediately upon appointment.
2. Implement decision making authorized by the Steering Committee.
3. Take a leadership role in fund raising and seeking donations, consistent with each member's means and capabilities. This may include:
 - a. Identifying and filling funding gaps in South Atlantic LCC budgeting.
 - b. Bringing in funders, investors, and grant support for South Atlantic LCC programs and priorities.
 - c. Recruiting new partner organizations.
4. Attend scheduled conference calls or in-person meetings.
5. Provide input and guidance for staff activities when requested.

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6. Review and revise strategic and operational planning for the Steering Committee as needed.
7. Review and approve agendas for Steering Committee activities.

III. Staff

The South Atlantic LCC staff is dedicated to carrying out the vision and priorities of the Steering Committee. The staff works with a variety of standing committees, work teams, organizations, and individuals to conduct the day-to-day business of the partnership. Examples include development of draft products such as species priorities, science priorities, and work plans for consideration and approval by the Steering Committee. Staff capacity will be evaluated strategically over time to ensure the South Atlantic LCC functions to meet partner needs for additional products and services. Initial capacity is as follows:

South Atlantic LCC Coordinator: The Coordinator serves as the executive director for the partnership, working directly with the Steering Committee Chair and Executive Committee leadership to provide communication to the steering committee and to develop and receive its direction. The Coordinator leads, facilitates, and communicates the South Atlantic LCC vision among the staff; directs overall operations of the South Atlantic LCC; and ensures coordination among staff in keeping with operations and direction from the Steering Committee. The Coordinator determines needs for additional resources for conducting the business of the partnership and works with the Executive Committee to seek capacity enhancements from Steering Committee members and elsewhere as needed.

Science Coordinator: The Science Coordinator reports to and consults with the Coordinator to provide direction and synthesis of South Atlantic LCC science activities, products, and needs. The Science Coordinator provides assistance to the Coordinator on specific technical and science-related duties and tracks and translates status and results of relevant science and research activities among the South Atlantic LCC staff and partners.

Core Staff Team: Assisting and complementing the positions of Coordinator and Science Coordinator, this team comprises the expertise and targeted skills needed for effective operations of the cooperative, and may include permanent agency-funded positions, term contractors and post docs, and other specialists such as agency liaisons or collaborators. Essential skills for the cooperative include dedicated positions for GIS Analyst and Communications Specialist. Supporting skills are provided by a National Park Service agency liaison for climate change and socioeconomic adaptation.

IV. Partnership Committee

The Partnership Committee facilitates coordination and integration with existing landscape conservation partnerships (e.g., joint ventures, fish habitat partnerships, etc.) and provides advice and recommendations to the Steering Committee on conservation issues, strategies, and initiatives of mutual interest to the conservation community of the South Atlantic LCC. The Partnership Committee provides a forum for:

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1. Formal collaboration on issues of mutual interest.
2. Sharing resources and assets to meet mutual goals and objectives.
3. Making recommendations on LCC priority resources and priority conservation decisions.
4. Making recommendations on science integration, projects, strategies, and initiatives for the collective South Atlantic LCC conservation community.
5. Promotion, testing, and suggestion of improvements of South Atlantic LCC decision support tools and conservation plans.

Membership in the Partnership Committee will be open to representatives (generally Coordinators or designated staff) of any partnership that crosses both state and organizational boundaries within the South Atlantic LCC geography (e.g., Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership, Southeast Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation). The committee will be chaired by the Coordinator of the South Atlantic LCC.

V. Standing Committees

Standing committees are distinguished from *ad hoc* committees and work teams by the expected long-term nature of their chartered purpose. The South Atlantic LCC Steering Committee may establish standing committees at any time and may identify initial chairs at that committee's inception. Committee members may be appointed by the Steering Committee or may be volunteers approved by the committee and will reflect the collaborative character of the South Atlantic LCC. Committees are responsible for accomplishing their responsibilities as defined by the Steering Committee but can refine or expand their tasks in consultation with the Steering Committee. The Chair of each committee will be responsible for reporting the group's progress and results directly to the Steering Committee.

VI. Work Teams

Work teams may be established by the South Atlantic LCC staff to support needs of an *ad-hoc* nature with short-term or indefinite duration. These teams are convened to assist staff with development and refinement of specific tools and applications for landscape conservation planning. Membership on these groups would be at the request of the South Atlantic LCC Coordinator or Science Coordinator and would be open to anyone with the specific knowledge and experience sought to support the *ad hoc* need.

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