

LCD in NW Montana & Conservation Planning for Lost Trail area

Meeting Notes: 18 June 2019

Attendees:

In the room: Bernardo Garza, David Allen, Dick Dolan, Kris Tempel, Dean Vaughn, Amy Lisk, Amy Coffman, Ben Gilles, Anne Carlson, Jim Lange, Sean Finn

On the phone: Chris Deming, Beverly Skinner, Phil Matson, Kevin Shinn, Greg Watson, Linh Hoang, Natalie Porumba

[Agenda](#) (also attached)

[History of Planning at Lost Trail NWR](#)

Lost Trail (LT) is unique in that it has multiple “Purposes” - the legislative language and authority for refuge establishment. Most National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) have 1-2 purposes. LT has 5-6 and they tend to be general. LT established as mitigation for loss of habitat near Flathead Lake. LT established as an ‘inviolate sanctuary’ to protect wetlands, waterfowl, migratory birds, T&E species (e.g., Spalding’s catchfly, grizzly bear, gray wolf, wolverine, lynx), and fish and wildlife recreation opportunities.

Initial Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for LT completed in 2005

A 2010 Preliminary Protection Plan (PPP) was drafted to expand refuge boundaries.

Successful restoration work at Dahl Lake and Pleasant Valley Creek – both receive water from surrounding uplands which are potentially at risk.

LT included at a state of Montana Important Plant Area – has catchfly and 4 other state-listed plant species

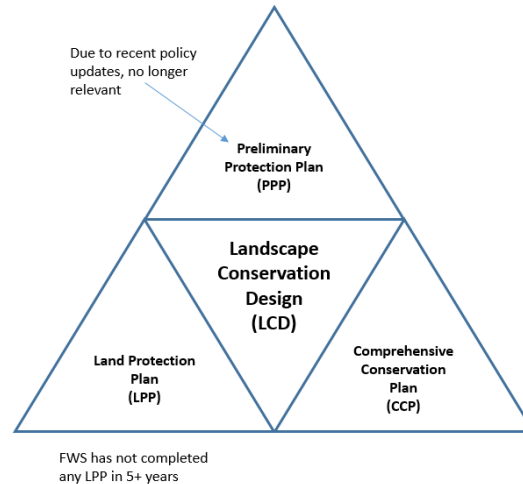
Provides several handicap hunter access opportunities.

Aspen restoration projects

Planned beaver reintroductions – likely to start with beaver dam analog installation

Current CCP is expiring – now is the perfect time to think about surrounding landscape

FWS (Service) Planning Process <see slides>



LPP process – gives FWS the authority to spend Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) dollars

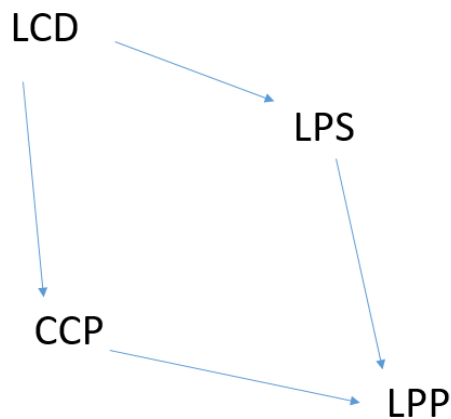
CCP

- A 15 year plan
- Describes broad management direction
- Outlines goals, objectives and strategies
- Accompanied by NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) analysis

Updated LT CCP put on hold because FWS Refuge/Realty program is understaffed; recognize new policy calls for an LCD first and associated with a Land Protection Strategy (LPS)

LCD is recent NWRS policy. An LCD is required for a CCP / LPP if plans are seeking to add conservation lands (more details on LCD below)

Landscape Protection Strategy (LPP) an adjustment to National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) policy; kind of takes the place of PPP. So the process now looks more like this:



Timing a challenge due to new Department of Interior policy. Once NEPA starts agency has ~ 1 year to complete. But can hold off on starting NEPA until we have ‘enough information’

Second iteration of a CCP for LT will be the first time in the Nation that a CCP is rewritten/revised.

Anne: we will really need a timeline (Action Item)

A plan is only part 1; getting approval and funding from Congress follows

Landscape Conservation Design (LCD) <see slides>

Collectively we recognize that the challenges we are all facing – invasive species, land use change, climate change – extend beyond traditional land management units to scales that are unsolvable by any individual organization or agency acting alone

LCD is a process to ‘stitch together’ multiple conservation science and delivery processes in a way that is holistic, inclusive and participatory. It is partner-driven and science informed.

Defined: a **partner-driven** approach to achieve a **sustainable, resilient socio-ecological landscape**. It is an *iterative*, **collaborative**, and **holistic** process resulting in **strategic and spatial products** that provide information, **analytical tools, maps, and strategies** to **achieve landscape goals collectively** held among partners.

An LCD is Non-regulatory, Bottom Up and Voluntary

LCD is also a set of products including a spatial design (where) and a strategy design (who, when and how); there are 20+ examples of LCD from around the Nation – they vary in status from completed and implemented to just getting underway. Large body of information of what works and what does not collected and summarized in “[Recommended Practices for Landscape Conservation Design](#)”

Case Studies and broad testimonials indicate Landscape Conservation Design makes sense and provides valuable resources for strategic implementation of effective landscape-scale resource management. Effective strategy design necessarily considers, embraces and supports jurisdiction-based management plans – a good strategy facilitates achievement of shared goals by aligning collective action across the landscape

As indicated (above) LCD has been included in recently released NWRS policy: Refuges initiating CCP and considering an increase in conservation lands must have an LCD analysis – conducted with partners and stakeholders – describing a strategic approach describing a future landscape.

So how does LCD interact with CCP and LPP processes? According to NWRS policy:

“Landscape Conservation Design (LCD) ensures that refuge-level actions contribute to a landscape-level vision. A landscape covers a large geographic area that has many habitats, conditions and human uses. Landscape Conservation Design provides the opportunity to create a recipe for functional landscapes. It is a long-term process in which flexibility and adaptive management are key elements.” [A third key product from an LCD is a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan which addresses adaptive management]

LCD can support broadly inclusive, large landscape, shared vision achievement and inform NWRS-specific planning.

Roundtable on need for and scale of LCD in NW Montana

Is an LCD appropriate for the Crown?

Probably ... but some sideboards:

- Due to CCP/LPP and NEPA timing an LCD informing LT planning is needed by ~ June 2020.
- Fully inclusive large-landscape LCD generally require more time – they proceed at the pace of the collaboration
- Approach may be an ‘LCD Lite’ or Phase 1 focused on LT followed by a Phase 2 with a larger geography and full inclusion of many partners/stakeholders
 - Such an approach will allow testing some processes, evaluating data inputs, test driving analyses and allowing trust relationships to build as we ‘test the waters’

Concept develops: conduct an abbreviated LCD concentrating on an area around LT and complete the “LCD Lite” within a year; use that to springboard a broader LCD process for much/most/all of NW MT.

Next Steps

What would be the planning area of an LCD lite?

Partners and focal resources (priority conservation features dictate the extent of planning area). What is the purpose of an LCD Lite?

Sean will draft a few maps for consideration (Action Item)

What would be Conservation Features?

Can't fully determine until partners convene but some proposed features include the targeted 'purposes' for LT including wetlands, waterfowl, migratory birds, T&E species (e.g., Spalding's catchfly, grizzly bear, gray wolf, wolverine, lynx), and fish and wildlife recreation/hunting opportunities.

Other possibilities include: native salmonids, ungulate/big game corridors, timber economy (fiber supply, working landscape), sensitive plants, recreation access for people with disabilities, quarry rock, sensitive plants (incl. catchfly and 3-4 others)

Partners:

Consider scales where Refuge is contributing to the larger area AND where the larger area contributes to the Refuge

Potential Partners include:

Confederated Tribes of Salish and Kootenai / Flathead Reservation

Weyerhaeuser

Stimson Lumber Company

Flathead County

Lake County

Lincoln County

Montana Department of Natural Resources

US Forest Service

Natural Resource Conservation Service

The Nature Conservancy

Flathead Land Trust

Conservation Fund

Vital Ground Foundation

Draft Timeline:

6/28/19: Draft Project Area Maps (Sean) and Draft Talking Points (David, Dick)

7/1/19 – 7/12/19: Partners identified and out reach initiated

Late July: Basics (Project Area, Priority Features) proposed and vetted; shared with FWS Region 6 & HQ

8/1/19: Geography, Features and Partners agreed upon;

Mid August 2019: Face to Face meeting. Exact dates and location TBD; details emerge from meeting

Mid November: 1st draft Spatial Design disseminated to partners for assessment and critique

Initiate LPS for Lost Trail area

Outreach to HQ and R6

1/10/2020: Near-final Spatial Design (map) and draft Strategy Design disseminated to Partners

Late January 2020: Face to Face meeting, Exact dates and location TBD

2/28/2020: Comments on draft Spatial and Strategy Design due

3/31/2020: Final Draft LCD – final opportunity for comments/ammendments

LPS submitted

4/30/2020: LCD Lite Complete

6/1/2020: Phase 2 LCD for NW Montana initiated

Meeting Adjourned