

Operation Plan

Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative

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Version 1.0

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List of Commonly Used Acronyms

CT - Coordination Team
BLM - Bureau of Land Management
EC - Executive Committee
FWS - United States Fish and Wildlife Service;
MOU - Memorandum of Understanding
NEPA - National Environmental Policy Act
NRCS - Natural Resources Conservation Service
SMIP - Science and Management Integration Plan
STAC - Science and Technical Advisory Committee
USFS - United States Forest Service
USGS - United States Geological Survey
WGFD - Wyoming Game and Fish Department
WLCI - Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative

Executive Summary

This Operation Plan is a direct extension of the Strategic Plan and specifically addresses the goals and objectives by implementation of the strategies through immediate or short-term actions. This Operation Plan will guide the Coordination Team (CT) with its efforts to achieve the goals of the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI). Included in the Operation Plan is guidance for establishing internal and external involvement in the WLCI, creating a process for planning and prioritizing projects, and identifying actions necessary to accomplish the stated goals of the WLCI. Specific actions and timelines for completing this work will be documented in regular updates to this Operation Plan.

This Operation Plan outlines the direction and procedures to be used by the CT to implement activities in support of the WLCI. These activities include:

- Coordination and information sharing procedures between the CT, Executive Committee (EC), Support Subcommittee, and Local Project Development Teams, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) member agencies, and other groups.
- Incorporation of science information and principles into conservation actions.
- Solicitation, identification, development, selection, implementation, and monitoring of conservation actions.
- Coordination of WLCI partners budgets and development of external financial support.
- Implementation of strategies for internal and external outreach opportunities.
- Development and implementation of data storage and management.
- Incorporation of adaptive management processes.
- Development and implementation of an annual review process.

Overview

The WLCI CT provides oversight, guidance, administration of funding, and services necessary to implement and manage the goals and objectives of the WLCI. The MOU for the WLCI, which was signed in spring 2007 (and was updated in summer 2008), established the CT under the direction of the EC, and directed that specific operational procedures necessary for day-to-day activities of the CT be developed. As a minimum, these procedures must address strategic planning and goals, coordination procedures for MOU member agency field organizational units, financial processes, internal and external outreach, and conservation and enhancement project planning and selection. The EC provides oversight for all WLCI processes.

The CT provides oversight on the identification, selection, and effectiveness of WLCI habitat conservation and enhancement actions across the 15 million-acre WLCI area. The process of developing conservation and enhancement actions incorporates the latest science findings and associated data, involves the public and WLCI partners in project selection, and applies the principles of adaptive management to guide project

development. The CT also provides information to WLCI partners, other participating agencies, and the public regarding conservation and enhancement actions, inventory and research, science findings, availability of data, and other associated information.

This plan will be modified, updated and adapted as new information becomes available. Future updates may include new and improved operating procedures, new partnering opportunities, refinement of goals, or other items that would improve the operational effectiveness of the CT. The relationship of this Operation Plan to other WLCI Documents is provided in Figure 1.

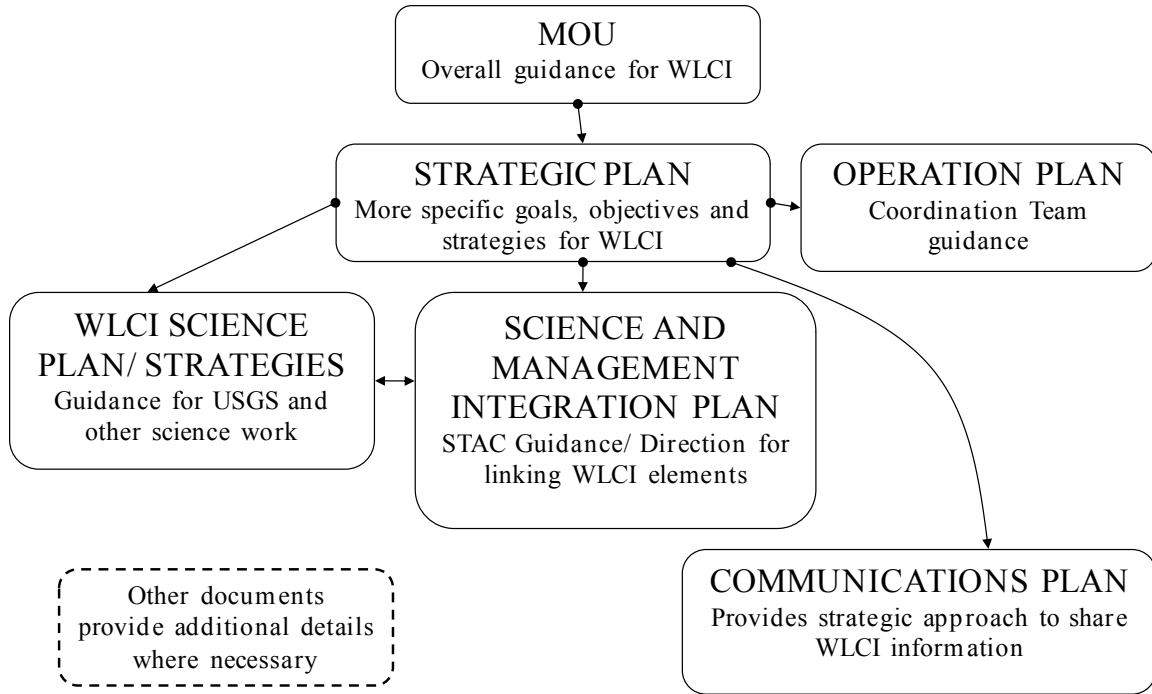


Figure 1. Relationship of WLCI guiding documents.

Internal and External Interactions

The WLCI is multifaceted organization involving several teams and groups composed of staff from partner agencies, local government, and other groups. Each group has a unique role in facilitating the success of the WLCI including providing support and information to the CT. Communication among the various groups and teams leads to mutual understanding of implementation actions, incorporation of scientific information to landscape-scale conservation, and local-level support for implementation. A summary of the roles and relationships of these groups and teams is included in Table 1 in the Appendix. Groups included in this table include the EC, Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), Data and Information Management Team, Communication Team, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Science Team, Support Subcommittee, and Local Project Development Teams.

Support Subcommittee

The Support Subcommittee provides the WLCI with support and advice from ground-level managers that are fully integrated into the goals, objectives, and processes of the WLCI. The Support Subcommittee communicates across agency jurisdictions in an effort to meet the landscape-level habitat priorities of the WLCI and collaborates on projects of interest to the WLCI. The CT coordinates with the Support Subcommittee to incorporate the priorities of various agencies and to ensure support for conservation work. Because the Support Subcommittee is made up of ground-level managers, they are able to provide support for having their staff involved in development of conservation actions through participation in Local Project Development Teams.

Local Project Development Teams

To facilitate local participation and foster local involvement in and support for WLCI projects, several Local Project Development Teams have been created. These teams are located geographically to facilitate planning and involvement by multiple organizations. Each Local Project Development Team includes local biologists, range managers, conservation district personnel, landowners, county commissioners, and other interested parties.

The main purpose of the Local Project Development Teams is to cooperatively create projects which address identified priority needs for local wildlife, habitat and other resource issues. These teams will prioritize their recommended projects annually to provide local-level input on the types of conservation actions that should be implemented. The CT, in conjunction with the Support Subcommittee, will work closely with Local Project Development Teams to develop an annual schedule for ranking, funding, and implementing WLCI conservation actions. The CT will assist the teams by processing requests for WLCI funds and arranging funding for projects through other federal, state, and regional funding sources such as the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Fund, Wyoming Big Game License Coalition, U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Bill program funding, and other external funding sources. This project development and funding structure should allow the local resource managers to focus more time on resource issues and less time on gathering funding for projects.

In addition to assisting with providing funding for conservation actions, the CT will provide information to the Local Project Development Teams that is generated by the EC, USGS Science Team, STAC, and Data and Information Management Team. The goal is to have locally-led and coordinated conservation actions that target WLCI priority conservation actions, are based on scientific findings, and are incorporated into the adaptive management process.

Coordination Team and Participating Agencies

The CT works with various internal and external groups that support or may support the work of the WLCI. Each agency representative on the CT serves as the primary point of contact for that agency. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) CT member maintains contact with the other WGFD offices in the WLCI area to keep them involved in project development, implementation and monitoring. The Bureau of Land

Management (BLM) CT member contacts the BLM field offices in the WLCI area to coordinate development and implementation of conservation actions with them. The FWS CT member maintains contact with other components of the FWS involved in the WLCI (i.e., Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and National Wildlife Refuges), develops Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances with interested landowners, and completes any consultation required by the Endangered Species Act. The USGS CT member works with the USGS Science Team to ensure that their work will help inform on-the-ground management actions. The Wyoming Department of Agriculture CT member reaches out to the agricultural community to foster relationships for future WLCI work. All of the CT members will likely need to help with the roles described for specific agency representatives. CT members will also attend and facilitate Local Project Development Team meetings.

The CT works directly with the Forest Service, county commissioners, and conservation districts (all represented on the EC) to ensure their interests are met in the development, implementation and monitoring of WLCI actions. These needs will also be met through interactions between the CT and Support Subcommittee and at Local Project Development Team meetings.

Other Groups

The CT will work with the Support Subcommittee and Local Project Development Teams to reach out to groups interested or potentially interested in cooperating with the WLCI. Contributions or cooperative work will vary among organizations. Contributions from outside groups may include financial donations (e.g., matching donations) to projects, technical expertise for project development or monitoring, scientific support, and sharing of data and information. Organizations interested in the WLCI have the option of participating on Local Project Development Teams.

The CT has identified points of contact for the various agencies and groups to facilitate communication with the CT and the WLCI (Appendix Table 2).

Conservation Planning Process

To meet the mission of the WLCI, landscape management that addresses conservation priorities will be integrated with science findings. Recently developed and emerging conservation planning approaches recognize the importance of integrating scientific information with management needs to support conservation planning. Additionally, the need to achieve conservation objectives more efficiently and effectively is being expressed by managers, stakeholders, and the public. Conservation actions typically have been limited to meeting site-specific needs without consideration of landscape-level issues. Some past conservation approaches also lacked the ability to incorporate strategic-based conservation objectives with measurable outcomes and the ability to inform the adaptive management process. One of the key approaches of the WLCI is to incorporate science findings into a landscape-scale conservation planning process that leads to measurable improvements to ecosystem functions.

The approach for supporting strategic-based conservation planning and implementation of conservation actions consists of five phases (Appendix, Attachment A). In the first phase, resource issues and conditions are identified and evaluated. This phase includes steps to incorporate local expertise and knowledge from agency resource staff and Local Project Development Teams. This will be accomplished through an iterative process consisting of meetings and using the WLCI/USGS intranet site to coordinate with the Support Subcommittee and Local Project Development Teams. Recommendations and conservation priorities from external groups will be considered as well. Inputs might include recommendations and conservation priorities that address important species (e.g., sage-grouse, trumpeter swans) or habitats at local and regional scales. An important step during this phase is the use data and findings associated with the Comprehensive Assessment, conducted by the USGS, as a decision tool to support the conservation planning process. This will be accomplished by synthesizing and evaluating ecological and land management data to provide an understanding of the relationships between stressors and threats and their influence on important species and habitats in the proposed project areas.

The second phase involves the development of conservation priorities and objectives. The development of conservation priorities and objectives will be accomplished through the integration of science and through an iterative process between the CT, Support Subcommittee, and Local Project Development Teams. Quantitative benchmarks will be identified and established to support measurable outcomes during the evaluation of the project after its implementation.

The third phase addresses the design, development, and ranking of conservation projects. The design and development of conservation projects will be accomplished through an iterative process that involves the CT, Support Subcommittee, and Local Project Development Teams. The Support Subcommittee will ensure NEPA is arranged and that all state and federal procedures are followed. Local Project Development Teams will be responsible for developing conservation projects and their implementation. Local Project Development Teams will also be responsible for selecting and prioritizing developed projects prior to their submission to the CT. This local involvement serves as a check that the actions can realistically be developed and implemented. The CT will evaluate conservation proposals and rank and prioritize them for funding. The CT will present the ranked and prioritized list of projects and selection rationale to the EC for final approval. An example of the project ranking process used for fiscal year 2008 projects is provided in Attachment B in the Appendix.

The fourth phase involves the implementation of funded conservation projects. Local Project Development Teams will follow procedures as identified by WLCI state and federal agencies. Local Project Development Teams will also be responsible for monitoring the implementation and compliance of the project to ensure it meets the design specifications.

The last phase includes the evaluation of the completed conservation projects and use of monitoring results to inform the adaptive management process. Monitoring protocols

(monitoring design, methods selection, method protocol, handling and reporting of data) will be identified or developed throughout the planning process by the USGS, CT, Monitoring Team, and project developers. Monitoring results will be used to support future conservation actions and other research activities being conducted by USGS and WLCI partners. They will also be used to develop recommendations and best management practices.

Funding of Conservation Actions

Funding for federal agencies participating in the WLCI is provided annually through congressional appropriations. In addition to these internal funding sources, external sources will be solicited and leveraged to further enhance the capabilities of agency funds. Based on interest in the WLCI, additional funds are anticipated to be contributed to achieve the conservation goals for southwest Wyoming. Partner involvement and contributed funds are essential to the successful implementation of the objectives and goals of the WLCI. Contributed and leveraged funds also help justify continued agency budget requests.

Funding by Participating Agencies

The internal funding process for the purpose of this section encompasses the budgets provided by the member agencies to support activities or products for the WLCI. Each agency has a separate budget submission process; however, the CT works to ensure coordination of WLCI budget needs between the various agency budgets.

Budget needs are identified by each agency based upon agency protocol and reflect the priorities of the WLCI. This information is then shared among the agencies for coordination and consistency. As final budgets are allocated by each agency, this information and the related funding capability of these budgets are shared among the CT members, the WLCI organization, and project partners.

BLM: BLM funds are provided for on-the-ground habitat projects and enhancement actions that accomplish the mission of the WLCI and either directly or indirectly support the management of BLM-administered lands. Monitoring can be a part of these project descriptions. Requests for project dollars are submitted as part of an overall BLM Wyoming funding package each year. The BLM fiscal year runs from October 1 through September 30 of the following year. Dollars are generally provided for the fiscal year budget cycle. Reporting and accountability are performed as part of periodic reporting on progress and allocation of funds

Individual offices, agency personnel and outside entities provide project proposals to meet the identified needs of a specific issue, species or habitat. The CT and Local Project Development Teams develop and prioritize projects based on current species and habitat priorities for each agency, the support of partners, readiness for implementation, the probability that the project will not be compromised by development, and consistency with WLCI Science Strategic Plan goals. Conservation actions will be developed

following the conservation planning process. The BLM CT member will work with BLM staff to integrate the WLCI program with landscape-level needs in the WLCI area.

FWS: FWS funds are provided for Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (Partners) projects, fisheries conservation actions, development of Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs) with private land owners, and Endangered Species Act section 7 consultations on federal actions. These funds are managed through existing FWS programs, which are coordinated with other WLCI components (e.g., USGS science, overall priorities). The FWS fiscal year runs from October 1 through September 30 of the following year. Dollars are generally provided for the fiscal year budget cycle. Beginning in FY 2009, FWS funds for WLCI are considered part of the agency's base budget. Reporting and accountability are performed as part of periodic reporting on progress and allocation of funds.

The Partners program works exclusively on private lands and has developed priority areas based on the presence of FWS trust resources (e.g., migratory birds, threatened and endangered species) and existing partnerships that have been created with landowners. The Partners program will continue to fund projects in the WLCI area using current project selection processes and will incorporate science information as it becomes available. The FWS CT member will work with the Partners program to integrate this private lands program with landscape-level needs in the WLCI area. Similar coordination will occur to help focus the strategic use of fisheries funds on actions that will have impacts at the landscape scale.

USGS: USGS funds research, inventory and monitoring in accordance with the WLCI Science Strategic Plan. The USGS fiscal year runs from October 1 through September 30 of the following year. Dollars are generally provided for the fiscal year budget cycle. Reporting and accountability are performed as part of periodic reporting on progress toward meeting Science Strategic Plan goals and the allocation of funds. The USGS CT member will work with USGS scientists to integrate the WLCI program with landscape-level needs in the WLCI area. Reporting and accountability are performed as part of periodic reporting on progress and allocation of funds.

WGFD: WGFD funds available for the WLCI are primarily funded by state legislature appropriations and are available for inventory, monitoring, and habitat enhancement projects. Other funds are available through its licensing program. The WGFD also has developed an agreement to expand its project funding through submission of projects to the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust (see discussion of external funding sources). The WGFD fiscal year runs from July 1 through June of the following year. Dollars are generally provided for the fiscal year budget cycle. The WGFD CT member will work with WGFD staff to integrate the WLCI program with landscape-level needs in the WLCI area. Reporting and accountability are performed as part of periodic reporting on progress and allocation of funds.

WDA: The WDA is primarily funded by state legislature appropriations. The WDA also is party to an agreement with the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust. The

WDA fiscal year runs from July 1 through June of the following year. Dollars are generally provided for the fiscal year budget cycle. The WDA CT member will work with WDA staff and agricultural interests to integrate the WLCI program with landscape-level needs in the WLCI area. Reporting and accountability are performed as part of periodic reporting on progress and allocation of funds.

Contributed Funds

Contributions to the WLCI are anticipated based on expressed interest in the initiative. An agreement between the Wildlife Heritage Foundation of Wyoming and the state and local entities of the WLCI will be used to manage contributed funds. This agreement will allow for the use of private funds for a variety of WLCI conservation actions. The ability to use private sources of funding will be invaluable to giving the WLCI needed flexibility to address conservation needs in southwest Wyoming. Project proposals relying on private funding sources will incorporate the WLCI project development process.

Leveraged Funds

Matching and in-kind contributions are very important to the WLCI process. In-kind a project exhibits strong partner commitment and collaboration. The in-kind contributions for each project need to originate at the local level and be recognized in WLCI proposals for conservation actions. Matching contributions will be considered at the Local Project Development Team level, and the CT will be responsible for pursuing matching funding opportunities to best meet the needs of the WLCI and the highest priority projects.

A funding source database and accounting system will be developed and maintained as a tool to help leverage other funds. A template for an accounting database is available from Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative.

An annual meeting will be held with interested NGOs to present the top priority projects in the WLCI area and request funding assistance. The NGOs working in the WLCI area will have an opportunity to work with Local Project Development Teams and then assist the CT to leverage funding with the available federal, state, and other grant monies.

Outreach Functions

The WLCI Communication Team will provide support to the CT in outreach functions. Public affairs-related work such as press releases will be developed and distributed by the Communication Team. Direct communication with WLCI stakeholders will be done by the CT and the EC at various WLCI workshops and meetings. The CT, working with the USGS, will provide poster presentations and papers at scientific conferences to highlight the successes and uniqueness of the WLCI. The CT will work with the Communication Team to produce a periodic newsletter and to manage the content that is posted on the WLCI website. As additional opportunities for WLCI outreach are identified by the Communication Team (i.e., in Communication Plan updates), the CT will be involved in their execution.

Data Storage and Management

Data and information will be available for interested parties on the USGS intranet and WLCI web sites. The WLCI CT will closely monitor the development of the myUSGS intranet site. The CT will work with the USGS to provide convenient links from state and federal intranet sites to the myUSGS site.

As part of the USGS intranet site, the USGS has developed a USGS Science Catalog which has the ability to map and store various types of data. The CT works directly with the WLCI groups and teams to ensure that the Science Catalog and other technology tools are utilized. To accomplish this, the USGS technology tools will need to be easy to use and effective for communication. The CT will work closely with the Data and Management Information Team to refine these tools so they can be used to track science and conservation projects, monitoring activities, and project proposals.

Adaptive Management

The CT will help ensure that adaptive management occurs in development, implementation, and monitoring of conservation actions and scientific work. Guidance for adaptive management is described in the SMIP. During development of conservation actions, the CT will rely on information gathered through the Comprehensive Assessment and ongoing scientific work to help determine priorities. The CT will also ensure that effectiveness and implementation monitoring components are included in each WLCI project. The CT and STAC will work with the USGS Science Team to determine which data gaps are most important to fill. The CT will also consider how monitoring of on-the-ground actions will help inform future scientific work. As information becomes available to fill these data gaps, the information will be used for development and prioritization of WLCI actions. Through these processes, the CT will work to ensure that adaptive management is applied at the landscape level and involves the various WLCI teams as appropriate.

Annual Review Process

This Operation Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that all aspects are kept current. Project status from previous years and the current year will be reviewed for completion and progress toward meeting WLCI goals (evaluation and monitoring). As part of this review, information from periodic updates to the Comprehensive Assessment will be provided and shared with the various entities that support the WLCI. New information will be used to identify and refine priority areas and species and to provide direction for future conservation actions. This will help ensure application of information gathered through adaptive management processes.

At the conclusion of a funding cycle, summaries of the year's projects will be available through a project reporting database on the myUSGS site and WLCI Web site. Each project lead will be responsible for submitting an annual progress report to the Coordination Team. Progress reports will include project locations and size, photos, a

narrative describing the purpose and results, the monitoring plan, partners and partner contributions, and future actions. The Coordination Team will establish a schedule for progress report submissions, and will provide a report template and an example of a completed progress report. Completed project reports will be used to describe the success of WLCI conservation efforts. The project reporting database will identify project leads and provide users with information on the status of the project, completion of required reports, and other pertinent information.

As the WLCI expands, additional resource needs will arise. A formal process will be developed to identify these needs and potential opportunities to fulfill these needs. Potential needs include equipment, materials, and assistance such as GIS, administrative, and clerical help. During the annual review process, the CT will create a forecasted work plan and projected budget for all resource needs.

Glossary

BLM: Bureau of Land Management; federal land management agency under the Department of the Interior.

Comprehensive Assessment: A comprehensive compilation and analysis of data to support the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative. This information will be used to support the development of conservation objectives

Comprehensive Assessment Tool: The Comprehensive Assessment tool supports the evaluation and interpretation of data and information that contribute to the decision making process for short-term and long-term conservation priorities and objectives.

Conservation Actions: Represents the entire range of conservation options that can be used to meet conservation objectives. Conservation actions may be passive (protecting an important habitat) or active (where an area needs to be actively restored).

Conservation Project: A defined course of action to address areas or issues where an active course of action is preferred or required.

Conservation Tools: An approach or range of approaches that can be used to address a specific conservation need or action. The use of conservation easements is one tool that might be selected to protect habitats not needing restoration or to preserve a specific area associated with a migration corridor.

CT: WLCI Coordination Team based in Rock Springs, WY

EC: WLCI Executive Committee; composed of executives of the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service, southwest Wyoming conservation districts, and southwest Wyoming county commissioners.

Ecological Indicators: A measure or a collection of measures that characterize abiotic and biotic elements of the environment of ecosystem processes. Ecological indicators can be aggregated into ecological classes such as habitat condition, habitat integrity, chemical and physical characteristics, ecological processes, and anthropogenic stressors and disturbances.

Ecological Restoration: The process of repairing or assisting with the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed.

Effectiveness Monitoring: The process of identifying and measuring key indicators to measure the ecosystem response to a restoration treatment or other conservation action. The WLCI will also use effectiveness monitoring to determine the effectiveness of conservation actions at meeting WLCI conservation priorities and objectives.

FWS: United States Fish and Wildlife Service; United States Department of the Interior agency charged with protecting and enhancing wildlife, fish and plant species and their habitats.

Implementation Monitoring: An assessment to determine the extent to which conservation actions were implemented as prescribed or designed.

Strategic-based Conservation Planning: A conservation planning approach to ensure that conservation priorities and objectives have measurable outcomes. This requires the establishment of quantitative benchmarks so conservation actions and projects can be evaluated to ensure they are meeting their intended targets.

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding; signed in spring 2007 to formalize the relationship of participating agencies. This document was updated in summer 2008 to incorporate WLCI membership of the southwest Wyoming conservation districts and county commissioners.

NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act; establishes national environmental policy and goals for the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the environment; provides a process for implementing these goals within the federal agencies.

NRCS: Natural Resources Conservation Service; United States Department of Agriculture agency that promotes natural resource conservation on private lands.

SMIP: Science and Management Integration Plan; this document creates a link between the USGS/WLCI Science Strategic Plan developed based on the May 2007 Science Workshop and the CT's Conservation Strategy. The Science Strategic Plan addresses research and effectiveness monitoring. The Conservation Strategy addresses conservation actions (projects) and monitoring of those actions.

STAC: The Science and Technical Advisory Committee of the WLCI provides science and technical advice and support to the EC, CT and other groups within the WLCI, and implements the strategies as directed in the SMIP. STAC also oversees the Monitoring Team, which provides technical expertise on monitoring activities associated with WLCI.

Strategic Plan: Document outlining the goals, objectives, and strategies for the WLCI.

Stressors: Natural or anthropogenic entity that can induce an adverse response.

USFS: United States Forest Service; United States Department of Agriculture agency charged with sustainable management of National Forests and Grasslands.

USGS: United States Geological Survey; a Department of the Interior agency providing scientific information.

WGFD: Wyoming Game and Fish Department; state agency with statutory responsibility for conserving, protecting and managing Wyoming's fish and wildlife resources.

WLCI: Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative; a long-term, science-based collaborative effort among several state and federal agencies promoting responsible planning and development of oil and gas resources and the assessment and enhancement of aquatic and terrestrial habitats and species at a landscape scale in southwest Wyoming.

Appendix

Table 1. Committee Team or Group Interface with Coordination Team								
	Executive Committee	Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)	Data and Information Management Team	Communication Team	USGS Science Team	Support Subcommittee	Local Project Development Teams	Monitoring Team
ROLE/RESPONSIBILITY	Provide leadership, direction, and oversight for the Coordination Team and all other WLCI teams for all WLCI activities	Provide science and technical support to the other WLCI committees and teams, including guidance for integration of science findings with on-the-ground management	Construct and maintain the WLCI data catalog, information sharing tools, and Website Identify criteria to determine if data are appropriate and applicable for the Science Catalog	Provide support for internal and external communication needs, facilitate media outreach for all WLCI teams and groups	Provide science information to facilitate management decisions associated with fish and wildlife habitat enhancement and conservation actions; to complement ongoing habitat and mitigation efforts; to understand cumulative effects of development, conservation actions and related activities at a landscape scale	Provide support to the Coordination Team to facilitate on-the-ground activities at the field level; facilitate the effectiveness of Local Project Development Teams	Develop conservation projects and provide local level leadership. Prioritize local needs and projects.	Provide technical expertise and coordination for monitoring activities associated with WLCI short-term local and long-term landscape-scale projects.
INTERFACE/ INTERACTION WITH WLCI and THE COORDINATION TEAM	--Provide direction and feedback on various actions pursued by the Coordination Team --Pursue and facilitate new	--Maintain open communication with the Coordination Team --Identify and prioritize relevant research and	--Maintain open communication with the Coordination Team --Establish data management network necessary to	--Maintain open communication with the Coordination Team --Maintain a current communication	--Maintain open communication with the Coordination Team --Develop and implement the WLCI Science	--Maintain open communication with the Coordination Team --Provide management and staff support for: -----Project initiation, design,	-- Maintain open communication with the Coordination Team -- Host necessary Local Project	--Maintain open communication with the Coordination Team on monitoring activities --Identify appropriate and

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INTERFACE/ INTERACTION WITH WLCI and THE COORDINATION TEAM (CONT'D)	partners at all levels for WLCI --Provide support for the Coordination Team --Provide decisions on project proposals over \$100,000	monitoring projects --Review and provide comments on the proposed short-term and long-term conservation priorities and objectives --Develop appropriate avenues (science conference) to inform partners and the public -- Help ensure the adaptive management process occurs effectively -- Provides periodic review of USGS and external science efforts -- Help develop approaches for consistent monitoring with the Monitoring Subcommittee	house data and information -- Ensure continued maintenance of the data management network --Establish a data catalog --Establish standards for sharing data among WLCI partners --Provide and maintain the WLCI website -- Adopt criteria to identify and select databases for the science catalog -- Develop metadata for derived data if metadata are lacking -- Work to display data and information --Inform CT of the status of data contributions by	on plan --Design and review outreach strategies and materials --Facilitate media events --Provide key points of contact for media inquiries --Provide consistent media responses and outreach materials	Strategic Plan --Provide best available science for inclusion in the comprehensive assessment --Provide a geospatial database of current science activities --Plan annual statement of work with CT and STAC --Provide recommendations and guidance to CT to inform the adaptive management process --Work with the CT to establish science priorities and address science gaps associated with funding from the heritage trust --Work with CT	coordination, implementation ----- Data and information relating to resources and activities -----Coordination among partners -----Potential funding sources --Assist in establishment of Local Project Development Teams as needed and participate in those groups --Provide information on WLCI activities to local staffs and constituents ----Provide staff support for project design and implementation ----Facilitate communication among members and the Coordination Team though scheduled meetings and	Development Team meetings to build and prioritize projects -- Ground truth scientific research and monitoring proposals --Make contacts with NGOs and landowners -- Host field tours --Ensure effective implementation of projects -- Provide timely project reporting	consistent protocols for monitoring (i.e., methods) --Disseminate information about established WLCI protocols --Ensure consistency and adequacy of WLCI monitoring data --Synthesize relevant information by identifying biological and physical components of the environment that will be affected by development and by assessing potential effects on them through conceptual models (e.g., syntheses of existing information) --Ensure that

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	Executive Committee	Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)	Data and Information Management Team	Communication Team	USGS Science Team	Support Subcommittee	Local Project Development Teams	Monitoring Team
INTERFACE/ INTERACTION WITH WLCI and THE COORDINATION TEAM (CONT'D)			partners and external sources		to develop ecological indicators and apply those indicators using the comprehensive assessment tool. --Inform CT of potential location of conservation actions	conference calls		validation monitoring is included in the WLCI monitoring plan to determine whether WLCI goals and objectives are being achieved and to provide an important feedback mechanism --Ensure that landscape-level monitoring is included in the WLCI monitoring plan
COORDINATION TEAM ROLE	--Apprise Executive Committee of ongoing activities --Provide information on funding availability and distribution --Provide information on project development	--Maintain open communication with STAC -- Participate in development and periodic updates to the science and management integration plan (SMIP) to meet management needs; --Identify	--Maintain open communication with Data and Information Management Team --Provide direction on format and content of data and information systems --Identify potential data	--Maintain open communication with the Communication Subcommittee --Provide details for articles, press releases, outreach materials	--Maintain open communication with the science team --A member of the CT serves on the Science Team --Provide information for inclusion into the Science Strategic Plan	--Maintain open communication with the Support Subcommittee --Provide coordination, review and input into Comprehensive Assessment --Facilitate work sessions with staff and partners to solicit input into	--Maintain open communication with Local Project Development Teams -- Provide WLCI framework to local processes including goals, objectives and strategies --Provide	-- Maintain open communication with the Monitoring Team --Identify potential monitoring needs to be addressed -- Help develop approaches for consistent monitoring with

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	Executive Committee	Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)	Data and Information Management Team	Communication Team	USGS Science Team	Support Subcommittee	Local Project Development Teams	Monitoring Team
COORDINATION TEAM ROLE (CONT'D)	and implementation , including any integrated science activities associated with project development and implementation --Respond to EC requests for briefing materials and information --Support Executive Committee activities (meetings, open houses, workshops, tours, etc.) -- Present suggestions and decision options for EC consideration	potential science needs	gaps --Identify needed databases to support data infrastructure --Provide materials for periodic updates to the Website --Provide materials for periodic update to the WLCI share site --A CT member (s) serves on the Data and Information Management Team	--Identify potential outreach needs --Provide a link to the Executive Committee --Provide points of contact with Communication Team members, for media inquiries --A CT member (s) serves on the Communication Team	--Identify data needs and identify priorities at the field level --Identify monitoring and research needs	on-the ground conservation actions ----Assist in establishment of Local Project Development Teams --Provide opportunity to review and enhance project proposals and potential priorities --Provide a platform to share information and data through the Data and Information Management Team ---Attend field office and other agency staff meetings as needed to provide periodic updates	meeting moderation to maintain effective proposal process and maintain focus on needs of WLCI --Streamline funding processes and allow local managers to focus on the resource instead of funding --Leverage funding to stimulate landscape-level projects --Include landscape-level strategies in local level conservation discussions	the Monitoring Team --Facilitate interaction with other WLCI committees and teams

Table 2. Coordination Team Lead Contacts with Various Groups					
Support Subcommittee and Local Project Development Team Participants	BLM (Renee Dana)	USGS (Pat Anderson)	FWS (Daniel Blake)	WGFD (vacant)	WDA (Justin Caudill)
BLM	X			X	
NRCS				X	X
FWS	X		X		X
USFS	X		X		
Conservation Districts		X			X
Association of Counties			X		X
WGFD	X			X	
NPS		X	X		
Local Project Development Team Participants only					
Local Sage-grouse Workgroups			X	X	X
Wyoming Range Interagency Habitat Initiative			X	X	
Little Snake River Aspen Initiative		X		X	
Grazing Associations					X
Private Landowners			X	X	X
Energy Industry Representatives	X				
Private Consultants		X	X		
Trout Unlimited		X		X	
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation		X		X	
Ducks Unlimited		X	X		
Mule Deer Foundation		X			
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife	X		X		
The Nature Conservancy			X		
Other NGOs				X	X

Table 3. Two Examples on How Ecological Indicators will be used to Develop Strategic-Based Objectives and Potential Conservation Actions					
Initial Question	Indicator Class	Ecological Indicators	Example of Data	Strategic Objective	Possible Conservation Actions
Where can conservation actions reduce potential threats to large mammal migration routes?	Migration Corridors	Elk migration routes Moose migration routes Pronghorn migration routes Mule deer migration routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maps and data on migration routes • Refined maps with buffers • Road maps • Fence maps • Allotment maps • Development maps • Land-use maps • Land Ownership • Habitat maps • Telemetry information • Vegetation maps 	Reduce critical “pinch points” for pronghorn by 10% by 2015.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of Easements • Maintain or improve habitats at or near “pinch points” • Remove or convert existing fences to support pronghorn movement especially focused at “pinch points”
Where should conservation actions be targeted to improve stream connectivity for cool season fisheries?	Habitat and Population Integrity	Species distribution Population extent Stream impediments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species distribution maps • Known current extent of species • Road maps • Develop road density index • Hydrologic Unit maps • Stream Hydrology maps • Ownership maps • Vegetation maps • Proper Functioning Condition Maps • Land use maps • Mineral maps • Mining permits • Locations of culverts • Water quality data 	Increase the distribution of Colorado cutthroat trout by 10% by reducing the number of impediments during the next five years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing physical impediments such as poorly designed or placed culverts • Increase the number of good quality steam reaches by improving degraded stream reaches • Increase the number of fish by reducing invasive fish species

Note: Ecological indicators will also be used to identify threats and the condition of important habitats. The threats and condition of habitats will undergo a scoring process to rank the threats and condition of habitats and thereby determine which habitats need protection and maintenance versus restoration.

Attachment A

WLCI Conservation Planning Process

Phase I: Identification and assessment of resource issues and condition

1. Identify and incorporate WLCI partner and Local Project Development Team's conservation priorities and needs.
 - a. Meet with Support Subcommittee and Local Project Development Teams to discuss local conservation priorities, issues, and needs.
 - b. Provide preliminary list of ecological indicators developed from Coordination Team and USGS to Support Subcommittee and Local Project Development Teams.
 - c. Incorporate local conservation priorities and issues identified by Support Subcommittee and Local Project Development Teams into the Comprehensive Assessment
 - d. Address comments about preliminary ecological indicators list, incorporate into the Comprehensive Assessment
2. Address species and habitat recommendations from external groups. Some examples are: recommendations from the Western Governors Association, sage-grouse working groups, Wildlife Trust' and other groups.
 - a. Coordination Team will identify and review conservation priorities and recommendations
 - b. Incorporate or address applicable recommendations in the Comprehensive Assessment
3. Apply the Comprehensive Assessment tool to support conservation planning.
 - a. Evaluate ecological indicators as they address:
 - (a) Important conservation species as identified by WLCI partners
 - (b) Important habitats, migration corridors as identified by WLCI partners
 - (c) New indicators from synthesis of existing indicators
 - b. Assess life history data associated with species of concern, umbrella species, surrogate species and other ecological information and data
 - c. Assess and analyze resource and management information and data
 - d. Incorporate species and habitat models to fill information gaps associated with species of concern, invasive species, and habitat integrity
 - e. Analyze historical trends and environmental changes to identify potential drivers and stressors
 - f. Evaluate relationship between stressors and environmental implications
 - g. Develop suites of conservation and ecological indicators for important species, habitats, and conditions unique to southwest Wyoming
 - h. Evaluate proposed conservation projects
 - i. Rank and score available data associated with species of concern and integrity of habitat to determine:
 - (i) areas for preservation
 - (ii) habitats that would benefit from being maintained
 - (iii) habitats that need to be restored
 - (iv) areas needed to reconnect fragmented landscapes
 - (v) where risk to threats can be abated

Phase II: Establishment of conservation priorities and objectives (results and findings associated with the application of the comprehensive assessment tool).

1. Establishment of short-term and long-term conservation priorities and objectives
2. Internal review of conservation priorities and objectives
3. Identify appropriate quantitative benchmarks to support measurable outcomes
4. Internal review of benchmarks
5. Make revisions if applicable
6. Finalize conservation priorities and objectives
7. Finalize conservation benchmarks
8. Iterative Process with Coordination Team, Support Subcommittee, STAC: repeat as new information and needs are identified

Phase III: Conservation Project Development and Implementation: Design, evaluate, and selection of conservation projects

1. Design project to meet WLCI conservation priorities and objectives and to address management issues.
2. Communicate and emphasize goals to partners and on-the-ground participants
3. Refine planning and priorities
4. Develop project with WLCI partners and Local Project Development Teams
 - a. Tool selection
 - b. Project Checklist
 - c. Expand partners and funding base
 - d. Finalize funding
5. Develop evaluation criteria associated with conservation priorities and objectives and ecological indicators
6. Review and score proposed conservation projects (Coordination Team and Support Subcommittee)
7. Prioritize proposed conservation projects for funding
8. Final Approval Process with Executive Committee
9. Funding Obligated
10. NEPA Process (complete permits and clearances)

Phase IV: Project Implementation

- Implement Project or appropriate phases of project
- Implementation and compliance monitoring

Phase V: Project Evaluation and Adaptive Management Process

1. Develop appropriate monitoring objects (aligned with conservation benchmarks)
2. Develop Monitoring Design. This will include:
 - a. Criteria for site selection
 - b. Procedures for identifying sampling locations
 - c. Sampling frequency
 - d. Number and location of sampling sites
 - e. Level of change that is desired to be detected
 - f. Identify appropriate measurements
 - g. Identify appropriate method protocols
 - h. Data handling and reporting
 - i. Training if needed

- j. Scheduling
3. Conduct monitoring
4. Synthesize and analyze monitoring data
5. Prepare monitoring reports
6. Adaptive Management Process: Use monitoring results to:
 - a. Inform the adaptive management process (as defined in the SMIP and WLCI Science Strategic Plan)
 - Development of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for future conservation projects
 - Prepare guidelines and recommendations for future management directives
 - Review, revise, and modify research objectives
 - b. Provide support for future assessments
7. Validate species and habitat models being developed for WLCI

Attachment B Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative 2009 Project Prioritization Score Sheet

Project Name: _____

BPS#: _____

Total Score: _____

NOTE: This score sheet is designed to guide habitat-project prioritization decisions, but some interpretation may be necessary.

PROJECT SCREENS

If the answer to any of the following questions is “no,” the project lead will be contacted to determine how to move forward.

Is project application complete (GIS included)?

YES NO

If project is to be completed on federal land (USFS, BLM, NPS), has the Field Office or District Ranger Office Project Planning Checklist been completed? (RSFO example)

YES NO

If an Archaeology clearance is required, is the clearance complete or does it have a high likelihood that it will be complete before the tentative project starting date?

YES NO

If NEPA is required, is the clearance complete or does it have a high likelihood that it will be complete before the tentative project starting date?

YES NO

Goals and Objectives are clearly identified and stated in the proposal and there is a high probability of success (as measured against the stated goals and objectives and expected and intended results).

YES NO

Has local coordination between landowners/land managers that are directly affected or adjacent to a project area been completed?

YES NO

Have species benefits and project goals, objectives, and strategies contained within this proposal been reviewed by a wildlife or aquatic biologist from WGF and federal agencies?

YES NO

Is cost of the project reasonable for project outcomes?

YES NO

Does the project occur within the WLCI area or directly benefit the WLCI area?

YES NO

WLCI PROJECT CONTINUITY

Project was funded previously as a multi-phased landscape scale coordinated effort through WLCI.	5
Project was not funded previously.	0

AGENCY PRIORITIES

Project is number one priority for lead proponent/agency	10
Project is second priority for lead proponent/agency.	8
Project is third priority for lead proponent/agency.	6
Project is fourth priority for lead proponent/agency.	4
Project is fifth priority for lead proponent/agency.	2

BIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

CONSERVATION FOCUS AREA

Project is in a WLCI Priority Work Area (based on 08 WGFD priority areas, Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy areas, RMP ACEC and WSA areas, BLM Project Program Elements) and benefits a key habitat as identified in the WLCI MOU.	15
Project benefits a key habitat but is not in a WLCI conservation focus area.	7
Project is in a WLCI Priority Work Area but does not benefit a key habitat.	3
Project is not in a WLCI Priority Work Area.	0

ESSENTIAL LIFE STAGES

Project improves migration corridors or critical seasonal habitats/critical life stages.	10
Project benefits migration corridors or critical seasonal habitats/critical life stages.	5
Project does not benefit migration corridor or seasonal habitat	0

ECOSYSTEM FUNCTION

Project benefits long-term ecosystem function (species assemblages and multiple habitats).	10
Project does not benefit long-term ecosystem function.	0

AT-RISK SPECIES / SPECIES BENEFITED

Project will benefit at-risk species (Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), special status, or threatened and endangered species); <u>and</u> high interest species (determined by local project development team).	15
Project will benefit at-risk species <u>or</u> high interest species (determined by local project development team).	10
Project will contribute to the overall biodiversity of the area.	5

GRAZING AND WATER DEVELOPMENT

Project promotes rangeland health and includes a management plan. Project alleviates barriers and facilitates access to existing adequate forage and/or water for wildlife and livestock.	10
Project does not provide improved forage, water or does not provide a management plan.	-5

THREATS AND RISKS

Threats and risks imminent. A 1- to 2-year delay in treatment could potentially have devastating effects (e.g., catastrophic wildfire and noxious weeds, ESA listings).	15
Threats and risks occurring now. A 1- to 2-year delay in treatment is not critical.	10
Project is important, but is not under such a high threat and risk level (e.g., pinyon-juniper encroachment, disease, and insect outbreaks).	5
Threats and risks are low.	0

**GEOGRAPHIC RELATIONSHIPS – Enhancement Projects
(long-term sustainability)**

Project is within, near, or adjacent to a protected area and under little threat of development (public land not currently leased, private land in conservation easement, NRCS long-term management contract, other signed agreements or previous WLCI projects, etc.).	10
Project is under little threat of development in the next 20-30 years (leased but with low development potential or areas not likely to have residential expansion).	5
Project area has the potential to provide good short-term habitat needs, but is under threat of development and other destructive habitat practices.	0

OR

GEOGRAPHIC RELATIONSHIPS – Conservation Easement Projects

Project area is providing critical habitat or migration corridors, but is under threat of development and other destructive habitat practices.	10
Project is under little threat of development in the next 20-30 years.	0

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

Project will help meet the goals and objectives identified in other plans.	5
Other plans have not been referenced, but the project may help meet goals and objectives of other plans.	1
Project will not help meet the goals and objectives of other plans.	0

FUTURE MANAGEMENT

Project proposal includes details on future management that will ensure the long-term success of the project (i.e., herd management plans, grazing management plans, resting the area for a few years, etc.).	10
Project proposal addresses only short-term measures to help facilitate short-term project success.	3
Project does not include details for future management or project success.	0

FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

PARTNERS

Partners are involved in the project and are providing 50% or more of the funding (monetary or in-kind) that will help leverage WLCI dollars.	10
Partners are involved in the project and are providing 10%-49.9% of the funding (monetary or in-kind) that will help leverage WLCI dollars.	5
Partners are involved in the project and are providing less than 10% of the funding (monetary or in-kind) that will help leverage WLCI dollars.	3
Project did not reflect partnerships or contributions.	0

MONITORING

Monitoring is planned for the project and is consistent with WLCI protocols (Range Trend or other vegetation monitoring, wildlife monitoring, AUM studies, stream and terrestrial habitat surveys or at minimum, established photo points).	15
Monitoring is planned, but monitoring details have not been fleshed out yet.	7
Monitoring is not planned.	0

OR

MONITORING – Research, Inventory and Monitoring

Methodology is explained in proposal. Process informs management and will be communicated through an adaptive management process.	15
Project is isolated from management, but question is adequately framed.	7
Methodology is not explained and project has little relevance to management questions.	0

REPORTING

Data (monitoring, spatial) will be uploaded in the WLCI Project Database and Project Completion Report (PCR) completed on schedule.	5
Commitment to provide Data and PCR not made.	0

TOTAL _____