

A STRATEGIC VISION for

The CLIMATE CHANGE AND WILDLIFE ALLIANCE - MASSACHUSETTS

WHEREAS, climate change is currently happening and will continue over this century ..., and

WHEREAS, climate change is already affecting ecological resources and will continue to do so ..., and

WHEREAS, it is important that conservation planning and action take into account climate change-induced changes in ecological systems...., and

WHEREAS, climate change is already affecting wildlife and ecosystems and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future even if greenhouse gas emissions are successfully reduced..., and

WHEREAS the scope and rapid pace of the problem will require an unprecedented level of collaboration among scientists, land managers, land owners, planners, and policy makers..., and

Whereas collaboration and thoughtful coordination among all stakeholders is key to influencing and benefitting from state, regional and national activity and policy,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the formation of the Climate Change and Wildlife Alliance – Massachusetts (referred to as Alliance in this Strategic Vision).

Definitions

Please note the following important definitions used in this Strategic Vision:

Adaptation – Initiatives and measures to reduce the vulnerability of natural systems to actual or expected climate change effects.

Climate Change – Climate change refers to an identifiable change in the state of the climate that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. Climate change may be due to natural internal processes or external forcings, or to persistent human-caused changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use.

Wildlife - The Alliance defines wildlife as all non-domesticated plant and animal species and the habitats on which they depend.

Background

In an era of rapid climate change, conservation agencies and planners are asking urgent questions about how we can continue to conserve valued ecosystems and their goods and

services. In New England, planning for adaptation to climate change has already begun. In Massachusetts, a number of NGOs have been working collaboratively with the State's Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and its Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) to identify and develop adaptation tools and approaches. In fact, some projects are already being implemented. This collaborative effort culminated in a conference held on November 15, 2008 at Bentley College, Waltham, titled *Responding to Climate Change: Working Together to Conserve Land, Wildlife and Habitat*. The purpose of this conference was to begin a dialogue among conservation agencies about how we should best move forward in conserving Massachusetts' ecosystems under climate change.

Following the Bentley Conference, approximately half of the 180 attendees participated in a survey designed to elicit opinions about the extent to which respondents believed that climate change was a serious challenge, what our next steps should be, and how we needed to organize ourselves to meet this challenge. The results of this survey were clear in that: (1) conservationists and land-managers are greatly concerned about the possible impacts of climate change on resources; (2) climate change could undermine efforts to conserve ecosystems in the Commonwealth; (3) collaborative efforts among agencies and conservation NGOs are needed to meet the scale and complexity of the threat posed by climate change; (4) Massachusetts can play an important role in advancing climate change adaptation planning, policy and funding regionally and nationally; and, most importantly, (5) constructive guidance and tools based on good science are needed to help conservationists and planners fulfill their missions under a rapidly changing climate. Survey participants stated repeatedly that coordination among organizations and resources was essential for moving forward on climate change adaptation in Massachusetts.

On December 19, 2008, many of the members of the Bentley Conference steering committee (Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, The Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Federation, Mass Audubon, Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, and the DFG/DFW) convened to discuss coordination amongst the groups. It was agreed that the *ad hoc* group that was formed as the conference steering committee should play a role in leading the process of collaboration on climate change adaptation in Massachusetts. It was also agreed that the initial step in this process would be the joint creation of a "strategic vision" – a document that identifies important goals and opportunities for collaboration, based on each organization's strengths and capabilities, and that sketches out a "roadmap" for adapting to climate change.

Mission Statement and Benefits of Alliance

The mission of the Alliance is to promote and facilitate the dissemination of climate-related impacts and adaptation information, to advocate for the development and implementation of science-based adaptation strategies to conserve Massachusetts' ecosystems and the array of services they provide in the face of climate change, and to engage in partnerships, communications and policy venues that enhance attention, planning, policy and funding for wildlife resiliency.

A collaborative approach among agencies and organizations is essential to achieving this overarching goal because:

1. The challenge of climate change is complex and multidisciplinary and calls for a broad array of skills and strengths that are not completely held by any one organization.
2. The Commonwealth's conserved lands, held by many public and private organizations and individuals, and include terrestrial, freshwater and coastal systems. Thus, implementation of adaptation strategies will be facilitated and advanced by collaboration and coordination among organizations.
3. The ability to attract future funding for planning and implementation will be strengthened if we approach funding sources with a common understanding of how our individual work connects to a commonly developed coherent and sensible plan, rather than individually developed projects.
4. Recommended policy changes may be more effective if they come from an alliance of partners, rather than separately from individual organizations.
5. Working together, Massachusetts is positioned to influence regional and national climate change planning and policy

Alliance Members

The entities that have participated thus far in developing the Alliance are:

Environmental League of Massachusetts
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
Massachusetts Audubon Society
Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition
New England Wild Flower Society
The National Wildlife Federation
The Nature Conservancy
The Trustees of Reservations

These are the organizations that have committed to a common approach and are moving forward in this process. Other agencies could make valuable contributions to the work and over time and we will strive to enlarge our overall Alliance to include a wider variety of stakeholders. For example, while the organizations already involved have strong capabilities in terrestrial ecosystems, we lack representation by agencies that have the strongest coastal and marine expertise.

Alliance Structure

In order to address the most compelling issues in a timely and efficient manner, we propose a structure to ensure focus and efficient use of collective resources. Our structure

will be flexible enough to allow and promote innovation and take advantage of each member's core strengths. The following three-tiered structure is intended to achieve this balance.

The first tier will comprise an overall **Executive Committee**, with representation from each of the participating organizations. This committee will determine the focus of the Alliance, identify the full suite of adaptation issues that need to be addressed over time, identify projects to be endorsed, develop responses to funding opportunities when needed, communicate with other regional and national agencies (including the Commonwealth, US Fish and Wildlife Service, national and international NGOs, etc.), interact with similar groups beyond Massachusetts, and promote the implementation of adaptation solutions. The Executive Committee will meet approximately bimonthly.

Coordinating with the Executive Committee will be a number of **Workgroups**. Each of these will be set up to address specific issues that are jointly decided on by the Workgroup and the Executive Committee. Each Workgroup will comprise three or more members with expertise in addressing the charge of the Workgroup. Examples of possible Workgroups are: landscape-scale assessment and planning, site-level adaptation tools and implementation, adaptation policy and communications. Workgroups will be the primary workhorses of the Alliance, generating new ideas, new information, and producing tangible results on the ground. The Executive Committee will support the formation and tasks of the Workgroups, review work plans and provide input.

This Executive Committee and Workgroups will be supported by a **Secretariat**. The purpose of the Secretariat will be to:

1. Provide day-to-day administration of the Alliance.
2. Promote and manage membership of the Alliance.
3. Ensure flow of information among individuals and organizations within the Alliance.
4. Set up and maintain a centralized on-line calendar for Alliance activities.
5. Provide logistical support for the Executive Committee, and Working Groups as needed.
6. Develop and maintain a centralized on-line clearinghouse of Alliance activities, projects, meetings, etc.
7. Facilitate the planning of workshops and/or conferences that will emerge from the Alliance.
8. Provide continuity and coordination for the Alliance.
9. Oversee the Alliance's communications to the broader citizen community, media, and key partners who may not be members of the Alliance.
10. Website development and maintenance?

The Secretariat will be funded through competitive grants in order to provide quality support to the Alliance.

Alliance Membership

The Executive Committee shall extend membership to other organizations or individuals who are willing to assist in that work.

Alliance Evaluation/Continuation

The Executive Committee will evaluate the effectiveness of the Alliance annually. The decision to renew the Alliance will be determined by the Executive Committee on an annual basis. The Secretariat will be selected by the Executive Committee on an annual basis.

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