

Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands Landscape Conservation Cooperative Charter

1. Purpose of this Charter

The Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands (ABSI) Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC or Cooperative) Charter references the authorities that allow for the creation of this LCC, defines the membership and roles of LCC constituent parts, specifies the Charter Review Process, clarifies the governance of the LCC, and outlines its operational guidelines.

2. Establishment Authority

The ABSI LCC is one of 22 LCCs nationwide, formed in response to, and under the authority of, Section 3(c) of Secretarial Order 3289 (September 14, 2009): “Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change on America’s Water, Land, and other Natural and Cultural Resources.” Current guidance at the time this charter was drafted describes LCCs as “...applied conservation science partnerships focused on a defined geographic area that inform on-the-ground strategic conservation efforts at landscape scales.” LCC partners include Department of Interior (DOI) agencies, other federal agencies, states, Native and tribal entities, non-governmental organizations, universities and others.

LCC national guidance states that LCCs shall integrate DOI science and management expertise with that of their cooperating organizations, providing information and best management practices to support strategic climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts on both public and private lands within and outside the United States. National LCC goals include: 1) address terrestrial and aquatic species’ needs as well as multiple ecosystems; 2) be accessible and transparent; 3) facilitate approaches to complex conservation challenges such as climate change; and 4) provide a spatial framework to address activities in the context of higher-level conservation goals (Austen 2011). LCCs shall accomplish these goals by providing coordinated scientific and technical support to meet the goals identified by partner organizations.

Techniques used to achieve LCC goals may include, but are not limited to: pursuit of outside grant monies; leveraging existing funds available from participating entities and outside granting organizations; finding and creating synergistic relationships among various partner entities working in the ABSI region that create operational efficiencies; having LCC Core Staff and staff from participating organizations work directly on tasks; making LCC project funds, as approved by the ABSI LCC Steering Committee (as defined in Section 7), available through grant agreements, cooperative agreements, direct acquisition of services and/or tribal grants; hiring staff to carry out certain LCC-related tasks; and implementing a formal or informal request for project proposals.

LCCs in Alaska are unique among LCCs elsewhere in that the senior executives from the State, Federal and non-federal agencies already convene to discuss climate change issues in the Alaska Climate Change Executive Roundtable (ACCER). ACCER is charged with facilitating coordination among the LCCs that occur within Alaska, DOI’s Climate Science Center for Alaska, the Alaska Sub-Cabinet on Climate Change, and NOAA’s Climate Service for Alaska.

The existence of ACCER provides the opportunity for some statewide oversight of the LCCs primarily through the ACCER Statewide Coordinating Group.

3. Mission Statement

The ABSI LCC promotes coordination, dissemination, and development of applied science to inform conservation of natural and cultural resources in the face of climate change and other landscape-scale stressors.

4. Goals

The goals of the ABSI LCC (not in priority order) include:

- Promote communications to enhance understanding regarding effects of climate change and other landscape-scale stressors in the ABSI region,
- Support coordination and collaboration among partners to improve efficiencies in their common science and information activities,
- Identify and support research, including data collection, analysis, and sharing that address common information needs of land and resource management decision makers,
- Enable synthesis of information at landscape and larger spatial scales,
- Enhance resource management in the ABSI region through applied science, analytical tools, data management, and information transfer.

5. Scope

The geographic scope of the ABSI LCC includes the islands of the Aleutian archipelago and the Bering Sea and surrounding marine waters.

The science focus of the ABSI LCC is the natural and cultural resources and their associated marine and terrestrial ecosystems important to ABSI LCC partner organizations. The ABSI LCC will strive to avoid duplication with other entities, and coordinate on issues of mutual interest.

6. LCC Composition and Staffing

LCCs are composed of the following constituent parts: Steering Committee, LCC Core Staff, working groups or teams, and a Partnership Community, as defined below.

a. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee shall be composed of the designated representatives of State, Federal and Alaska Native entities participating in the ABSI LCC with an emphasis on field-level staff responsible for management and conservation of land and natural resources in the ABSI region as defined under the Scope section above.

State and Federal agencies holding a seat on the ABSI LCC Steering Committee may be represented by up to two members. Steering Committee members may designate an alternate

representative to a Steering Committee meeting, provided the alternate has been given the information, and vested with the authority to speak for, and make decisions on behalf of, the agency being represented. Rotation between standing members and designated alternates may occur on a yearly basis.

Two Steering Committee seats will be available for individuals who can contribute Native Alaskan perspectives to the LCC. Identification of individuals to fill these seats will come through discussions with Tribal and Native entities within the ABSI LCC geographic area. If more than two Tribal or Native entities are interested in serving on the Steering Committee, alternates and a rotation pattern will be developed by the interested participants with the approval of the existing Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee shall have a Chair and a Vice Chair from two different entities. The Chair will serve for one year, and will be succeeded by the Vice Chair. Selection of the initial Chair and Vice Chair shall be made by consensus. Thereafter, selection of the Vice Chair shall be made by consensus. In the event that an individual is unable to serve for the two-year term as Vice Chair and Chair, a replacement will be selected by consensus to complete that individual's term from an appropriate entity.

In addition to voting members, the Steering Committee shall have an "ex-officio" seat available for the Alaska Climate Science Center. The Steering Committee may establish additional "ex officio" seats as necessary for other entities such as, the North Pacific Research Board, and the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

b. LCC Core Staff

Core staff shall be composed of a coordinator and science coordinator. Staffing may evolve in response to the wishes of the Steering Committee, and positions can reside within any organizational entity represented on the Steering Committee.

c. Advisory Groups

These may be composed of individuals from organizational entities with natural or cultural resource conservation and management responsibilities or science capacities in the geographic area or that have skills that can meaningfully inform management decisions within the geographic scope of the ABSI LCC. The Steering Committee may form such groups to provide additional technical expertise and advice to the Steering Committee on management and science needs.

d. Partnership Community

The Partnership Community consists of individual researchers, managers, organizations, agencies, etc. with an interest in conservation of natural and cultural resources within the ABSI region. The Partnership Community may participate in the LCC in a number of ways, including (but not limited to) membership on Advisory Groups, participation at workshops and listening sessions, and submission of proposals to conduct high-priority scientific research. Input from the Partnership Community will also be valuable to ensure that LCC

activities complement existing activities and partnerships, and can increase efficiencies by leveraging funds and facilitating coloration on projects.

7. Roles of LCC Committees, Groups, and Staff

The ABSI LCC Steering Committee, Core Staff, Advisory Groups/panels, and Partnership Community shall fulfill the roles as described below.

a. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee shall represent their agencies' views on issues and represent the science needs, interests, and capabilities of their agency. Because some LCC participating agencies are programmatically diverse, there is the expectation that Steering Committee members will represent all of the programs within their agency. The Steering Committee shall work with the Core Staff to establish broad conservation goals, set priorities, determine ABSI membership, facilitate key activities of the LCC, leverage funding across participating entities to accomplish priority tasks, and provide operational oversight of the LCC.

The Steering Committee shall make a good faith effort to seek consensus in reaching all decisions. Consensus shall be defined as "concurrence without serious objection." While most decisions shall be made during Steering Committee meetings, decisions may also be made via teleconference, web conference, or other forms of electronic communication, provided a quorum is in participation.

b. LCC Core Staff

The Core Staff shall provide support to all constituent parts of the LCC. They shall convene Partnership Community meetings, at intervals to be determined by the Steering Committee, to collaboratively identify conservation goals and identify priority science needs that are essential to fulfilling the conservation goals of the LCC. They shall provide relevant information to the Steering Committee and seek to fulfill information requests made by the Steering Committee and its members. They shall facilitate communication between scientists and resource managers and provide a forum for continuous exchange. The Core Staff shall assemble, translate, and deliver scientific data, analyses, and scientific tools required for conservation and management decisions. Finally, Core Staff shall coordinate with, communicate activities to, and leverage funding with other partnerships and neighboring LCCs.

The LCC Coordinator shall serve as the leader, manager, and supervisor of the ABSI LCC support office. This shall include, but is not limited to: direct supervision of LCC staff hired within the LCC Coordinator's agency; development, administration, and oversight of program budgets and funding; maintenance of administrative and fiscal records; documentation and conveyance of ABSI LCC activities and accomplishments; coordination with LCC member entities and other interested parties. The Coordinator shall assist the Steering Committee in preparing for, and conducting, their meetings. The Coordinator shall assist in development of methods to communicate with, and receive input from, non-member organizational entities. The Coordinator shall seek external funding opportunities and other

available resources that could support ABSI LCC activities and projects. Finally, the Coordinator shall serve as facilitator for Steering Committee meetings.

The LCC Coordinator also serves as a member of the LCC National Network team to represent the interests of the ABSI LCC Steering Committee in the national forum. The Coordinator will share information on potential Network needs or direction with the LCC Steering Committee.

The LCC Science Coordinator shall work with the Steering Committee and others to identify science needs relative to the ABSI LCC. The LCC Science Coordinator shall serve as the leader, manager and coordinator for ABSI LCC scientific issues, activities, and programs. These duties may include, but are not limited to: coordination, review, technical support, and administration of projects implemented largely with ABSI LCC funds; managing and integrating scientific data; facilitating information exchange and feedback among scientists within and outside the ABSI LCC; presenting scientific results and recommendations at regulatory and professional meetings; and conducting public outreach and communications relative to science and technology issues and accomplishments. The Science Coordinator shall serve as the main scientific advisor to the Steering Committee.

The LCC Science Coordinator also represents the ABSI LCC at national LCC meetings on science topics and processes. The Science Coordinator will share information gathered from other LCCs which may be useful to the ABSI LCC and will keep the Steering Committee apprised of national initiatives that affect science within LCCs.

c. Advisory Groups

Advisory groups shall provide recommendations for fulfilling priority science needs and conservation objectives to the Steering Committee and Core Staff. Each group shall have a Chair appointed by consensus of its members. The Chair shall coordinate all phases of the group's work to the Core Staff, and, if requested, have a representative of the group provide the Steering Committee with a written or oral report of activities and products. The Steering Committee may disband or change the composition of Advisory Groups that it deems to be ineffective.

d. Partnership Community

The role of the Partnership Community is to help identify shared science needs, collaborate and leverage opportunities to address shared science needs, and to help the LCC avoid duplication of effort. The LCC will engage with the Partnership Community either through its Core Staff or through Steering Committee members engaged in the partnership and in the LCC.

8. Steering Committee Meetings

The Chair of the Steering Committee shall preside over the Steering Committee meetings. In the event that the Chair is absent, the Vice chair shall preside over the meeting. Steering Committee meetings must have either the Chair or Vice Chair in attendance, or the Chair or Vice chair must

ensure another Steering Committee member is prepared to lead the meeting. Meetings must have a quorum to engage in decision-making, defined as participation by two-thirds or more of the member agencies on the Steering Committee. All agencies with representation on the Steering Committee are expected to ensure participation of their representative(s) or designated alternate(s) to each Steering Committee meeting. Participation in Steering Committee meetings may take place by videoconference or teleconference as necessary.

9. Charter Review Process

Amendments and revisions to this charter will be made by consensus of the ABSI LCC Steering Committee at such times that they deem appropriate. At a minimum, the charter will be reviewed by the Steering Committee every five years.