

Land Conservation Breakout Session

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Participants:

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A. Clarification questions:

1. How do you define “the best example” of Sandhills ecosystems or habitat?
A: NCNHP has its ways (and they are scientific)!
2. How is recreation defined in these strategies?
A: Nature based activities like hunting, fishing, hiking, etc.
3. How does objective 7 (preserving local history) relate to the physiographic features?
4. How do we determine appropriate buffer size?
A: Completely dependent on site specifics, but some rules, like minimum riparian zones and flood plains, can be applied. –Reserve Design will define
5. What are non-biological resources?
A: Drinking water supplies, hunting, fishing, clean air and water, military training, etc.
6. Why is landscape scale management necessary?
A: To avoid fragmentation and facilitate wildlife movement and land management.

B. Initial reaction or feelings for the plan:

1. The bulleted structure doesn't seem to mesh well with the original. Suggest a more “idea based” structure.

2. I like it, with some reservations – needs a few improvements.
3. One of the most well articulated and understandable strategies, for landscape level conservation, I have seen.
4. Well written, but would need clarification for general audience, and needs to include more community based aspects.
5. Provides a base for all partners to work together.
6. Numbered objectives may be perceived as prioritized by a general audience.
7. Needs to involve more of the political realities/process, needs a BIG educational piece.

C. Potential problems, obstacles or difficulties with the plan:

1. This strategy will be perceived as land grabbing, loss of tax revenue, loss of traditional land uses by citizens.
2. Getting into farmland and **historical preservation** (may be true) may dilute the original intent of the partnership.
3. In this format, the strategies don't reflect the need to take advantage of opportunities (i.e. focused on only saving "the best", when restoration opportunities are very important).
4. "Locking up land" is how this will be attacked.
5. The only way to get a seamless network of lands is to include cultural and historical lands. Simply concentrating on ecological preservation only will result in a hodge-podge of parcels.
6. The core partners need to start to rethink strategies, with a mindset of involving additional organizations, stakeholders, and local governments.
7. We need to be flexible with prioritization, because present condition may not matter as much as tract size, proximity, and location, in the long-term.
8. This needs to be really well worded and tailored towards additional partners, before it goes to the public.
9. Need to involve general public more.

10. The plan needs to articulate a plan for establishing public support. Also, we need to be careful and think about compatible uses (i.e. working farms), which are much wider than simply longleaf pine ecosystems.
11. We need to stress the willing landowners aspect, to avoid the perception that these actions are forced on local communities.
12. We need to be more transparent with plans and avoid the perpetual internal dialogue.
13. **Is there an implementation plan that will improve how we actually work to conserve land included along with this, or is this just for public relations?**
14. More emphasis needs to be put on wildlife.

D. What to like about the plan and vision:

1. When we can demonstrate how this plan will benefit local people, both by preserving traditional land uses, and preserving natural resources, then we're on the right track.
2. **Encourage compatible development in appropriate areas** (and there are actually many areas that are appropriate and desirable).
3. **Transparency is the key.**
4. This offers a vision of a sustainable future, one that balances often conflicting forces.
5. This *is* a plan to get to where we want to be, and one that's built on consensus. It "brings us out of the closet"
6. It is good to have a plan that could actually be implemented, similar to how the ESA was implemented with respect to the RCW, resulting in recovery.
7. "A dream come true". We have a plan and this is what we're working for.
8. It is good that the partnership is now on the same page.
9. Very unusual mix of local to federal partners, which has gained national recognition. Good handle on technical tools and the "hottest" technology, all of which should allow us to leverage more resources.
10. NC will be 7th most populated state very soon, and the pockets (of opportunity) will soon be gone. This is a blueprint for much needed protection.

11. A vision of all Sandhills wildlife species in sustainable numbers.
12. A vision of working lands, including conservation lands and recreational areas providing a network of wildlife habitat that is compatible with well planned development.
13. A vision of broader acceptance of conservation as beneficial to the community, that enables us to work at a broader scale.
14. A realistic possibility of halting the decline of, and restoring a viable, sustainable Sandhills landscape, including all species in good numbers, which preserves traditional land uses and encourages compatible development, resulting in increased economic prosperity (?).

E. New strategies to consider:

1. How does this mesh with existing land use plans?
2. Are anthropogenic and cultural resources included in the goal of protecting Sandhills ecosystem (how is ecosystem defined)?
3. Combine objectives 6 & 7, to incorporate communities, institutions, and existing land uses into a single objective, since they are all part of the Sandhills landscape.
4. Write a separate plan, worded for public consumption, to minimize backlash and establish more trust.
5. Use new economic theories to address: 1) the value of healthy natural environments to public health. This can be used by the conservation community to validate actions and counter criticism; 2) how the economy can grow without physical, geographic expansion. This can help us to protect remaining green space, and gives us a response to those who say “if we don’t grow we die”. Articulate the value of Open Space for quality of life, including economic benefit.
6. We have many successes to present to the commissioners, involving the improvement of surrounding land values near conservation areas.
7. We need to partner with existing groups and connect with RMWG’s private landowner council, who can deliver the message.
8. Have NRLI review language.
9. There’s a perception that military is the main driver (and primary funder) of conservation efforts, and we need to move beyond that to a broader regional compact. Need a broader appeal and incentives, including zoning, local funding,

watershed protection as opposed to just land, and other ideas that appeal to the greater public.

10. Incentives are important since development is inevitable and ongoing. Need to define what sustainable development looks like, and provide encouragement to follow consistent guidelines.

11. Document should be coupled with an implementation plan when published.

12. Foster community and residential trust and incorporate it into the plan.

13. The large landowner is almost extinct, and the small minority landowner is who we have to work with, and we need willing participants, and incentives (tax breaks etc.) to bring them in to the program.

14. Add Regional Land Use Advisory Council to 1.2

15. Add funding available from Land for Tomorrow, to preserve lands to 4.1.

16. Add an education objective.

17. Add an objective to provide incentives to encourage compatible urban development. ?????

18. Invoke images of “beauty and attractiveness of the area” when presenting the plan.

F. List of indicators that will show we are making progress

1. RCW population connectivity achieved.
2. Riparian corridors on major waterways are protected.
3. All objectives for one of the focus areas is completed.
4. Public recognizes noticeable improvement in general environmental quality.
5. We still need to develop concrete measures of success.
6. Track county plans, and hold county meetings, to see if new plans incorporate our goals and strategies.
7. Public/private partnerships are actively engaged in implementing the plan. The measure is the percentage of counties and municipalities involved.
8. Outreach and community engagement.

9. Specific # of riparian corridors protected in a specific timeframe (like in existing plans).
10. Perpetually viable populations of native wildlife species.
11. Stable to increasing wildlife populations as documented by wildlife surveys.
12. No additional listing of species.
13. Polls of public attitude toward conservation, successively over time. Every 5 years. Repeat 2000 Kent Study in Hoke County and then expand to other Sandhills locations.
14. Dedicated annual funding exists (state, federal, etc.).
15. Volunteer monitoring.