

# **GREAT NORTHERN LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL CHARTER**

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## **A. NEED**

To maximize conservation effectiveness, federal, state, province, tribal and First Nation, and local governments, NGOs, industry and private landowner partners must work together to develop landscape-level strategies for understanding and responding to climate change impacts, and other landscape stressors in order to inform sustainable resource management.

## **B. PURPOSE AND GOALS**

Landscape conservation cooperatives (LCCs) are applied conservation science partnerships that provide scientific and technical support for conservation and inform sustainable resource management at landscape scales. Landscape Conservation Cooperatives are intended to inform sustainable management of land, water, fish, wildlife, and cultural heritage resources in response to climate change and other landscape-level challenges.

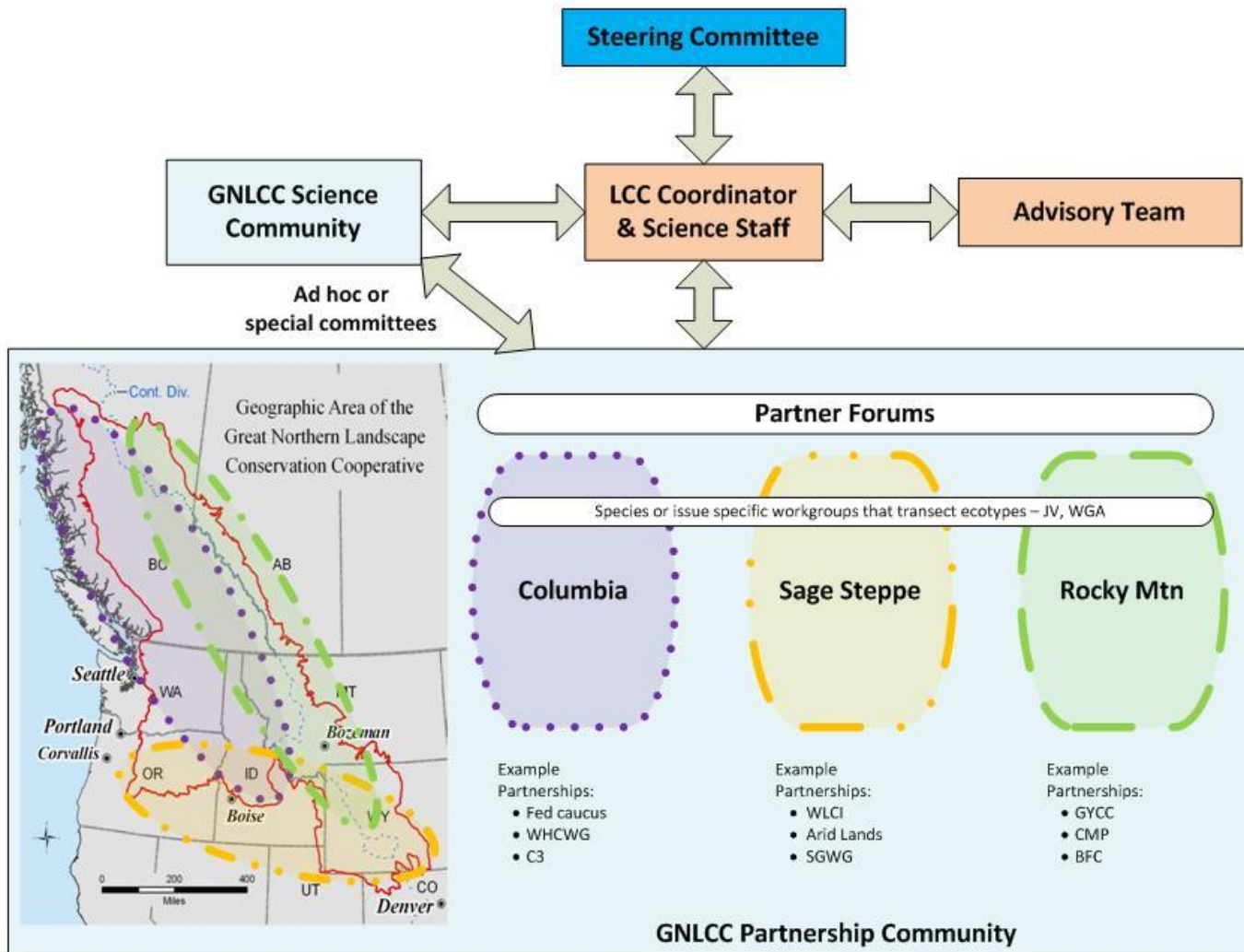
The Great Northern landscape includes a diversity of lands and supports diverse land values including:

- Ecosystems and habitats with native vegetation that supports populations of important fish and wildlife species
- Species important for ecological values as well as socially important hunting and angling values
- Rivers, lakes, riparian, and wetland systems valued for ecological services as well as for water delivery and water quality for human use
- Lands rich in cultural heritage to Native American Tribes and First Nations
- Natural resource and land uses such as human occupation, urbanization, transportation systems, ranching, agriculture, forestry, mining and energy development, and tourism and recreation.
- Working lands supporting a history of western culture.

Partners to the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GNLCC) support land and water conservation for all of these values through a manner conducive to sustainable ecosystem services and resilience to change from landscape stressors.

The Great Northern landscape also transcends international boundaries. Significant portions fall within each of the United States and Canada, subject to differing constitutional systems and requirements under law. As much as 94% of the portion within British Columbia is Crown (public) land that is the responsibility of the Province of British Columbia, as well as claimed as the traditional territory of as many as 100 First Nations. In addition, a portion of the northern Rocky Mountains and eastern foothills is in the Province of Alberta. Reflecting these and other realities, the GNLCC is an alliance of conservation partners with common landscape conservation goals for building ecosystem resilience and informing sustainable resource management within the Great Northern Geographic Area (Figure 1).

# GREAT NORTHERN LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



## FUNCTIONS

### *Steering Committee or Executive Council*

1. Set vision, goals, and priorities for GNLCC
2. Provide direction to the GNLCC Coordinator and staff
3. Approve long-term strategy and operations
4. Approve GNLCC capacity needs
5. Approve funding for annual workplan including priority setting process
6. Provide communication on GNLCC relevant organizational programs and interests

### *GNLCC Coordinator and Staff/ Advisory Team*

1. Promote and communicate long-term vision
2. Develop and write long-term strategy and annual workplans
3. Coordinate science and information needs
4. Develop and implement process for operations
5. Develop annual workplan recommendations
6. Develop and revise long-term strategy
7. Coordinate, communicate, and provide outreach to science and partnership communities

**VISION:** A landscape that sustains its diverse natural systems to support health and connected populations of fish, wildlife, and plants; sustains traditional land uses and cultural history; and supports robust communities.

**MISSION:** Coordinate, facilitate, promote, and add value to large landscape conservation to build resource resilience and inform sustainable resource management in the face of landscape stressors, primarily climate change, and other landscape stressors through the following (as defined below):

- Support Science Development
- Effect Coordination
- Inform conservation action and sustainable resource management
- Monitor and Evaluate
- Communicate and Educate

### **Support Science Development**

Identify and facilitate the development, integration, and application of social and natural scientific information needed to inform conservation actions and sustainable resource management decisions to conserve water, land, fish, wildlife, and cultural heritage.

### **Effect Coordination**

Support coordination and integration of conservation science and actions across ecosystems at the landscape scale, leveraging the capabilities of respective agencies/organizations/ partnerships, and provide real-time situational awareness of on-going conservation efforts.

### **Inform Conservation Action and Sustainable Resource Management**

Provide scientific information and decision support tools informing conservation action and sustainable resource management that conserve water, land, fish, wildlife, and cultural heritage.

### **Monitor and Evaluate**

Support efforts to monitor landscape scale indicators, test scientific assumptions, and evaluate effectiveness of conservation actions and sustainable resource management to inform adaptive management decision making.

### **Communicate and Educate**

Communicate relevant science information and GNLCC activities and opportunities to partners and users. Facilitate collaborative conservation and seek to leverage capabilities and support.

## **C. ORGANIZATION**

The basic organizational structure of the GNLCC comprises an executive-level Steering Committee and an Advisory Team, the latter organized under United States and Canadian (British Columbia) LCC Coordinators. Also included in the basic structure are the Science Community and the Partnership Community which are flexible and responsive in representation (see below). See Figure 1 for a schematic diagram of this organizational structure.

### **1. Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee includes executive-level representation for entities with responsibilities for land and natural resource use and conservation within the Great Northern geographic area: federal, state, and provincial governments, and Tribal and First Nation governments who wish to participate

that work on regionally-scoped landscape conservation. Non-government conservation organizations who share a common vision and mutual goals through closely aligned scope and purpose may also be included. The Steering Committee reserves the privilege of determining membership.

Reflecting the international character of the Great Northern landscape, the Steering Committee will have a United States and a Canadian Co-Chairperson and Co-Vice Chairperson. Together the Co-Chairpersons and Co-Vice Chairpersons will serve as the Executive Committee for the international Great Northern Steering Committee.

The United States co-chair and co-vice chair will rotate every two years; the first two year term begins in 2012 when the GNLCC is considered to be fully operational.

The United States co-vice chair will be considered co-chair-elect. The originating chairperson will be held by the US Fish and Wildlife Service Mountain-Prairie Region and originating vice chairperson will be held by the National Park Service Intermountain Region.

The Canadian originating co-chair will be the Assistant Deputy Minister, Regional Operations, of the British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, reflecting the predominant responsibility of the Province of British Columbia for that portion of Great Northern geographic area that falls within the Province of British Columbia in Canada. The Canadian co-vice chair will be held by the Director, Ecosystem Services, British Columbia Ministry of Environment. These positions will rotate on a two-year basis beginning when the Executive Committee agrees that the Canadian partnership is fully operational.

Decisions will be made through consensus. For purposes of GNLCC business, “consensus” means votes of affirmation or no objection by those present at the time of the vote. For issues directly affecting the programs or prerogatives of one or more governmental entities not present at the time of the vote, votes of affirmation or no objection shall be obtained from each such entity prior to the proposal being placed into effect.

A quorum must be present for a vote to be considered binding. Though each originating or participating Steering Committee organization is allowed to have one vote, a quorum is defined as 60% of the number of organizations on the originating Steering Committee. (A quorum for the GNLCC as of last revision of this document is 13 or 60% of originating SC organizations listed on page 6). The Executive Committee can override rule of quorum based on meeting attendance and other factors. Quorum shall be determined at the start of each meeting and, if attendance has shifted during a meeting, before a vote.

Each participating entity designates one primary and one alternate representative by name, authorized to speak for the entity on GNLCC matters. Steering Committee Membership shall be maintained and recorded in meeting summaries and notes by the GNLCC Coordinators or administrative designees of the GNLCC Coordinators.

The functions of the Steering Committee are to:

1. Set vision, goals and priorities for GNLCC
2. Provide direction to the GNLCC Coordinators and staff
3. Approve Strategic Framework and operational by-laws
4. Approve GNLCC capacity needs

5. Approve funding for annual workplan including priority setting process
6. Provide communication on GNLCC relevant organizational programs and initiatives

### **Steering Committee Originating Members – September 2010**

- 2 Regional Directors, USDO National Park Service
- 2 Regional Directors, USDO Fish and Wildlife Service
- 3 State Directors, USDO Bureau of Land Management
- 2 Regional Executives, USDO Geological Survey
- 2 Regional Foresters, USDA Forest Service
- 1 State Conservationist, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
- 1 Regional Representative, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- 1 State of Idaho Fish and Game Representative
- 1 State of Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks or Department of Natural Resources Representative
- 1 State of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Representative
- 1 State of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Representative
- 1 State of Wyoming Game and Fish Representative
- 1 Province of Alberta Representative
- 1 Province of British Columbia Representative
- 1 Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation Representative
- 1 Confederated Umatilla Tribes
- 1 Heart of the Rockies Initiative Representative
- 1 Intermountain West Joint Venture Representative
- 1 Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Representative
- 1 Columbia Basin Federal Caucus Representative
- 1 Wildlife Conservation Society Representative

Each organization on the above list has one vote, regardless of the number of representatives that attend a meeting. In addition, participating agencies such as Canadian Wildlife Service, Parks Canada, DOI Bureau of Reclamation and Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Environmental Protection Agency who are currently monitoring status of the GNLCC, may also vote. Other Tribal and First Nation Partners have been invited and may wish to be formally represented on the SC.

An organization may request membership on the GNLCC Steering Committee through a written letter to the chair. The organization must demonstrate commitment through meeting the following criteria:

- Capacity for participation through attendance at Steering Committee meetings
- Substantial alignment of scope and purpose of program or organization with GNLCC
- Stated and demonstrated (institutional history) willingness to adhere to GNLCC stated values (page 1) abide by GNLCC Guiding Principles (page 9).

After review of the petition and discussion, a nomination and second must come from a current Steering Committee member. Then a vote will indicate whether the organization is formally added.

### **2. GNLCC Staff**

The GNLCC staff comprises a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Co-Coordinator; a U.S. National Park Service Co-Coordinator; a Canadian Co-Coordinator; a U.S. FWS Science Coordinator and a USGS

Science Coordinator, with the Advisory Team reporting through the LCC Coordinators. Other staff may be identified and added as agreed to by the Steering Committee.

*a. The GNLCC Co-Coordinators* work directly with the Steering Committee Chairs to provide communication to the Steering Committee and receive their direction. The GNLCC Co-Coordinators lead, facilitate, and communicate GNLCC vision and mission among the staff; direct overall operations of the GNLCC; and ensure coordination among GNLCC staff as per operations and direction from the Steering Committee. The Co-Coordinators also oversee development and functioning of Partner Forums.

The British Columbia Co-Coordinator has the specific task of working to engage governmental and non-government agencies and partners in British Columbia and Canada within the GNLCC that work on regionally-scoped landscape conservation including ministries and agencies of the Government of British Columbia as well as Environment Canada and Parks Canada; Government of Alberta; First Nations and local governments as required.

*b. U.S. FWS Science Coordinator:* works under the direction of the Coordinator to provide coordination and synthesis of GNLCC science activities, products and needs. The FWS and USGS Science Coordinators provide assistance to the Coordinator on specific technical and science-related duties and track and translates status and results of relevant science and research activities among the GNLCC staff and users. The Science Coordinator also maintains contact with and supports the needs of the Partner Forums and science partnerships such as the USGS-led Climate Science Centers.

*c. Advisory Team:* The Advisory Team serves as a working team, under the leadership and coordination of the LCC Coordinators. The Advisory Team participation is based on recommendation from the Steering Committee but with explicit approval from the respective parent entity. The Advisory Team develops foundational concepts, drafts governance and operational documents, and provides specific recommendations to the Steering Committee according to their direction on such tasks as the annual workplan, strategic framework and other formative and operative needs. The Advisory Team also serves as a GNLCC “think tank” to develop strategic concepts, analyze issues and other operative needs as identified by the Steering Committee or Partner Forums, and under the leadership of the Coordinator.

The functions of the Advisory Team are to:

1. Promote and communicate long-term vision
2. Develop and write Strategic Framework and annual workplans
3. Coordinate science and information needs
4. Develop and implement process for operations
5. Develop annual workplan recommendations
6. Develop and revise Strategic Framework
7. Coordinate, communicate and provide outreach to Science and Partnership Communities

*d.* Additional staff support and duties and responsibilities will be determined in consultation with the Steering Committee.

### **3. Science Community**

The Science Community is the collective science capacity within the GNLCC including university,

government and non-governmental scientists, researchers and specialized science and technical expertise. The Science Community participates, as permitted through their respective organizations, in various specialized science committees, panels or working groups. The GNLCC staff coordinates with appropriate expertise within the Science Community to develop or provide specific science or information needs such as science theme development and peer review.

#### **4. Partnership Community**

The Partnership Community is the collective conservation partnerships and partners within the GNLCC including landscape, species, habitat or issue specific partnerships, management and organizational representatives and other conservation partners. The Partnership Community is currently organized into 3 separate, but overlapping geographic Partner Forums: Rocky Mountain, Columbia Basin, and Sage-Steppe. If deemed valuable, the Steering Committee can agree to additional Partner Forum foci.

Members of the Partnership Community participate in the most relevant annual Partner Forums for Rocky Mountain, Columbia Basin and Sage-Steppe subunits. Within each Forum, priority science products and information needs will be identified and loosely prioritized through a structured process coordinated by GNLCC Staff. Science products and information needs will be strategically aligned to meet the needs of specific agency, program or partnership outcome-based adaptive management processes. As part of each forum, feedback on and input to the GNLCC process and products will be used to iteratively improve GNLCC effectiveness and coordinated landscape adaptation strategies.

Each geographic Forum will be encouraged to develop operating procedures consistent with this governance framework should the members determine this to be beneficial to their function. If procedures are not established, the GNLCC Coordinator and Staff will facilitate participation and information flow.

#### **5. Ad Hoc or Special Committees**

The steering committee may designate subgroups as needed, composed of science and/or partnership community representation to conduct and/or develop specialized projects (science communication, data integration, ecoregional assessment, etc.). Details of committee designation and development will be described in operating bylaws.

### **D. OPERATIONS**

#### **1. GNLCC Guiding Principles**

The GNLCC organization will observe the following guiding principles:

- a. Work cooperatively and collaboratively to improve effectiveness of each organizations' large scale landscape conservation programs and efforts;
- b. Conduct open and frequent communications within the GNLCC network, between related climate change and landscape programs, and among the expanded climate change and landscape conservation community;
- c. Consider and respect each participating organizations unique mandates and jurisdictions;
- d. Coordinate with other committees, workgroups or organizations that add mutual value, maximize capacity, avoid redundancies, and leverage resources;
- e. Focus on solving scientific, ecological and biological issues to promote scientifically-sound, outcome-based adaptive management;

- f. Respect social, political and legal limitations while promoting solutions to landscape-level stressors (climate and others) that benefit the greater GNLCC conservation community; and
- g. Be transparent in operations and ensure equal and open access.

## **2. GNLCC Strategic Conservation Framework**

The purpose of the GNLCC Strategic Conservation Framework (Strategic Framework) is to provide a long-term operational framework that articulates the rationale, approach, and priorities for achieving the goals of the GNLCC that will inform a more coordinated landscape conservation with regards to landscape drivers over a ten year time frame. From this Strategic Framework, specific objectives and science and information needs and products, as well as costs, will guide Annual Workplan development. This does not imply operational compliance or coordination with respect to each organizations' responsibilities for conservation; rather this should be construed within the context of the stated GNLCC goals.

A draft Strategic Framework was developed based on existing conservation plans and programs within the Great Northern Area and through feedback from the GNLCC participants and partners to determine important thematic categories (e.g. data management, climate information, biological monitoring and evaluation). For each category, a step-down outline will define each piece of information integral to the overall need.

The Strategic Framework describes specific landscape goals and conservation targets; from these, a gap analysis will define specific science and information needs along a timeline and includes estimated costs. There is also a mechanism for revising the Strategic Framework on a regular basis to iteratively refine our science needs, scientific assumptions and basic understanding.

The Strategic Framework and associated gap analysis can be used to project costs and workload for out-year budgeting and strategic implementation to acquire specific science and information needs. Through use of the Strategic Framework, participants in the GNLCC share goals and a common vision for landscape conservation and can work through their existing jurisdictions and programs to implement landscape conservation using coordinated and leveraged information, data, science, tools and decision support.

## **3. GNLCC Partner Forums**

GNLCC Partner Forums will employ a structured process developed through the GNLCC Coordinators, NPS Landscape Coordinator, Staff and Advisory Team to identify common science products and information needs of landscape and species or issue specific partners. The results of these Forums will be incorporated into the GNLCC Strategic Framework through a Science Plan as approved by the Steering Committee. These Forums will occur on some regular multi-year schedule to be determined. This will require GNLCC Staff facilitation of Forums. The value of this is that ground-level conservation partners, partnerships and initiatives can participate directly in identifying specific conservation priorities and science and information needs for the GNLCC.

## **4. GNLCC Annual Workplan Development**

In order for the Strategic Framework to remain applicable and effective: (1) a process for implementation and decision-making must be established, (2) the information gained each year from science products and information must be integrated into the Strategic Framework; and (3) communication and coordination within the GNLCC and among other LCCs must be effective. The process for workplan development is as follows:



### *Annual Workplan Development*

The annual workplan is a compilation of science and information needs that must be developed and procured in the identified year. Funding for these should be considered, planned for, leveraged and sought collectively on an annual and, optimally, over the 10-year time-frame of the Strategic Framework. Annual workplan development should occur at least 9 months in advance of need for action.

Each year, a specific list of science and information needs and products will be identified from the Strategic Framework. These needs will be developed into a work plan by the GNLCC staff for approval by the Steering Committee.

### **Science Products and Information Needs Development and Acquisition**

Science products and information needs can be developed and acquired by either of the following means:

*1. Support for Existing Partnership Products and Information* – If a partnership is supporting the identified project, this process can be used. This process will allow the GNLCC to support and network the work of existing landscape partnerships. This consists of querying existing partnerships for specific projects that meet established criteria for the GNLCC. This process may be more desirable in the early years of the GNLCC as a means to leverage existing efforts.

*2. Request for Proposal* – If the identified project is not currently supported by existing partnerships, the RFP process can be used to procure competitive and effective proposals for a specific science product or information need. The GNLCC may wish to put more emphasis on an RFP process. The RFP process must include:

- a. RFP development with a clearly stated science product or information need from the Annual Workplan
- b. Circulation of the RFP is widespread within and outside the GNLCC
- c. Proposals received are peer-reviewed (using review template and process)
- d. Selection committee should be established at time of RFP development

### *Deliverables*

The following process ensures that funded projects are completed, deliverables produced, and findings are timely, responsive and applicable to the original needs identified. Results will also be used to revise and update the Strategic Framework. This ensures an accountable, iterative mechanism for funding and will ensure use and application of science products and information gained towards the collective GNLCC understanding of landscape conservation as we work together to achieve resource resilience through GNLCC partners respective or joint adaptation strategies.

All GNLCC endorsed projects are expected to include interim reports on a schedule determined during contracting and a final report submitted within 6 months of project completion (unless

otherwise arranged). Deliverables should include:

- Executive Summary
- Project explanation or Study Design
- Methods or Application
- Results and discussion
- Recommendations for use, application or next steps

### *Tracking*

A designee of the GNLCC Staff will be responsible for:

- tracking deliverables
- maintaining a list of late products
- maintaining a library (electronic and 2 hard copies) of products
- maintaining a list of recommendations from each product
- maintaining an annual schedule for work plan development and Strategic Framework revisions.

### *Review*

Draft final reports will be reviewed by the GNLCC Staff and opportunity for feedback provided.

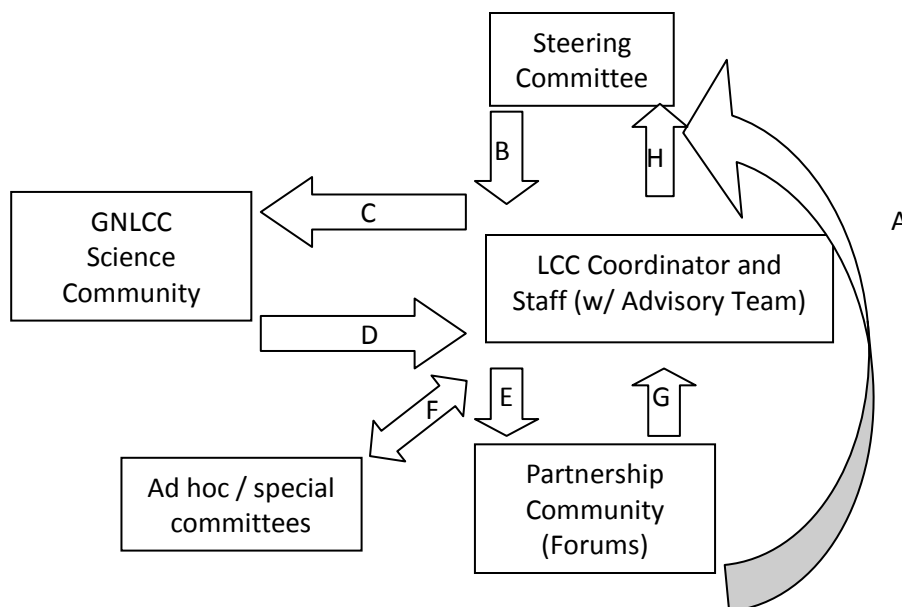
### *Finalization*

The GNLCC Steering Committee will decide by consensus which recommendations they will incorporate into the Strategic Framework.

## **E. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

As an interface between science and policy and program managers, the GNLCC serves as an organizing framework for science, information, coordination and collaboration on landscape conservation and sustainable resource management. This vision suggests a multi-directional flow of information between the five (note that for simplicity, the advisory team is combined with “LCC staff”) organizational entities (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.



A. Program managers organized through Forums of the partnership community identify landscape scale research needs and questions to the Steering Committee. In practice, these would be collected and consolidated by the LCC Coordinator and Staff on behalf of the Committee.

B. The steering committee provides guidance, research needs, selection criteria, and weighting factors to the LCC Coordinator and staff, along with assignments, requests for analysis, and other tasks as needed.

C. The LCC Coordinator and Staff issue requests for proposals to the Science Community based on the SC guidance.

D. The Science Community provides proposals to the LCC Coordinator and Staff, who in turn process and evaluate them in accordance with the Steering Committees guidance and criteria, and provides a recommended list of projects, in priority order (H). The Steering Committee provides the approved list, perhaps edited, back to the LCC Coordinator and Staff (B). The Coordinator and Staff issue the funds and notices to proceed to the Science Community as appropriate (C). The LCC Coordinator and Staff track the issuance of research funding and track progress. Research products are provided by the Science Community to the LCC Coordinator (D).

E. The LCC Coordinator and Staff synthesize research results received from the Science Community (and, perhaps, other sources) and provides this synthesis to program and policy managers in the partnership community for their information and use in carrying out their activities.

F. Ad Hoc teams may be formed, upon approval of the Steering Committee, and assigned tasks as needed by the LCC Coordinator that are not otherwise appropriately assigned to the Science Community. Ad Hoc team members may be drawn from the Steering Committee, Partnership Community, and/or Science Community as appropriate.

G. Partnership Community provides feedback to the LCC Coordinator and Staff regarding research product usefulness and the manner in which LCC research products have been put to use.