

Purpose

The Desert Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) has developed this Communications Plan to help accomplish the goals of the LCC. Communication of information is a critical element of each Desert LCC goal. As a result, this document will identify key audiences, communication resources, communication objectives and messages associated with each LCC goal, and specific tasks to move the LCC towards accomplishing its goals.

Background

The Desert LCC, one of the 22 LCCs created pursuant to Secretarial Order 3289 to address the impacts of climate change on America’s water, land and other natural and cultural resources, is focused on acquiring and sharing information to support the development of landscape level strategies for understanding and responding to climate change impacts and other large scale ecosystem stressors such as land use change, invasive species, wildfire and drought.

The Desert LCC is a bi-national, self-directed, non-regulatory regional partnership formed and directed by resource management entities as well as interested public and private entities in the Mojave, Sonoran, and Chihuahuan Desert regions of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Through collaborative partnerships, the Desert LCC seeks to provide scientific and technical support, coordination, and communication to resource managers and the broader Desert LCC community to address climate change and other landscape-scale ecosystem stressors.

The Desert LCC is governed by a Steering Committee. In 2011, the Steering Committee agreed upon the following Mission and Goals for the LCC.

Mission Statement

Through collaborative partnerships provide scientific and technical support, coordination and communication to resource managers and the broader Desert LCC community to address climate change and other landscape-scale ecosystem stressors.

Desert LCC Goals

1. **Science Development and Delivery.** Identify science needs of LCC partners related to climate change and ecosystem stressors at broad spatial scales, and facilitate the development, integration and application of scientific information (including decision support tools) that will inform resource management decisions.
2. **Collaboration and Communication.** Promote and facilitate collaboration and communication among conservation partnerships and entities to support and add value to their efforts to respond to climate change and other stressors and to integrate scientific information into resource management plans and conservation projects.
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation.** Provide expertise and opportunities to enhance and add value to climate change and other monitoring programs of various partners through such activities as coordinated data collection, data analysis and information management, and data dissemination, when such actions are mutually agreed to by the partners involved.
4. **Outreach and Education.** Provide information and application tools that educate and apprise resource managers and the public about the effects of climate change and ecosystem stressors.

The Steering Committee also approved strategic actions to reach each of these goals as described in the Desert LCC 2011 Operations Plan with tasks described in the 2012 Annual Work Plan. Specific to communications, these strategic actions include:

Goal 2: Collaboration and Communication

Strategic Action 7: The Desert LCC will collaborate and provide a forum for communication among partners and existing partnerships.

- i. Conduct outreach to both existing and potential LCC partners.
- ii. Build upon existing LCC partnerships.

Goal 4: Outreach and Education

Strategic Action 9: Develop a suite of communication tools to educate resource managers and the public about the effects of climate change and adaptation strategies.

- i. Develop a website
- ii. Provide updates on LCC and partner activities

These actions are incorporated into this Communications Plan as communication objectives and tasks. See Appendix A for complete action plan, prioritized deliverables, targeted audiences, and responsible entity.

General Strategy

- Provide core messages for members of the Desert LCC to communicate clearly and consistently to target audiences
- Identify shared outreach priorities for the Desert LCC
- Expand access to information – includes development of web-based platforms to share information with partners and with the larger general public
- Engage partners by creating forums and channels for information sharing and idea exchange
- Illustrate the value-added contribution of the Desert LCC by telling stories using specific examples on projects, people, and places
- Ensure that communication is culturally appropriate and inclusive
- Establish a mechanism to assess the effectiveness of messages and information in reaching different audiences.

Desert LCC Communication Objectives, Tasks, and Key Messages

Upon successful execution of this communications strategy, target audiences will:

- Understand how the Desert LCC enhances and builds upon existing conservation efforts without duplicating them (understand the unique nature and value added of the LCC)
- Understand the role of the Desert LCC and its relationships to Climate Science Centers (CSC) and other science services available to public and private land managers
- Have access to a centralized (web-based) source of LCC network data and information, progress and challenges
- Support and engage in the Desert LCC as partners and demonstrate sustained commitment (through active participation, shared resources, etc.)
- Use Desert LCC products for resource management on the ground
- Recognize and use Desert LCC as forums for two-way information exchange and dialog on landscape-scale resource issues and concerns

- Have access to culturally appropriate and locally specific ways to participate in the Desert LCC process

Goal 1: Science Development and Delivery

Objective: Deliver science information related to priority science needs identified by Desert LCC partners.

Communication Goals:

- Improve the exchange of knowledge and dissemination of science-based information, tools, and products to advance collaborative landscape conservation.
- Increase opportunities to leverage funding and align existing programs and initiatives to enhance collaborative landscape conservation.

Primary Audiences:

Steering Committee and Working Group members, partners, resource managers, scientists, political decision makers, National LCC Network, and international and tribal partners

Tasks:

1. Support existing funding and seek new funds for science development and delivery.
 - a. Identify existing funding sources.
 - b. Promote funding opportunities available from partners.
 - c. Create, deliver, and update communications products that demonstrate how funds are used.
2. Build on existing partnerships.
 - a. Develop success stories and opportunities about how partners are addressing issues facing the Desert LCC, including how partners are collaborating and using applied science products developed through the Desert LCC.
 - b. Communicate Desert LCC science needs to Southwest Climate Science Center and South Central Climate Science Center.
3. Promote and release final applied science reports and/or products targeted to specific audiences.
 - a. Develop news releases that identify available data developed and shared with the Desert LCC.
 - b. Create fact sheets for every project that is funded by the Desert LCC.
 - c. Once there are initial developments in projects, tell the story using multi-media products like webinars, video and podcasts.
4. Evaluate effectiveness of science delivery.
 - a. After products are developed, conduct surveys with managers to evaluate effectiveness of science products.
 - b. Use information to create more effective products and inform funding opportunities.

Key Messages

- The Desert LCC leverages existing conservation efforts by coordinating and identifying existing science based planning and conservation products and disseminating that information to partners.
- The Desert LCC provides capacity for partners in delivering science needs.

Goal 2: Collaboration and Communication

Objective: The Desert LCC will collaborate and provide a forum for communication among partners and existing partnerships.

Communication Goals:

- Build and foster engagement in the Desert LCC by increasing awareness and understanding of the role and value to collaborative landscape conservation
- Build and foster engagement with Mexico and Tribes in collaborative landscape conservation.

Primary Audiences:

Steering Committee and Working Group members, partners, resource managers, scientists, and international and tribal partners

Tasks:

1. Create a Desert LCC brand.
 - a. Develop a Desert LCC logo consistent with the LCC's mission and vision
 - b. Take a group photo of the Steering Committee, Science Working Group, and other partner groups as appropriate.
2. Develop effective communication products to enhance communications among partners and partnerships.
 - a. Create, develop, and update materials that can be customized by any organization to convey key information about the LCC.
 - b. Develop stories on the work that the different partners bring to the Desert LCC.
 - c. Create and distribute newsletters about DLCC activities.
 - d. Create a Desert LCC blog to publish stories, facts, new publications, etc. This will be a place to stream up-to-date information from all organizations as well.
3. Conduct outreach to both existing and potential LCC partners.
 - a. Identify opportunities and meetings that a representative of the Desert LCC can attend to discuss the work of the LCC.
 - b. Create a list of key communications contacts designated by the Steering Committee.

Key Messages

- The Desert LCC provides a coordinated approach to prioritize needs, improve capacity, create synergies, and to avoid duplication or competition between units with a shared interest in conservation.
- The broad based makeup of the Steering Committee, Science Working Group, and our partners provides for informed management actions across a broad landscape.

Goal 3: Monitoring and Evaluation

Objective: Raise awareness of monitoring and evaluation priorities associated with Desert LCC partners.

Communication Goals:

- Improve the exchange of knowledge and dissemination of science-based information, tools, and products to advance collaborative landscape conservation.

- Increase opportunities to leverage funding and align existing programs and initiatives to enhance collaborative landscape conservation.

Primary Audiences:

Steering Committee and Working Group members, partners, resource managers, scientists, political decision makers, National LCC Network, and international and tribal partners

Tasks:

1. Promote Desert LCC products as defined in the Annual Work Plan.
 - a. Develop stories on the monitoring and evaluation programs and techniques that the different partners bring to the Desert LCC.
 - b. Create specific materials for audiences as needed. This could include hosting webinars on activities of the Desert LCC and inviting audiences to participate, developing a fact sheet that describes monitoring and evaluation programs, or developing a report that synthesizes information from monitoring and evaluation data.

Key Messages

- The Desert LCC helps inform partners of existing programs for monitoring and evaluation and effectiveness of conservation actions for adaptive management decision making.

Goal 4: Outreach and Education

Objective: Develop a suite of communication tools to educate resource managers and the public about the effects of climate change and adaptation strategies.

Communication Goals:

- Improve the exchange of knowledge and dissemination of science-based information, tools, and products to advance collaborative landscape conservation.
- Build and foster engagement in the Desert LCC by increasing awareness and understanding of the role and value to collaborative landscape conservation
- Build and foster engagement with Mexico and Tribes in collaborative landscape conservation.

Primary Audiences:

Partners and external audiences

Tasks:

1. Finalize a communications plan and outreach strategy for 2013.
 - a. Work with Administrative Working Group to finalize plan and bring to Steering Committee for approval.
 - b. Pull together a list of projects, tools, etc. from organizations to be featured on the Webpage.
2. Develop a way for partners and partnerships to post and share information online.
 - a. Initiate and support SharePoint pilot project in the Desert LCC to share documents, posting and retrieving information, and manage working groups.
 - b. Design website to include opportunities for partners to post information about upcoming events, activities, and products.
 - c. Look into the creation of Twitter and Facebook presence.

3. Develop a dynamic Desert LCC Web presence. This site will be hosted on Reclamation's server but will contain a design separate from Reclamation's design.
 - a. Provide for a bi-lingual website.
 - b. Design website to include social network features to attract new partners.
 - c. Design website to include links to potential funding sources and promote funding opportunities available from partners.
 - d. Assess the applicability of a content management system (CMS) Website and possible social networking integration instead of a traditional website for the Desert LCC.
4. Develop and/or promote communication tools about climate change and adaptation strategies for general public education that support the needs of resource managers.
 - a. Develop an informational brochure on climate change effects in the Desert LCC for the general public.
 - b. Develop an informational brochure on adaptation strategies in the Desert LCC for the general public.
5. Evaluate effectiveness of communications plan.
 - a. Conduct a yearly survey to evaluate partners' attitudes toward the Desert LCC and outreach efforts.
 - b. Use Web analytics tools to track Website use by partners and the public.

Key Messages

- The LCC creates an environment where everyone comes to the partnership with different tools in their belt, creating opportunities to leverage available resources and learn about new ones.

Key Audiences

Communications efforts will target several broad and targeted audiences (including international partners) in an effort to meet the Desert LCC's Communications Goals. These audiences have been identified by the Desert LCC Steering Committee.

Broad Audiences

- LCC Partners and Key Stakeholders (P): Includes, but is not limited to, the Desert LCC Steering Committee and Working Group members, employees of Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies; university partners; and non-governmental organizations.
- General Media (G): Includes, but is not limited to, national news media, local news media, and local communities.

Targeted Audiences

- Natural and Cultural Resource Managers (M): Success of the LCC is dependent on our ability to engage and reach out to natural and cultural resource managers. Engaging managers through conferences, workshops, meetings, existing partnerships such as Western Regional Partnership, Desert Managers Group, Western Governors Association, Southern Nevada Agency Partnership, Joint Ventures and Desert Fish Habitat Partnership, and through their organizational affiliations will be vital to the success of the Desert LCC in identifying management needs and objectives and ensuring are meeting those needs.
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NG): Engaging non-governmental organizations, including those associated with local governments, industry, and conservation, through conferences,

workshops, meetings, and existing partnerships is also vital to the success of the LCC in leveraging resources and identifying management needs and objectives.

- Scientists (S): Engaging scientists to create a network of researchers with identified areas of expertise will help foster the success of the Desert LCC. Engaging scientists through conferences, universities, DOI Climate Science Centers, Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units, Cooperative Ecosystems Study Units and through their organizational affiliations will be vital to the success of the Desert LCC science initiatives.
- Political Decision Makers (D): The political decision-making audience is critical for continued support and the sustainability of LCCs. This audience needs to be assured that the Desert LCC is important to the future of conservation in the region. Outreach should take place through the National LCC Network to demonstrate our successes.
- National LCC Network (N): The National LCC Network needs to be aware of the accomplishments of and issues within the Desert LCC to ensure the sustainability of the Desert LCC within a national seamless network. Outreach to the National Network should begin with bi-monthly reports.
- Tribes (T): Tribes are integral partners within the Desert LCC and it is important that the LCC conducts specific outreach to Tribal partners.

Resources

Reclamation is committed to providing communications support to the Desert LCC through its Public Affairs Office. In addition, a partner communications team (Appendix B), identified by the Steering Committee, will assist with communications support by creating and disseminating materials and conducting outreach, as coordinated through the Desert LCC Coordinator and Science Coordinator. Existing communication channels will be used to disseminate information coming out of the Desert LCC.

Appendix A – Communications Action Plan and Deliverables					
Item	Description	Target Audience	Responsible Entity	Priority	Completion Date
Goal 1	Science Development and Delivery				
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Deliver science information related to priority science needs identified by Desert LCC partners.</i>				
Task 1	Support existing funding and seek new funds for science development and delivery.	P, M, NG, T		Low	
Action	a) Identify existing funding sources.		Admin WG	Low	
Action	b) Promote funding opportunities available from partners.		DLCC Coordinators	Low	
Action	c) Create, deliver, and update communications products that demonstrate how funds are used.		Comm. team	Low	
Task 2	Build on existing partnerships.	All		Med	
Action	a) Develop success stories and opportunities about how partners are addressing issues facing the Desert LCC, including how partners are collaborating and using applied science products developed through the Desert LCC.		Science WG	Med	
Action	b) Communicate Desert LCC science needs to Southwest Climate Science Center and South Central Climate Science Center.		DLCC Coordinators	Med	
Task 3	Promote and release final applied science reports and/or products targeted to specific audiences.	All		Med	
Action	a) Develop news releases that identify available data developed and shared with the Desert LCC.		Reclamation PAO	Med	
Action	b) Create fact sheets for projects funded by the Desert LCC.		Science WG	Med	
Action	c) Once there are initial developments in projects, tell the story using multi-media products like webinars, video and podcasts.		Comm. team	Med	
Task 4	Evaluate effectiveness of methods of science communications.	M		Low	
Action	a) Determine a process for evaluating effectiveness.		Comm. team	Low	
Action	b) Implement process to evaluate effectiveness of science products.		Comm. team	Low	
Action	c) Use information to create more effective products and inform funding opportunities.		DLCC Coordinators	Low	

Appendix A – Communications Action Plan and Deliverables					
Item	Description	Target Audience	Responsible Entity	Priority	Completion Date
Goal 2	Collaboration and Communication				
<i>Objective</i>	<i>The Desert LCC will collaborate and provide a forum for communication among partners and existing partnerships.</i>				
Task 5	Create a Desert LCC brand.	All		High	
Action	a) Develop a Desert LCC logo consistent with the LCC's mission and vision		Admin WG	High	
Action	b) Take a group photo of the Steering Committee, Science Working Group, and other partner groups as appropriate.		DLCC Coordinators	High	
Task 6	Develop effective communication products to enhance communications among partners and partnerships.	P		High	
Action	a) Create, develop, and update materials that can be customized by any organization to convey key information about the LCC.		DLCC Coordinators w/ Comm. team	High	
Action	b) Develop stories on the work that the different partners bring to the Desert LCC.		Comm. Team	High	
Action	c) Create and distribute newsletters about DLCC activities.		Reclamation PAO	High	
Action	d) Explore and evaluate benefits of social media to drive traffic to DLCC website and increase engagement.		Reclamation PAO	High	
Action	e) If needed, develop a social media strategy to compliment ongoing communication efforts.		Comm. Team	High	
Task 7	Conduct outreach to both existing and potential LCC partners.	All		Low	
Action	a) Identify opportunities and meetings that a representative of the Desert LCC can attend to discuss the work of the LCC.		Admin WG Science WG	Low	
Action	b) Create a list of key communications contacts designated by the Steering Committee.		DLCC Coordinator	Low	

Appendix A – Communications Action Plan and Deliverables					
Item	Description	Target Audience	Responsible Entity	Priority	Completion Date
Goal 3	Monitoring and Evaluation				
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Raise awareness of monitoring and evaluation priorities associated with Desert LCC partners.</i>				
Task 8	Promote Desert LCC products as defined in the Annual Work Plan.	M, P, NG, T		Low	
Action	a) Develop stories on key developments in the landscape (e.g., places where changes or accomplishments are occurring) to promote awareness of issues/successes that may prompt science needs or conservation actions.		Science WG Comm. Team	Low	
Action	b) Create specific materials for audiences as needed. This could include hosting webinars on activities of the Desert LCC and inviting audiences to participate, developing a fact sheet that describes monitoring and evaluation programs, or developing a report that synthesizes information from monitoring and evaluation data.		All	Low	

Appendix A – Communications Action Plan and Deliverables					
Item	Description	Target Audience	Responsible Entity	Priority	Completion Date
Goal 4	Outreach and Education				
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Develop a suite of communication tools to educate resource managers and the public about the effects of climate change and adaptation strategies.</i>				
Task 9	Finalize a communications plan and outreach strategy for 2013.	P		Med	
Action	a) Work with Administrative Working Group to finalize plan and bring to Steering Committee for approval.		Admin WG	Med	
Action	b) Pull together a list of projects, tools, etc. from organizations to be featured on the Webpage.		Admin WG Science WG	Med	
Task 10	Develop a way for partners and partnerships to post and share information online.	All		Low	
Action	a) Initiate and support SharePoint pilot project in the Desert LCC to share documents, posting and retrieving information, and manage working groups.		Desert Managers Group	Low	

Action	b) Design website to include opportunities for partners to post information about upcoming events, activities, and products.		Reclamation PAO	Low	
Action	c) Look into the creation of Twitter and Facebook presence.		Reclamation PAO	Low	
Task 11	Develop a dynamic Desert LCC Web presence. This site will be hosted on Reclamation's server but will contain a design separate from Reclamation's design.	All		Low	
Action	a) Provide for a bi-lingual website.		Mexico WG	Low	
Action	b) Design website to include social network features to attract new partners.		Reclamation PAO	Low	
Action	c) Design website to include links to potential funding sources and promote funding opportunities available from partners.		Reclamation PAO	Low	
Action	d) Assess the applicability of a content management system (CMS) Website and possible social networking integration instead of a traditional website for the Desert LCC.		Reclamation PAO	Low	
Task 12	Develop and/or promote communication tools about climate change and adaptation strategies for general public education that support the needs of resource managers.	All		Med	
Action	a) Develop an informational brochure on climate change effects in the Desert LCC for the general public.		Science WG Comm. Team	Med	
Action	b) Develop an informational brochure on adaptation strategies in the Desert LCC for the general public.		Science WG Comm. Team	Med	
Task 13	Evaluate effectiveness of communications plan.	P		Low	
Action	a) Conduct a yearly survey to evaluate partners' attitudes toward the Desert LCC and outreach efforts.		Comm. team	Low	
Action	b) Use Web analytics tools to track Website use by partners and the public.		Reclamation PAO	Low	

Target Audience Key:

(D) – Political Decision Makers

(G) – General Media

(M) – Natural of Cultural Resource Managers

(N) – National LCC Network

(NG) – Non-Governmental Organizations

(P) – LCC Partners and Key Stakeholders

(S) – Scientists

(T) – Tribes

Appendix B: Desert LCC Communications Contacts

Name	Email	Phone Number	Organization	Representative Steering Committee Member
Peter Soeth	psoeth@usbr.gov	303-445-3615	Bureau of Reclamation	Terry Fulp