

Developing a Regional Biodiversity Plan Using NatureServe's Vista Program

June 8-9, 2006 Workshop
Cleveland Metroparks' CanalWay Center

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Executive Summary

On June 8-9, 2006, the Lake Erie Allegheny Partnership for Biodiversity (formerly known as the Regional Biodiversity Partnership) held a two-day workshop focused on the development of a regional biodiversity plan for the Lake Erie Allegheny region of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. (The official title of the plan is the “Lake Erie Allegheny Biodiversity Plan,” but for practical purposes it may also be referred to as the “Regional Biodiversity Plan” in this document.) Forty-five participants, representing twenty-nine different organizations and agencies attended the workshop.

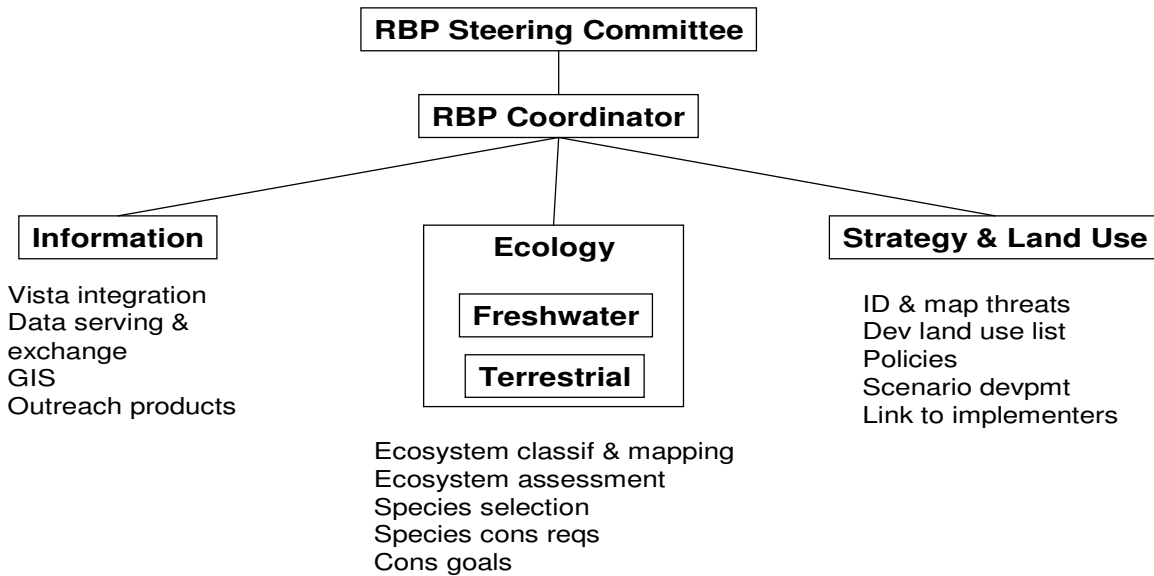
The objective of the workshop was to begin the process of developing a work plan that will outline the key activities, roles and responsibilities, schedule, and budget needed to develop a regional biodiversity plan for the Lake Erie Allegheny region. The work plan, which will be completed by NatureServe in conjunction with the Regional Biodiversity Plan Steering Committee, will be completed by mid-August.

Throughout the course of the workshop, participants agreed that the regional biodiversity plan should:

- Provide a regional vision and strategy for conservation and restoration.
- Utilize a science-based planning methodology to identify and prioritize conservation and restoration objectives, with a focus on the preservation of ecosystem function and resilience at a larger scale but also including key species for this region.
- Include scientific information on ecologically important systems in the region and the number of habitat types (pre-settlement vs. now).
- Set conservation goals for each habitat type.
- Provide a blueprint for conservation action to be carried out by different organizations based on their individual objectives and capacities.
- Employ a decision support tool to help pool community resources and encourage cooperation, coordination, and collaboration toward conservation of biodiversity at regional and local scales.
- Provide a public communication tool about our natural heritage.

Two planning tools were reviewed and their applicability to the development of a regional biodiversity plan was discussed. NatureServe Vista, a decision support tool for conservation planning, will be utilized to develop the Regional Biodiversity Plan. This plan, which will be focused on biodiversity, will be incorporated into the Trust for Public Land’s Greenprint program, a web-based tool currently under development that will be used to guide growth management efforts in park equity, regional trail connectivity, water quality protection, and wildlife protection.

During the course of the workshop, attendees devised a project structure that would be implemented in order to carry out the creation of the Regional Biodiversity Plan using NatureServe Vista. That structure is depicted below. The responsibilities for each sub-team, the skills needed within each team, the number of team members, the names of potential team members, and possible sources of information were also identified through the course of the workshop.



At the end of the workshop, a number of next steps were identified, including:

- Distribute notes/minutes from workshop
- Determine what other organizations/agencies should be involved
- Evaluate make-up of Plan Steering Committee and revise as necessary
- Determine how to communicate with the conservation community
- Write job description for Regional Biodiversity Plan Coordinator and Vista ‘Guru’ (review job descriptions provided on Conservation Online -Ecoregional Planning Toolbox)
- Develop initial team charters, member lists, and leads
- Print publication of report and overview of the ecosystems of the region - completed by mid-September, 2006
- Request extension of current NFWF grant
- Develop/submit new grant proposals for plan development (Aug-Sept., 2006)

Attendees

Out of 133 people invited, there were 45 participants, representing 29 different organizations/agencies (see attached list of invitees and participants).

Presentation Materials

A copy of the meeting agenda, meeting notes, as well as all presentation materials has been made available on the Regional Biodiversity Partnership's Listserv at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/biodiversitypartnership/>.

Day 1: June 8, 2006, 1:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Welcome

Patty Stevens opened the meeting and provided some background on why we were having this workshop; discussed the goals of the workshop; and reviewed the agenda.

Introduction to NatureServe and Work Plan Development

Cindy McKinney (NatureServe) provided an introduction to NatureServe; discussed intended outcomes for the work plan; and the overall process for work plan development.

NatureServe is a non-profit conservation organization that focuses on providing the scientific information and tools needed to promote effective conservation action. NatureServe works at all levels of the “information value chain”. They collect and manage detailed local information on plants, animals, and ecosystems, and also provide information products, data management tools, and conservation services to help meet local, national, and global conservation needs. Much of their work is carried out by a network of member programs. This network spans all 50 states as well as 10 Canadian provinces and 12 Latin American countries. Most of these programs, often referred to as Natural Heritage programs, are within state/ provincial agencies and universities. Some are affiliated with The Nature Conservancy. Together, the network includes some 800 dedicated scientists and a collective annual budget of more than \$45 million. These independent centers collect and manage data on at-risk species and ecosystems and the threats to them. They are considered to be the authoritative source for information about rare species in the Western Hemisphere.

NatureServe was invited to help the Regional Biodiversity Partnership develop a work plan that will outline a process for the creation of a regional biodiversity plan for the Lake Erie Allegheny region. This workshop was designed to facilitate the development of this work plan by facilitating the collection of information on:

- the Partnership's desired outcomes,
- the various capabilities that the Partnership will bring to the planning process, and
- data availability.

Using this information, NatureServe will develop a work plan that will outline the key activities, roles and responsibilities, schedule, and budget needed to develop a regional biodiversity plan for the Lake Erie Allegheny region.

The development of the work plan will occur in four stages:

- Information gathering workshop: June 8-9, 2006
- Work Plan development: June, 2006
- 1st Draft Work Plan Delivery: July, 2006
- Final Version Work Plan: Mid-August, 2006

Goals and Desired Outcomes

Memory Refresher from April 2005 Workshop

Kay Carlson provided a “memory refresher” of the consensus goals and objectives for the plan that was developed during a facilitated workshop in April 2005.

At that workshop, it was agreed that the plan will focus on areas of significant biodiversity and restoration potential. Recreational, cultural, or farmland values will only be considered where they overlap with protecting biodiversity.

A number of goals were also identified. These goals are detailed in the PowerPoint presentation located at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/biodiversitypartnership/>, and are also summarized here. Participants agreed that the regional biodiversity plan should:

- Provide a regional vision and strategy for conservation and restoration.
- Utilize a science-based planning methodology to identify and prioritize conservation and restoration objectives.
- Include scientific information on ecologically important systems in the region and the number of habitat types (pre-settlement vs. now).
- Set conservation goals for each habitat type.
- Provide a blueprint for conservation action to be carried out by different organizations based on their individual objectives and capacities.
- Employ a decision support tool to help pool community resources and encourage cooperation, coordination, and collaboration toward conservation of biodiversity at regional and local scales.
- Provide a public communication tool about our natural heritage.

It was also agreed that the regional biodiversity partnership should look at other regional conservation planning models, such as Chicago Wilderness or other models reviewed in the Chadbourne survey (located at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/biodiversitypartnership/>).

Survey of Regional Conservation Plans

David Beach reviewed the results of a survey of other existing regional conservation plans conducted by Joe and Mary Chadbourne (2005). Twelve plans were studied and a number of themes emerged from those plans. David synthesized these themes into seven general conclusions about the direction we want to take for the Regional Biodiversity Plan.

- Conservation Targets: Focus on the preservation of ecosystem function and resilience at a larger scale but also include key species for this region (globally rare down to locally important); Take an element-driven approach addressing species (globally rare) and ecosystem function.
- Focus: Utilize a science based focus of biodiversity, with an emphasis on protecting the “best of what’s left” and evaluating restoration potential.

- Strategic Detail: Develop a consensus about priorities to be implemented by many organizations using different strategies.
- Integration into Other Planning: To the extent possible or feasible, the plan should integrate relevant aspects of the region's other plans for land use and development, however it should retain its conservation focus (allowing it to serve as an input into other types of planning). There was a desire expressed for the biodiversity plan to be integrated into more local plans as the opportunity arises.
- Presentation of Alternatives: The plan should foremost be a presentation of best professional judgment about what needs to be done to protect sufficient levels of biodiversity, but it could also present various scenarios about the pros and cons of different levels of protection, mostly for outreach purposes.
- Educational Objectives: The plan's primary purpose will be to guide conservation, not necessarily to educate the public, but hopefully individual organizations could use it for public outreach and education.
- Cost: Cost for the development of the plan is expected to be in the range of several hundred thousand dollars.

There was general consensus by participants on the overall direction for the plan.

NatureServe's Conservation Planning Methodology

Pat Comer (NatureServe) gave a presentation about NatureServe's Conservation Planning Methodology. A complete copy of this presentation is available at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/biodiversitypartnership/>. In summary, NatureServe's Conservation Planning Methodology (as embodied in the NatureServe Vista conservation planning software) will allow us to clarify what it is we care about and to determine how we will measure our progress towards ecological sustainability.

- Vista can be used at multiple scales (listed from largest to smallest):
 - Range-wide population recovery and habitat restoration: We should take advantage of this information and use relevant information in our plan.
 - Regional land/water use prioritization: We should evaluate this information and use relevant information for our plan.
 - Sub-regional land use planning: We should focus on this level of effort for our plan.
 - Local land use planning: Our plan should support local land use planning efforts.
- Vista provides an element-driven analysis that incorporates six basic steps:
 - What do we hope to conserve (what are the *conservation elements* to be conserved)?
 - Where is it located?
 - What is its reference/baseline condition? (i.e., what condition should it be in?)
 - What is its current condition?
 - What is the desired future condition? (i.e., what are reasonable expectations over a given timeframe?)
 - What land/water uses are compatible or in conflict with its long-term survival?
 - Where could these conditions be met; where are they in conflict?
- Vista uses a "course filter/fine filter" approach to selecting elements:

- Coarse filter = elements that are representative of all characteristics of native ecosystems in a certain area.
- Fine filter = rare/vulnerable community types or species in a certain area.
- There are approximately 400 species in this region that fall into the category of Species of Concern (G3). We need to consistently derive information from many sources.
- Reference conditions are documented by evaluating:
 - Rangelwide distribution: What proportion of the natural range of this species occurred here?
 - Natural variability: What was the historical extent of different forest and wetland types across this region?
 - Ecological processes: What is the expected flow regime for this river type? How large a forest patch is required to support forest-interior birds? What fire regime is appropriate for this dry forest type?
- Current conditions are documented by evaluating:
 - Rangelwide status: How many viable populations remain?
 - Gap analysis: How much of each forest and wetland type is protected?
 - Assessing ecological condition: Is the flow regime as expected for this river type? Are forest blocks of sufficient size? Is fire regime as expected for this dry forest type?
- Desired conditions (conservation goals) are set by evaluating:
 - Rangelwide viability: How many populations are needed to ensure long-term persistence of the species?
 - Representing viability: How should protected habitat be distributed to conserve genetic diversity and maintain ecosystem function?
 - Guiding management action: How should resources be allocated to habitat restoration and management

Workshop attendees agreed that the plan should focus on a sub-regional analysis. They also expressed an interest in later integrating non-biological elements.

NatureServe Vista Demonstration

Patrick Crist (NatureServe) gave a demonstration of NatureServe Vista and its capabilities. A copy of the presentation is available at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/biodiversitypartnership/>. For more information, you can also access the NatureServe Vista website at: <http://www.natureserve.org/prodServices/vista/overview.jsp>.

The Trust for Public Land's GreenPrint Project

Tom Dudley (consultant for TPL) provided a brief overview of The Trust for Public Land's GreenPrint project for northeast Ohio. This project will develop a web-based computer modeling program to analyze existing data and help communities make informed decisions about land conservation. The GreenPrint project for northeast Ohio (20 counties) will combine layers of spatial information to guide growth management efforts in park equity, regional trail connectivity, water quality protection, and wildlife protection.

On the surface, NatureServe's Vista program and TPL's GreenPrint program seem very similar; however, the Vista program is focused mainly on biodiversity, whereas the GreenPrint program incorporates more factors relating to recreation, historic values, economic values, etc. The GreenPrint program relies on local communities to assign relative weighting to factors that are important to them; whereas the Vista program relies on scientific data for various conservation elements. NatureServe and TPL's staff have already begun working together to determine how information developed and contained within the Regional Biodiversity Plan can be included in the GreenPrint plan (and vice-versa). While the Regional Biodiversity Plan may remain a separate, independent document, it can also provide an in-depth scientific component to the GreenPrint plan.

(More on TPL's GreenPrinting services can be found at:

http://www.tpl.org/tier3_print.cfm?folder_id=3130&content_item_id=20150&mod_type=1.)

Detailed Review of NatureServe Vista's Conservation Planning Framework

Pat Comer then went into a detailed review of the NatureServe Vista Conservation Planning Framework. The complete framework is available at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/biodiversitypartnership/>.

There was a suggestion to identify the expertise needed for each step in the planning process (e.g. biologist/ecologist; GIS; conservation planner; land use planner/manager, etc.). There were also a lot of questions raised about the structure needed to implement this framework, NatureServe's ongoing role, and NatureServe Vista's licensing structure. These issues were discussed in more detail on Day Two.

Work Plan Development Process

Patrick Crist discussed the process of developing a work plan and how it will be used by the partnership to develop the Regional Biodiversity Plan. The process defined to develop the work plan included the following steps:

- Gather requirements information at this workshop
- Vet requirements & outline work plan with leadership team
- Develop sub-teams for specific components
- Develop and circulate draft
- Revise and submit final plan

A draft outline of the work plan was reviewed. It included the following sections:

- Problem Statement
- The Partnership
- Project Approach (Vision & Strategy)
- Project Phases, Activities, Tasks, and Schedule
 - Phase One: Analysis and Plan Development
 - Activity One: Requirements Gathering, Database Development, and Vista Installation
 - Activity Two: Biodiversity Value Analyses and Data and Values Refinement
 - Activity Three: Gap Analysis and Opportunities Identification
 - Activity Four: Biodiversity Conservation Plan Development

- Phase Two: Implementation, Monitoring, and Adaptive Plan Implementation
 - Activity Five: Outreach
 - Activity Six: Implementation Planning and Support
 - Activity Seven: Monitoring and Adaptive Planning and Implementation
- Schedule
- Chart Of Activities By Quarter
- Budget
- Budget Assumptions
- Organization Roles and Key Staff

The overall timeline for developing a regional biodiversity plan is generally 12-18 months.

Day 1 Wrap-Up

By the end of the day, participants agreed that the NatureServe Vista program seems like the right decision-support system/tool for our regional biodiversity planning purposes.

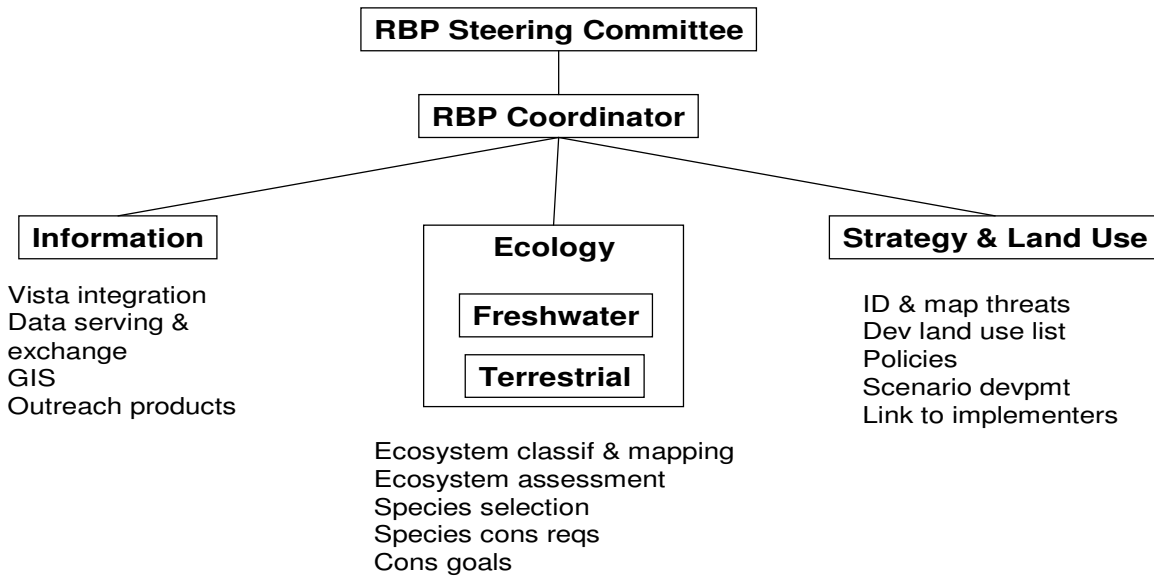
Day 2: June 9, 2006: 8:30 am – 1:30 pm

Patrick Crist provided a review of the progress made during Day 1. Based on suggestions made during Day 1, the agenda for Day 2 was revised to include discussions about:

- 1) How the Partnership should structure itself to develop and implement the plan; and
- 2) Responsibilities and potential participants for each sub-team involved in the development of the plan.

How the Partnership Should Structure Itself

We discussed how to organize our many organizations to sustain a long-term biodiversity planning process. The plan development should take approximately 18 months, but we need a permanent structure in place to maintain and continue implementation of the plan. The following structure was discussed:



Structure Explanation

- **Regional Biodiversity Plan (RBP) Steering Committee** – would be responsible for overall management of the planning process; providing oversight, guidance and feedback to the RBP Coordinator; coordinating fundraising for plan development and implementation; and providing outward communications (public outreach). The makeup of the current RBP Steering Committee will need to be reviewed and possibly revised to best meet these needs; consider having representatives from each subcommittee on the Steering Committee.
- **Regional Biodiversity Plan (RBP) Coordinator** – would probably be hired by one of our organizations as a full-time position for 12-18 months (but position could potentially morph into something more permanent after the initial timeframe); responsible for coordinating all aspects of plan development; identifying what is already being done by other organizations; organizing, coordinating, and facilitating subcommittee meetings (or delegate to Subcommittee leaders); facilitating communications between subcommittees and RBP Steering Committee; coordinating with RBP Steering Committee on fundraising and providing outward communications (public outreach).
- **Information Management Team** – there are many possible groups in northeast Ohio who have data and GIS capabilities. The Information Management Team would be responsible for identifying a permanent leader and home for the data and GIS information for the plan. We also need to recognize that some organizations/institutions may not want to part with their data, but we should continue to move forward with whatever data we can gather. The Information Management Team would be responsible for managing all data, GIS, and map products for the plan; GIS processing; data server and exchange; data library; and communications and outreach products (maps, posters, website, etc.). Between 1-5 people with GIS skills will need to become the local experts in the Vista program, and one of these should become the service provider to the region. A strong leader (Chair) for the team will need to be selected who can make a significant time commitment for 18 months; the Chair may also sit on the RBP Steering Committee.

- **Ecological Systems Team** – may be broken into 2 subteams: Terrestrial Ecology and Aquatic Ecology. Each subteam would address: ecosystem classifications and mapping; ecosystem assessments; species selections; species distribution; conservation and restoration requirements (goals); and communications with other teams. A strong leader (Chair) for the team will need to be selected who can make a significant time commitment for 18 months; the Chair may also sit on the RBP Steering Committee. Subteam leaders will also need to be selected.
- **Strategy & Land Use Team** – would identify and map threats to biodiversity; identify other existing plans and determine how information can be integrated into the Regional Biodiversity Plan; determine land use designations/classifications; understand land and water policies that affect biodiversity (legal framework; regulatory regime; legislative/policy issues), and determine if/how they can be expressed in a map form; determine scale of analyses needed for scenario and strategy development; develop different scenarios for various threats and protection of biodiversity; develop strategies; interact with and communicate information needs with other teams; coordinate priorities; and link information to implementers (i.e., get buy-in from other organizations and agencies to adopt recommendations in the plan). A strong leader (Chair) for the Team will need to be selected who can make a significant time commitment for 18 months; the Chair may also sit on the RBP Steering Committee.

Several other questions and concerns were raised as this structure was discussed. Primarily, attendees were interested in further defining the requirements for the coordinator position. They also wondered if NatureServe could temporarily serve in the coordinator's role. NatureServe's response was that this would be better done by a local organization and that NatureServe would instead probably serve in a consulting role across the various sub-teams. Finally, attendees recognized the need to get the planning structure in place and to get staffing commitments made so that they would be ready to go when funding became available.

Breakout Sessions

Breakout sessions were held to discuss/refine this structure.

Breakout Group 1

Much of the discussion surrounded the process and structure needed to implement the plan.

Members of this breakout group wondered if implementation and funding committees would be needed to ensure that implementation of the plan occurred. There was recognition that there would be a distributed responsibility to implement the plan, with individual institutions implementing the plan within their own region, according to their own interests, but also within the context of overall goals. There was also agreement that the steering committee could be responsible for the fundraising role.

There were questions about the information management team. Attendees clarified that they saw this group as working across the region. There was also a lot of interest in moving Vista into a collaborative framework thereby allowing several individuals to collaborate in the Vista-specific work required to develop the region-wide plan.

There was concern about whether or not there was the depth of expertise to support both terrestrial and freshwater ecology groups. Pat Comer clarified that he envisioned the terrestrial

group to be 5-7 individuals with the freshwater group consisting of 3-4 individuals. This seemed realistic to everyone in the group, but there was also no concern about condensing these two into one ecological systems team.

Finally, there was the suggestion that instead of following the organizational structure described above, that we instead organize around watersheds. The suggestion was made and accepted that instead of organizing around watersheds, we perform some analyses at the watershed level.

There was also some discussion about the basic objectives for the plan.

Attendees wanted to know how we could accommodate for data gaps so that information-poor areas would not be ignored within the plan. There was also concern about the ability to incorporate and deal with all of the variability in local planning processes. The conclusion was that Vista can accommodate this variability, but that we might be forced to generalize a little. One suggestion was to use a generalized land use framework to develop the regional blueprint and then do subsequent, local analyses using local information to help analyze specific implementation activities.

Questions also arose about how far into land use planning the plan should go. Should it just identify biodiversity objectives/areas of concern or should it be used to influence land use planning?

Finally, there were questions about how course/fine the analysis should be. One response was that planning should go down to the parcel level. Another opinion was to just set regional goals and priorities and let individual institutions do subsequent analyses to get to the parcel level.

Breakout Group 2

The second breakout group suggested that the freshwater and terrestrial ecology teams be merged into one ecological systems team. This change is reflected in the structure depicted above.

The breakout group also noted that each sub-team must have strong leadership, perhaps someone spending as much as ½ their time on the project, including participation on the steering committee.

There were a lot of questions about the strategies group. The breakout group suggested that lots of communication would be required with implementing agencies and that some kind of link would be needed with all of the various agencies impacting land use within the region (both conservation agencies as well as those contributing threats to biodiversity).

Finally, the group suggested that public communication and outreach should happen at the steering committee level.

Responsibilities and Potential Participants for Each Sub-Team

Three breakout groups were formed for each of the three teams: Information Management Team, Ecological Systems Team, and Strategies & Land Use Team. Each breakout group was to discuss the charge/responsibilities for the team, skills needed, number of team members, names of potential team members, and possible sources of information to be used by the team.

Strategies & Land Use Team Breakout Discussion

Members of Breakout Group included: Patrick Crist (facilitator), Patty Stevens, Eddie Dengg, Paul Novak, Kay Carlson, Chris Craycroft, Carla Regener, John Niedzialek, Mark Gorman, Brian Parsons, David Beach, Meiring Borchers, Ivette Bolender, and David Kriska.

Charge/Responsibilities:

- Identify and map threats to biodiversity in consultation with Ecological Systems Team.
- Work with Ecological Systems Team to determine current distribution of elements vs. potential distribution (if restored), as well as current vs. predicted areas containing invasive species.
- Get a clear picture of existing land uses – identify hotspots of conflict with protection of biodiversity.
- Develop a land use list – names of all phenomena we'd like to evaluate for impacts on selected elements (e.g., housing at different densities; restoration activities).
- Develop a land use policy list – zoning, statutory regulations, legislative designations, mechanics of conservation protections (conservation easements, deed restrictions, TDR's, etc.).
- Evaluate land use policy reliability.
- Evaluate what elements would remain viable in the presence of a specific threat.
- Develop alternate scenarios – impacts of various threats on conservation; consider optimization route (i.e., link to MARXAN – minimum set of sites to meet conservation goals within certain budget). Take alternate scenarios to Steering Committee.
- Provide information and alternate scenarios to implementers – serve as the link to implementers and the business community.

Skills Needed:

- Conservation planning and implementation
- Socio-economics
- Land use planning; infrastructure planning
- Someone from the business community?

Potential Team Members/Organizations (ideal Team size = 3-8 people who can best represent other similar groups):

- Patty Stevens, Cleveland Metroparks (rep. Park Districts)
- Carol Thaler, WRRCD/Cuyahoga Co. Planning Commission *
- David Beach, EcoCity Cleveland *
- Kirby Date, CSU-Countryside Program*
- Wendy Kellogg, CSU-Levin School of Urban Planning
- Rep. from conservation NGO's
- Kay Carlson, TNC
- Rep. from WRLC
- Rep. from Chagrin River Watershed Partners
- Rep. from Trust for Public Land
- Greg Studen
- Rep. from regional planning agencies (NOACA, NEFCO, Eastgate, AMETS)
- Rep. from OH and PA state agencies (OEPA, ODNR, ODOT, and PA equivalents)
- Rep. from federal agencies (USEPA, USGS, USFWS?)

- Rep. from Ohio & Erie Canal Association?
 - Rep. from watershed groups/RAPs
 - Rep. from SWCDs
 - Rep. from CSU-NODIS?
 - Other Universities?
 - Rep from county planning agencies
 - Natural History Museum
 - Erie basin
- * = potential team leader

Potential Sources of Information (need to sort out potential Team members vs. potential sources of information that can be mined by Team members):

- Team NEO database of commercial sites
- NRCS – NRI
- USGS land cover
- County soil maps, headwater streams, GIS data
- OH Dept. of Admin. Services data (OGRIP)
- Municipal zoning data
- Regional sewer districts
- Other state/regional/local conservation plans
- Land trust plans and protected areas
- OH GAP Analysis and “Stewardship Map”?
- USEPA inland sensitivity atlas?
- USACE
- Transportation agencies – pipeline maps
- ODNR-Coastal Mgt. Program - Coastal Atlas
- OH Lake Erie Commission – shoreline data/GIS atlas
- OH Invasive Plants Council
- OH Greenways
- ODNR - Wellhead protection zones
- County farmland preservation
- Heritage protected areas database

Ecological Systems Team Breakout Discussion

This group was facilitated by Pat Comer. Other members were not recorded.

Charge/Responsibilities:

- Element selection
- Element distribution information
- Predictive range modeling
- Determine what we want to model and who should do it

Skills Needed:

- Aquatic species and systems experts
- Terrestrial species and systems experts

Potential Team Members/Organizations (team will probably break into 2 subteams; ideal subteam size = 12 people who can best represent other similar groups):

- Cleveland Museum of Natural History: Jim Bissell, Tim Matson (vertebrates), Larry Roche (birds and butterflies)
- Ohio Lepidopterist Society (none named)
- Midwest Biodiversity Institute: Roger Thoma
- Summit County Metroparks: Mike Johnson (bats)
- OH EPA: John Mack (wetlands), Steven Tuckerman (streams)
- OH Natural Heritage Program: Rick Gardner, Greg Schneider, Tam Smith,
- PA NHP: Jeff Wagner
- TNC: Marleen Kromer (ecosystems)
- Carnegie Museum: Bob Davis (burying beetles)

Potential Sources of Information (need to sort out potential Team members vs. potential sources of information that can be mined by Team members):

- Ohio EPA – stream, fish, macroinvertebrates, IBI
- Ohio DNR – fish distributions, IBI
- OH and PA Natural Heritage Program – Natural Heritage database; aquatic species distribution and habitat; Coastal Management Programs
- NOAA – coastal land cover
- USEPA/Great Lakes National Program Office
- NWI, OWI
- USGS – satellite imagery and fish
- TNC
- CMNH – most of their occurrence data is in the OH NHP database, but there are many unprocessed records in the region
- University of Akron, KSU
- Western PA Conservancy - (roadless) forest block analysis in support of TNC ecoregional assessments (needs to be extended to OH)
- GLNPO?

- OH Lepidopterist Society?
- Cuyahoga Valley NP
- Soil and Water Conservation District offices - fish distributions, headwater streams classified to Rosgin reach classification, lakes

Products

Restoration opportunities; relative scoring across the landscape; information behind the maps; what's there, not there, why; management guidelines/feedback; related prioritization: priorities spread across element, geographies, marginal value; establish scoring process to rank projects

Information Management Team Breakout Discussion

This breakout group was facilitated by McKinney. Other members were not recorded.

Charge/Responsibilities:

- Become the IT/Infrastructure gurus
- Facilitate data exchange between teams
- Provide centralized data entry location and organization
- Perform data filtration to ensure good data is utilized in analyses; provide data validation before data goes into Vista
- Complete data entry into Vista
- Perform GIS processing within Vista; run scenario analyses
- Perform ongoing data management activities
- Create, manage and update website to feed information back out and to post information and analyses; consider public vs. password protected web access
- Develop communications/outreach products

Skills Needed:

- IT
- GIS
- Conservation planning

Potential Team Members/Organizations (ideal Team size was not identified; these are also potential long-term 'homes' for the information database):

- CSU – NODIS
- Western Reserve Land Conservancy
- TNC
- EcoCity Cleveland
- Cleveland Museum of Natural History
- Cleveland Metroparks
- Federal and State agencies

Potential Sources of Information (need to sort out potential Team members vs. potential sources of information that can be mined by Team members):

(Not listed during breakout session.)

Information Management Team Process/Structure

The information management team also discussed the internal process and structure required to fulfill its responsibilities:

- Step 1: Complete data inventory (to be completed by all teams, facilitated by information management team)
- Step 2: Identify data that needs to be included in Vista (all)
- Step 3: Perform data validation (information team will complete GIS validation, other teams will focus on content)
- Step 4: Fill data gaps (all)
- Step 5: Standardize data for Vista (consider creation of a lookup library on species, standardized data entry forms)
- Step 6: Enter data into Vista

They also discussed the possibility of creating 3 subteams, focusing on:

- data entry for ecological information
- data entry for land use/threats
- data entry for scenario analysis

Other Points of Discussion

- **Role of Existing Conservation Plans.** Where a group has produced a plan, it can be included in the Vista program either as part of a scenario, or if it has a strong scientific basis it can be put into Vista as an element.
 - NRCS plans and soil/water district 5 yr plan
 - TNC ecoregional and site conservation plans
 - Others?
- **What is the end product?** The group identified several features or end results it wanted from this Plan:
 - Identify areas of high conservation value
 - Identify areas that conflict with areas of high conservation value
 - Provide implementation strategies to mitigate conflicts with areas of high conservation value
 - Identify areas with restoration potential (elements are no longer here but could be with some restoration)
 - Plan should address stewardship, i.e., long-term management of biodiversity and an understanding of threats (such as invasive species) to biodiversity
 - Plan needs to inform and influence land use decision makers about protection and restoration opportunities
 - Maps and analyses from Vista need to be made user-friendly so they can be easily interpreted by local municipalities (where land use decisions are made); reports should provide an interpretation of the planning process used
 - There is an open question about how well all of the information should be documented
- **How should conservation implementation occur?**

- There was a suggestion that the steering committee/fundraising committee should act as a re-grant agency to distribute money to implementers
- There were questions about influencing other planning processes (roads, etc.). This may be out of scope of this plan, but land use planners could take the tool and apply it to their own processes.
- Overall Goals/Objectives:
 - Plan will have to go beyond conservation of what's left of the region's biodiversity and should also include a vision for restoration. This region is already past the 'tipping point' of ecological degradation in many areas. The real goal should be ecological health, not just protecting the few quality places left.
 - Consider setting up the Lake Erie Allegheny Biodiversity Fund (to be held at NFWF) so that approximately 75% of the funds go toward conservation/preservation and 25% goes toward restoration.
 - Plan needs to outline a consensus or general agreement about what should get conserved 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.
 - Need to have scientific backing of the priorities identified in the plan.
 - Although the Vista program will allow analysis of social and political realities and their impacts on biodiversity, it is possible that TPL's GreenPrint program will already achieve this. We will need to coordinate w/ TPL on these aspects.
 - Plan should influence decision makers about the threats to biodiversity; inform about protection and restoration; and help stop the loss of biodiversity.

Next Steps

NatureServe will develop a work plan that will identify the process necessary to create a regional biodiversity plan. The draft is to be completed by end of July; the final version will be completed by mid-August, 2006.

The Plan Steering Committee will:

- Distribute notes/minutes from the workshop to the Partnership and to all workshop invitees and participants
- Determine what other organizations/agencies should be involved
- Evaluate make-up of Steering Committee and revise as necessary
- Determine how to communicate with the conservation community
- Write job description for Regional Biodiversity Plan Coordinator and Vista 'Guru' (review job descriptions provided on Conservation Online -Ecoregional Planning Toolbox)
- Develop initial team charters, member lists, and leads
- Print publication of report and overview of the ecosystems of the region - completed by mid-September, 2006
- Request extension of current NFWF grant
- Develop/submit new grant proposals for plan development (Aug-Sept., 2006)

Attachment 1: Workshop Invitees and Participants List

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	AFFILIATION	E-MAIL	RBP LIST SERV MEMB 1=yes 0=no	RSVP JUNE 8 1=yes 0=no	RSVP JUNE 9 1=yes 0=no	ATTENDED 1=yes 0=no
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Beeker	John	NOACA	jbeeker@mpo.noaca.org	1			1
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Gorman	Mark	PA Environmental Council/French Creek	mgorman@pecpa.org	?	1	1	1
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Pira	Paul	Geauga Park District	ppira@geaugaparkdistrict.org	1	1		1
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