

The South Atlantic Conservation Blueprint: From Planning to Action

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The South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) is a partnership of federal, state, and local organizations committed to sustaining the region's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. Part of a network of 22 LCCs across North America, the South Atlantic LCC covers parts of six southeastern states, from southern Virginia to northern Florida.

The South Atlantic LCC's mission focuses on the Conservation Blueprint, a living spatial plan that identifies opportunities for shared action. Released in June 2015, Version 2.0 of the Blueprint is totally data-driven, prioritizing the lands and waters of the South Atlantic based on the current condition of terrestrial, freshwater, marine, and cross-ecosystem indicators. Through a connectivity analysis, Blueprint 2.0 also identifies corridors that link coastal and inland areas and span climate gradients. By incorporating connectivity, climate-resilient biodiversity hotspots, and explicit sea-level rise models, the Blueprint serves as a climate adaptation strategy. So far, more than 400 people from 100 different organizations have actively participated in developing the Blueprint. The South Atlantic Blueprint will integrate with neighboring LCCs' spatial priorities in a Southeast-wide plan as part of the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS).

The South Atlantic LCC updates the Blueprint and underlying indicators through an annual cycle of testing and revision to incorporate the best available science and extensive input from the broader cooperative community. Blueprint 2.1, scheduled for release in June 2016, will include improved indicator data for the marine and freshwater aquatic ecosystem indicators, as well as updated corridors.

Members of the cooperative have already used the Blueprint to bring national fire resilience funding to the region, compete for coastal wetlands protection and climate-smart wildlife management grants, provide landscape-scale context for public lands planning, and prioritize fish passage efforts. Through a transparent process, a science-based plan, and a user-friendly product, the South Atlantic LCC intends the Blueprint to eventually become a "gold standard" for guiding large landscape conservation.

The Blueprint is available online through two mapping viewers: The Conservation Planning Atlas (salcc.databasin.org) and the Simple Viewer (blueprint.southatlanticlcc.org). The Conservation Planning Atlas allows users to overlay additional datasets, view indicator layers, and download Blueprint data. The Simple Viewer summarizes the Blueprint at a subwatershed and marine lease block scale, and provides information about ecosystem indicators, land cover, and protection status.