Memorandum of Understanding
Among the
National Park Service
Bureau of Land Management
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Reclamation
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Forest Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Army Corps of Engineers

For Coordination of Landscape & Watershed-scale Conservation Demonstration Areas

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) is hereby entered into by and among the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps of Engineers, Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Bureau of Reclamation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (collectively, "the Federal partners").

I. PURPOSE

To strengthen and formalize the institutional framework, including the existing inter-agency partnership teams, better enabling cooperation, communication, and collaboration among the Federal partners on large-scale landscape and watershed conservation demonstration areas.

II. BACKGROUND

Conservation in the 21st -century requires a holistic integrated management approach that can operate across Federal agency jurisdictions, programs, and authorities. In response, Federal agencies are joining state, tribal, and private stakeholders in a variety of conservation approaches to landscape and watershed-scale conservation. While this approach to conservation is most appropriately defined in the context of place, some attributes are relatively constant across geographies; for example, landscape and watershed-scale conservation inherently transcends any single jurisdiction and is predicated on multiple parties collaboratively defining shared objectives and coordinated action.

There are numerous examples of agencies and local partners working collaboratively to conserve large landscapes, including watersheds and coastal ecosystems. These include whole ecological systems, such as the Everglades, Chesapeake Bay, longleaf pine forests in the Southeast, and the California Bay Delta, as well as Federal agencies engaging in state or local landscape conservation initiatives such as Keeping Maine's Forests as Forests and the Blackfoot Challenge in the Crown of the Continent. In addition, there are programmatic initiatives that support large-scale landscape and watershed collaboration including Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, the Army Corps of Engineers' Integrated Water Management Strategy, the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Landscape Initiatives, and the Department of the Interior National Blueways System, as well the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The interagency teams formalized pursuant to this MOU will not supplant any of these ongoing efforts, but will complement and, as appropriate, coordinate with them to advance shared objectives.

Woven throughout the large landscape and watershed conservation ethic is the basic tenet that the Federal government has an important and unique role to play as a partner and supporter of local conservation efforts. The Federal agencies have a special interest in maximizing conservation benefits, leveraging taxpayer dollars, catalyzing private sector investment, and reconnecting with and engaging Americans about the importance of our outdoor resources. The advantages of landscape and watershed conservation areas are highlighted in President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative (AGO) which calls for a 21st-century conservation agenda that will protect America's natural and cultural resources, and connect people to the outdoors through jobs, education, recreation, and restoration.

To facilitate these shared objectives, the Federal agencies established AGO interagency regional landscape and watershed teams to encourage interagency coordination, to improve communication, and collaboration and to model the importance and advantages of Federal family coordination with local partners. The Federal partners initially established interagency large landscape teams and watershed teams focused on specific landscapes and watersheds across the country. This MOU will formalize the initial Federal agency coordination, including providing a forum for exploring the relationships among existing landscape and watershed-based initiatives.

Further, it is the intent of this MOU that the interagency teams will focus first and foremost on ensuring that the Federal partners themselves are well-coordinated, in part by providing a forum to assist in developing cross-cutting budget and action plans. Unique to this MOU are the Federal interagency teams that were established and are organized and managed as interagency teams with no one agency having a greater or lesser leadership role than another. While these teams are currently organized under the umbrella of AGO's demonstration large landscape and waters initiative, the need for interagency collaboration and communication transcends any particular initiative.

III. AUTHORITIES

This agreement is based on existing authorities including the President's Memorandum of April 16, 2010: *A 21st Century Strategy for America's Great Outdoors*, 75 Fed. Reg. 20767 (April 20, 2010), and various authorities within the context of the laws or regulations governing specific programs administered by the agencies.

IV. STATEMENT OF MUTUAL BENEFIT AND INTERESTS

The signatory Federal partners' missions include many overlapping and complementary conservation interests. Accordingly, there is great potential for mutual benefit from enhanced cooperation and synergies, especially in the area of large landscape conservation where alignment of multiple resources will result in strategic and effective conservation outcomes.

V. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

For the purpose of guiding efforts under this MOU, the Federal partners find and agree that:

a. Conservation planning and implementation at a large scale is a critical component of protecting our natural and cultural resources and is most effective when land and water objectives are approached in an integrated fashion by stakeholders at all levels—Federal, tribal, state, local, and private. Effective and efficient implementation can only be accomplished through the

voluntary collaborative efforts of tribal, state, and Federal agencies; non-profit organizations; and many other entities associated with large landscape conservation.

b. Federal effectiveness in realizing shared landscape and watershed conservation goals depends on developing, where appropriate, shared capacities (including information sharing, shared personnel, and shared science-based understanding of social, economic, and environmental conditions of the target landscape, and complementary landscape and watershed conservation strategies); better aligning and leveraging conservation funding and authorities across the executive branch; and creating mechanisms to facilitate coordination and cooperation among these programs/agencies to concentrate investments in shared priority conservation areas.
c. Conservation planning and implementation among diverse partners benefits substantially from a shared science-based understanding of social, economic, and environmental conditions of the target place. This shared scientific understanding can inform prioritization and selection of conservation strategies, measurement of progress and adaptive management.

VI. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In furtherance of the purpose agreed to under this MOU, the partners resolve to take further actions to:

a. Advance national, regional, and community-supported work to preserve and enhance large landscapes including watersheds, and their historic and cultural resources.
b. Catalyze strategic large-scale landscape and watershed conservation partnerships projects though economic incentives, technical assistance, and the leveraging of funds consistent with agency objectives and priorities.
c. Work to increase the pace of conservation activities applied on working farms, ranches, range land, forests, and waters.
d. Consider ways to increase the availability of voluntary financial incentives for stewardship of working lands and waters and look for opportunities to develop and expand new markets for nature's ecological services.
e. Conserve, restore, and manage Federal lands and waters to ensure appropriate access and enjoyment for future generations while contributing to the protection of larger natural, working, and cultural landscapes.
f. Improve Federal government performance and value as a conservation partner.
g. Maximize the efficacy of Federal investments.
h. Support efforts to share scientific information to inform conservation strategies and progress.
i. Break down barriers among landscape and watershed initiatives, including but not limited to those covered by this MOU, in order to maximize investments, resources, and sharing of knowledge.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION

To meet the goals and objectives of this agreement, the Federal partners agree that the MOU will focus on the existing AGO interagency large landscape demonstration areas: the deserts of the Southwest; the grasslands of the northern Great Plains; the Crown of the Continent in the northern Rockies; the northern forests and waters of New England; and America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative in the Southeast (For the purposes of this MOU, it is anticipated that the existing Federal Coordinating Committee established pursuant to an interdepartmental MOU in 2010 will serve as the interagency team for the longleaf pine demonstration area); and the watershed demonstration pilots: the Connecticut River Watershed and the White River/Cache River Watershed. However, it is the

Federal partners' intent that as opportunities arise to expand or modify the number and scope of the interagency teams, this MOU will adapt to those opportunities as appropriate.

Further, through these interagency teams, the Federal partners shall:

(1) Establish and maintain interagency landscape and watershed working groups consisting of representatives at the headquarters and regional levels to provide the leadership necessary to coordinate Federal action in each of the identified landscapes.

(2) Establish a shared vision, metrics, and strategy document for each selected landscape and watershed demonstration area. The document must outline goals and objectives, as well as an implementation plan.

(3) Develop and implement actions in each of the demonstration areas that will:

a. Maintain and strengthen formal and informal partnerships and coordination with the full range of stakeholders and partners as appropriate.
b. Support landscape partnerships by targeting existing Federal dollars, policies, technical support, staff, best practices, tools, scientific information, training, and other resources toward conservation of large landscapes and watersheds, and coordinating expenditures, where appropriate, across Federal agencies and partners.
c. Support financial and other incentives to encourage access for hunting, fishing, hiking, recreation, and other outdoor activities across private working lands and waters.
d. Manage Federal lands and waters within a large-scale landscape and watershed context to help conserve and restore ecosystems and watershed health, to the extent feasible and allowable under Federal law.
e. Strategically invest and align Federal funds, as appropriate, to achieve landscape-scale and watershed conservation and restoration goals on public and private land and waters and to leverage other public and private funds.
f. Manage Federal lands and Federally-controlled waters to create and protect critical wildlife corridors and maintain landscape connectivity in collaboration with other public and private stakeholders to the extent feasible and allowable under Federal law.
g. Identify opportunities to align other Federal large-scale landscape and watershed initiatives and share scientific information to furher that alignment.
h. Measure and report progress.

(4) Convene periodically, but at least on a quarterly basis, Federal representatives from across the landscapes and watersheds covered by this MOU to review the progress made under this MOU; transfer knowledge; assess current goals and objectives; and consider or develop additional short- and long-term goals, objectives and strategies for future implementation, including the projected financial and technical resources needed for project implementation in the upcoming fiscal year budget and 2 years beyond.

(5) To the degree that the Federal parties agree that new or additional large landscape and watershed demonstration areas are appropriate, they will be selected after taking into consideration the following factors:
a. Community-led landscape collaborative conservation efforts where the alignment of Federal resources and authorities can play a value-added role;

b. Diversity of jurisdiction of the partners over components of the landscape (e.g. land ownership, resource oversight, permit responsibility, etc.);
c. Opportunity to aggregate scientific information to better inform shared conservation strategies among diverse partners;
d. Diversity of conservation needs and opportunities–acquisition, restoration, and designation—that could be successfully pursued and applied;
e. Opportunities to provide knowledge transfers and lessons learned, and demonstrate successful Federal partnerships in large landscape and watershed conservation;
f. Opportunities to partner with non-Federal, public or private entities to augment and leverage available resources; and
g. Opportunities to achieve, sustain, and measure improvements in ecosystem health.

VIII. GENERAL PROVISIONS

A. Participation in Similar Activities. This MOU does not in any way restrict the Federal partners from participating in similar activities or entering into similar instruments with other public or private agencies, organizations, and individuals.

B. Effective Period and Termination. This MOU will become effective upon date of final signature and continue for a period of 5 years. It may be renewed as mutually agreed upon by the Parties. It may be modified or terminated at any time by mutual agreement of all Parties in writing. Any party to this MOU may withdraw from its responsibilities identified herein by notifying, in writing, all Parties on or before October 1 of each year that this MOU is in effect.

C. Responsibilities. The Federal partners will manage their own activities and utilize their own resources, including expenditure of funds, if any, in pursuing the goals and objectives of the MOU. Although the Federal partners will carry out such activities independently, each partner intends to coordinate and cooperate with the other partners to promote successful implementation of this MOU's landscape and watershed-scale conservation goals.

D. Principal Contacts. The designated chair or co-chair of each interagency work team shall be the principal contact under this MOU for that respective landscape conservation area.

E. Non-fund Obligating Document. Nothing in this MOU shall be construed as obligating the Federal partners to expend, obligate, or transfer any funds; or as involving the United States in any obligation for the present or future payment of money in excess of appropriations authorized by law and administratively allocated for the work to be undertaken pursuant to this MOU.

Specific work projects or activities that involve the transfer of funds, services, or property among the signatory Federal partners will require execution of separate instruments or agreements and be contingent upon the availability of funds. Such projects and activities must be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority of the respective signatory Federal partners. This MOU does not provide such authority. Negotiation, execution, and administration of each such instrument or agreement must comply with all applicable statutes and regulations.

F. Communications and Engagement Coordination. The Federal partners will work together to coordinate public relations and public engagement activities related to this MOU.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties hereto executed this Memorandum of Understanding on the date(s) set forth below:

Bureau of Land Management

Date: 12/18/12 **By:** _____
Title: Director

Department of the Army

Date: Jan. 7, 2013 **By:** _____
Title: Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Date: 12.10.12 **By:** _____
Title: Director

U.S. Forest Service

Date: DEC 11 2012 **By:** Thomas L. Tidwell
Title: Chief

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Date: 12/19/12 **By:** milton wayne donaldson
Title: Chair

Bureau of Reclamation

Date: 12/6/12 **By:** _____
Title: Commissioner

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Date: Nov. 19, 2012 **By:** Dave White
Title: Chief

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Date: DEC -4 2012 **By:** [illegible]
Title: Administrator

National Park Service

Date: 12/17/2012 **By:** Jonathan B Jarvis
Title: Director