

Southeast Landscape of the Future Summit

New Orleans, Louisiana
February 27 - 29, 2024



Southeast
Conservation
Adaptation
Strategy
(SECAS)



SOUTHEAST
Climate Adaptation Science Center

Report presented by CI International

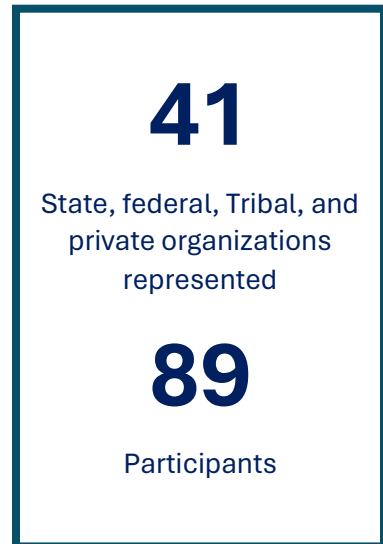
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Summit Overview

The Southeast Landscape of the Future Summit was held February 27-29, 2024, under the theme of “Building the Southeast Landscape of the Future.” The Summit was an opportunity for state, federal, and Tribal natural resource leaders, and leaders in conservation initiatives to come together to determine a collaborative pathway toward a shared vision for the Southeast landscape of the future.

With a focus on convening leaders and decision makers from regional, statewide, and local conservation agencies and organizations, the Summit was designed to deepen relationships with new and existing peer leadership communities, gain perspectives on critical conservation issues facing the Southeast, and discover where participant priorities intersect across boundaries. Understanding that today’s actions will contribute to the landscape one hundred years from now, attendees were asked to contemplate a strategic approach emphasizing broader and deeper collaboration to achieve the desired future. The Summit format involved a combination of panel discussions and breakout sessions to consider collaborative approaches for collective action at regional and local scales. Concluding discussions focused on immediate and long-term actions needed to continue the collaboration and shape the future landscape.



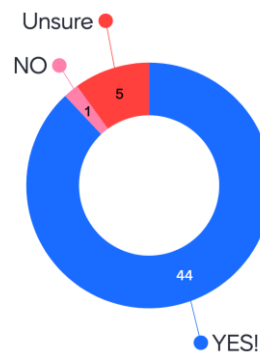
Outcomes Achieved: A commitment emerged to work collaboratively with an expanded community to establish shared priorities and actionable strategies for conservation across the Southeast landscape. Participants acknowledged the need to provide structure and specificity around a shared vision to address conservation challenges more collaboratively – not simply re-hashing existing approaches – to drive effective action resulting in tangible conservation outcomes.

An informal poll conducted near the end of the Summit involving more than half of attendees revealed the following agreement profiles for meeting the Summit’s objectives and for continuing a collective conservation effort:

How well did we meet the objectives of the Summit?



Is a collective effort worth pursuing?



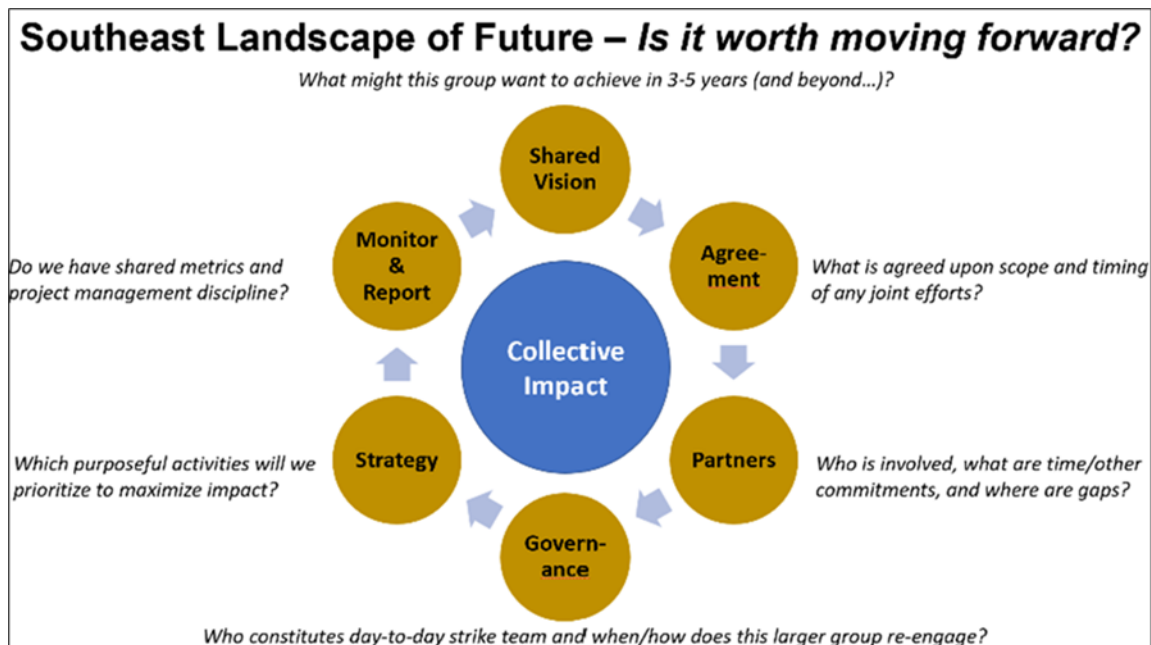
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Key Takeaways: Participants recognized the need for increased collaboration and communication across jurisdictions and organizations to address complex conservation challenges effectively. They emphasized the importance of inclusivity, particularly in engaging with Indigenous communities and incorporating diverse perspectives broadly into conservation efforts. Additionally, there was a clear consensus on the necessity of adaptive management and continuous learning to navigate uncertainty and evolving landscapes.

- **Collaboration is essential:** Success hinges on cross-sector partnerships, integrating diverse knowledge, including local and indigenous insights.
- **Action over planning:** Shift focus from continuous planning to implementing tangible conservation actions.
- **Commitment to adaptability:** Embrace adaptive management to respond to evolving challenges and opportunities in conservation efforts.
- **The importance of a backbone organization:** A central coordinating entity is crucial for sustaining momentum, facilitating communication, and driving collective action.
- **Equity and inclusion matter:** Ensuring diverse voices are heard and incorporated into decision-making processes is vital for equitable and effective conservation outcomes.

Participants discussed potential next steps to consider in moving collaboratively toward collective impact. The following graphic provided a model for guiding end-of-session discussions and revealed areas of agreement for potential next steps and recommendations for immediate action to maintain the Summit’s momentum.



Commitments: Attendees were committed to strengthening collaboration and partnerships, both within and beyond the Summit, to advance shared conservation goals. These commitments included bringing on new stakeholders, fostering dialogue with existing partners, and investing in capacity building to support ongoing collaboration. Furthermore, there was a pledge to prioritize

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action and implementation over planning, with a focus on tangible outcomes and measurable progress.

Moreover, regional representatives of the USDA Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service formally expressed their agency's support for continuing to advance the themes of the Summit, and to broaden regional and local collaborative conservation efforts toward shaping the future landscape of the Southeast.

Recommendations/Next Steps: Moving forward, it is essential to maintain momentum and build on the foundations laid during the summit. This entails establishing clear mechanisms for ongoing communication and knowledge sharing, as well as identifying opportunities for collective action and resource mobilization. Additionally, there is a need to develop frameworks for evaluating the effectiveness of collaborative efforts and adjusting strategies accordingly. Emphasizing transparency, accountability, and equity will be critical to ensuring the success and sustainability of future conservation initiatives in the Southeast landscape.

Information gleaned from the Summit's discussion sessions and captured in this report will provide specific detail and guidance for continuing a broad collaborative effort in the Southeast, both short- and long-term. However, to sustain the momentum and energy resulting from the Summit, immediate action and demonstrable results are critical. In this regard, several actionable recommendations emerged from the dialogue and can serve as a launching base to continue the strategic evolution of an effective collaborative conservation partnership.

Recommendation 1. At the conclusion of the Summit several organizational participants formally expressed their support for continuing to broaden collaborative conservation efforts toward shaping the future landscape of the Southeast. As the initial coordinating entity for the Summit, the Summit Planning Team should continue its coordination functions to address attendees' and the meeting report's recommendations and longer-term action items in a consistent and timely manner. Fundamental to this effort is the need for clear and concise expression of the general purpose, goals, and direction of a collaborative endeavor.

Recommendation 2. There was general agreement that this large group needs a smaller, day-to-day "strike team" to address fundamental operational considerations to ensure movement forward with continuity. The Planning Team should poll all participants for recommendations on standing up a smaller strike team, including options for varying levels of engagement to accommodate organizations' differing abilities and capacities to participate.

Recommendation 3. There was consensus on the importance of focusing on the future landscape, but also realization that near-term content is needed to drive actions now that will determine future conditions later. The Planning Team should propose tangible accomplishments that the group could choose to achieve in 3-5 years, including consideration of the scope and timing of those efforts, with leadership guidance and oversight provided by the aforementioned strike team.

Recommendation 4. In addressing near term tangible accomplishments, the Planning Team should ensure that key performance indicators and metrics are identified, aligned, and tracked to support accountability and strategic decision making. Summit participants recommended that performance

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metrics focus primarily on the most important and highest-level actions, rather than bookkeeping exercises.

Recommendation 5. Participants agreed that the initial core group should remain involved, and that other stakeholders (e.g., industry, other government, private enterprise, etc.) must be invited to participate as well. The Planning Team should use existing network information and polling of Summit participants to identify additional stakeholder groups to be invited to participate in subsequent Summit meetings, with consideration for varying levels of engagement recognizing differing capacities to participate.

Overall, the Southeast Landscape of the Future Summit provided a valuable platform for stakeholders to come together, share insights, and chart a course toward a more resilient and sustainable future for the region's natural resources. By embracing collaboration, innovation, and adaptive management, participants demonstrated their commitment to addressing complex conservation challenges and fostering positive change in the Southeast. The results of the Summit presented in this report will provide valuable guidance for determining the future condition of the landscape of the Southeast.

Organizations represented at the Southeast Summit

Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries

American Bird Conservancy

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Central Hardwoods Joint Venture

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Division of Fish and Wildlife, Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands

East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

FWS Directorate Fellows Program

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Georgia Forestry Commission

Gulf Coast Joint Venture

Kentucky Division of Forestry

Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries

Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture

Mississippi Forestry Commission

Missouri Department of Conservation

Monacan Indian Nation

National Park Service

North Carolina Forest Service

North Carolina State University

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education Fellows Program

Resource Management Service, LLC

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP)

Southeast Climate Adaptation Science Center

Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS)

Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS)

Southern Group of State Foresters

Texas A&M Forest Service

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

The Nature Conservancy

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

U.S. Geological Survey

University of Alabama

University of Georgia

USDA Forest Service

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service