New Research and Products to Support Pro-Active Conservation Planning in the Northwest Boreal LCC

The Northwest Boreal LCC (NWB LCC) envisions a dynamic landscape that maintains functioning, resilient boreal ecosystems and associated cultural resources. To support this vision, the NWB LCC has partnered with the BEACONS Project to implement a new approach to conservation planning, including the identification of ecological benchmarks to support implementation of active adaptive management in the northwest boreal region.

Within an adaptive management framework, benchmark areas serve as references for detecting and understanding the influence of human activity on ecological systems. They support identification of management practices that sustain the wide-range of environmental, cultural, and economic values associated with the northwest boreal region, and help to manage risk.

The design of ecological benchmarks considers landscape condition, natural disturbance (e.g., fire), terrestrial and hydrologic connectivity, representation of landscape variability and focal species habitat, and resilience to climate change. Candidate benchmark areas can be further evaluated based on cultural and socio-economic values, or other attributes of interest.

The NWB LCC region has high potential for the establishment of a comprehensive benchmark network, with contributions from existing protected areas. Benchmark networks were identified for 30 ecoregions, intersecting the region, and there are numerous network options to select from.

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