

NLCS 15-year Strategy Matt Preston – Theme 2

>> Marlo: Let's go to Matt. Matt, why don't you walk us through Theme 2.

>> M. Preston: Thanks, Marlo. Thanks, everyone for the opportunity to speak with you today. Theme 2 is all about collaboratively managing NLCS as part of the larger landscape. We recognize in the NLCS that we're just one player in the BLM. We're a proportion of the land of the BLM. We're part of the BLM.

We work together with the other BLM programs. What's really important to us is collaborative management. We want to work with our BLM partners, our external partners in order to help build a new conservation model, one of collaboration.

>> M. Draper: Matt, provide us with an example of this collaboration.

>> M. Preston: Sure. I would be happy to opinion if you think about all the protected areas, different types of protected areas we have in this country, we have the NLCS, we have national parks, we have the Fish & Wildlife refuge and state and local conservation, private conservation areas. We have all these areas.

If we all work in isolation, if we don't communicate with each other across agency boundaries, then we're -- we might tend towards redundancies and inefficiencies.

What we hope to do in NLCS is lead a movement toward communication with these other stakeholders in terms of protected areas. We want to share best practices. We want to share experiences. That we want to share data. In doing that we will all improve and become better managers of the land.

>> M. Draper: How does NLCS management align with the work of other BLM programs?

>> M. Preston: That's a great question. Here at the NLCS we do a lot of coordination with other BLM programs already and we open to improve on that and expand our network of collaboration. Nikki will be talking in a few minutes about some of the ways we're going to integrate with the BLM. I'll talk about a couple points right now.

I wanted to highlight a couple programs that that we do work with actively and how we collaborate and why we collaborate with them.

One example is the heritage resource program. The heritage resource folks are tasked with managing cultural resources, paleontology resources, historical resources. These are the same items or Congress has identified for NLCS to conserve, protect and restore.

There is a natural connection between what heritage is doing and the is doing and by working together to meet common goals we can be more efficient and more effective.

>> M. Draper: So, thank you for that that with -- other than alignment with BLM's other programs, what about aligning with our landscape approaches such as the ran identify ecoregional assessments?

>> M. Preston: I'm glad you brought up the Rapid Ecoregional Assessments. We're thrilled about what that team is doing. They're gathering all this great data the BLM will be able to use to improve our management. We're getting the baseline data we need to make informed decisions. We work directly with this team, often on a daily basis, here in Washington.

Some of the information that will come from the Rapid Ecoregional Assessments will help us better -- objects and values in the context of the larger landscape. We'll be able to understand, for example, where important wildlife corridors are and how that is related to where NLCS units are

and where we serve an important role there or with such things as habitat connectivity.

These are important areas where the data that landscape teams are collecting we will be able to use and collaborate with to improve the bigger picture management.

>> M. Draper: So does the NLCS Strategy address land acquisition efforts?

>> M. Preston: It does. We want to work with Congress. We want to work with other federal agencies, are with tribal partners, local community agencies in order to identify lands that are crucial to long-term ecological integrity. One of the approaches toward this goal is to work with the landscape people, the Rapid Ecoregional Assessments.

This will provide some of the data to identify, like I was saying, those wildlife corridors that are important to be protected or, for example, if we have an NLCS unit that we find to be incredibly important in terms of ecological integrity, but it also has a lot of inholdings, maybe those areas or those wildlife corridors could be prioritized for acquisition via land and water conservation funds, for example.

>> M. Draper: Tell us, how does the strategy consider local communities as part of the larger landscape?

>> M. Preston: That's another great question. Thanks, Marlo. With the NLCS Strategy, we not only focus on ensuring lands are healthy, which we do, we also want to ensure local communities around NLCS units also can be supported by having an NLCS unit close to them.

We're concerned and want to help benefit their social and economic fabrics. One strategy to get towards this goal is when we're thinking about building a visitor center or interpretive center,

we want to work with those local communities to place those centers within the communities.

This will hopefully provide for tourists who want to come to our NLCS units, shop there, stay there, and provide a local economic boom because of the NLCS unit.

At the same time, this helps us prevent further development in the NLCS unit, which will help maintain the ecological integrity of the land.

>> M. Draper: Great, Matt. Thank you so much for that overview of Theme 2.