

# Town Hall Meeting Summary

## **Town Hall Title**

Response to the PCAST Report to the President on Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity

## **Town Hall Description**

The President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) July 2011 report on *Sustaining Environmental Capital: Protecting Society and the Economy* recommends that a biodiversity and ecosystem services trends assessment be developed. Town Hall meeting participants will discuss a Federal response to the PCAST recommendation and stakeholder feedback.

The PCAST report is available at:

([http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/pcast\\_sustaining\\_environmental\\_capital\\_report.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/pcast_sustaining_environmental_capital_report.pdf))

## **Background**

Stakeholder needs relating to a biodiversity and ecosystem service trends assessment have been identified in meetings with diverse leaders and stakeholders. These meetings were organized on behalf of the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Subcommittee on Ecological Systems (SES) of the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Sustainability (CENRS).

- 1) *The Inaugural Policy Forum: Advancing Ecosystem Services in Federal Resource Management Decisions* hosted by the National Ecosystem Services Partnership (NESP) and A Community on Ecosystem Services (ACES), held at Resources for the Future in Washington, D.C. on May 8, 2012. This workshop focused on federal policy issues relating to ecosystem services and engaged Federal decision-makers in the ecosystem services policy community in a dialogue on approaches for implementing ecosystem-services-based approaches to natural resource planning and management.
- 2) A workshop for U.S. governmental stakeholders held at the Department of the Interior on May 9, 2012 in Washington, DC, titled *Developing a Federal Response to the PCAST Report on Sustaining Environmental Capital*. This workshop gathered federal input and ideas for incorporating biodiversity and ecosystem services into ecosystem assessments and decisions.
- 3) A meeting on *Habitat/Biodiversity Metrics at Multiple Scales and Across Jurisdictions* held May 10, 2012 by U.S. Geological Survey and Defenders of Wildlife at the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C. This goal of this meeting was to propose a partnership that would include agencies and private sector partners to develop and implement a credible and consistent set of measures for the quality and quantity of habitat for fish and wildlife that can be applied cost-effectively across programs, ownerships and scales.
- 4) A *Global Policy Forum* held as part of the 5th Annual International Ecosystem Services Partnership (ESP) Conference in Portland, Oregon on July 30, 2012. This forum provided an opportunity to obtain input from an international perspective on needs and ideas for addressing key issues relating to a biodiversity and ecosystem services trends assessment. The issues relating to a biodiversity and ecosystem services trends

assessment are common across national boundaries, and international perspectives and experience enrich the identification, development, and implementation of an assessment to inform critical public policy choices.

- 5) A *working group* held August 1 – 2 during the ESP conference. The working group reviewed the discussion of the four previous workshops and began the development of a paper outlining key issues that need to be addressed in a biodiversity and ecosystem services trends assessment in response to the PCAST report.

Any trends assessment needs to explicitly consider its usefulness to decision makers. Therefore, the discussion in these meetings were designed to initiate dialogue across a broad group of stakeholders on how a biodiversity and ecosystem services trends assessment can be most useful to decision makers at the national, regional, and local levels. The discussions were organized around the identification of key questions, issues, and challenges for biodiversity and ecosystem services trends assessments using four fundamental themes to assess biodiversity and ecosystem services:

- 1) **Identification:** Do we need a common set of categories and if so, how should these categories be structured?
- 2) **Assessment and Quantification:** How can we most effectively understand the biophysical processes that produce ecosystem services and the impact of change on these processes?
- 3) **Valuation:** How can we develop valuation estimates that are most useful to decision makers?
- 4) **Partnerships and Decision Making:** How can we most effectively and routinely incorporate ecosystem services and biodiversity measures into resource management decisions?

### **Target Audience**

This session will be of interest to scientists, practitioners, and managers interested in responses to the PCAST recommendations and potential strategies for assessing biodiversity and ecosystem services.

### **Town Hall Organizers**

Carl Shapiro USGS

Dianna Hogan USGS