

Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent

Summary of the Dialogue on November 6-7, 2008

Situation Statement

The Crown of the Continent is a 17 million acre ecosystem that spans portions of Alberta, British Columbia, and Montana and is anchored by Glacier and Waterton National Parks. The “Crown” spills water to the Pacific Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Hudson Bay. Native people continue to occupy the region that has been their homeland for thousands of years. Grizzly bear, wolverine, wolf, and bull trout are also at home in the landscape.

Jurisdictionally, the Crown includes two countries, seven tribal nations, two provinces, and one state, with more than 20 government agencies exercising some type of authority and management of the landscape. The Crown is also unique in that it has received more special designations than any similar landscape, including the first International Peace Park, Biosphere Reserve, World Heritage Site, two national parks, five wilderness areas, the Flathead Wild and Scenic River, and habitat for six endangered species. Some observers claim that the Crown is globally significant because it is one of the most intact large-scale landscapes in the world, making it an important laboratory to understand the interaction of humans and nature.

Given these unique values, the Crown faces several issues or threats - the inevitability of climate change and how to mitigate and adapt to its effects; population growth and development in the necklace of communities surrounding the Crown; a blending of traditional economic engines such as ranching, logging, and mining with new opportunities based on tourism, recreation, and second-home development; and fragmentation of wildlife habitat due to subdivisions, transportation corridors, and other developments.

In response to these issues, individuals and groups are working locally and regionally to understand, celebrate, and protect the Crown’s unique values. Building on a heritage of trans-boundary collaboration that dates back at least 75 years to the creation of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, there is a robust sense of identity in places such as the Rocky Mountain Front, the Blackfoot/Seeley/Swan area, the Flathead Valley, and various watershed groups and other place-based partnerships throughout British Columbia, Alberta, and Montana. The Crown Managers Partnership (a group of public resource managers from across the region) and Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Education Consortium span the entire ecosystem. And the recently completed Crown of the Continent Geotourism Map has perhaps done more than any recent effort to facilitate a sense of regional identity at the level of the Crown.

The future of the Crown relies in large measure on the simple fact that over 100 government agencies, non-government organizations, and place-based partnerships are working in the region. Each effort, whether local or ecosystem-wide - came into existence because of a government mandate or because a conservation or stewardship need/opportunity was not being addressed. And, each initiative continues to operate because it has mobilized the right people a compelling purpose, and has found sufficient financial support to continue its work.

While the efforts underway are diverse and effective, they are often discrete and disconnected. Past and current efforts also struggle to constructively engage local communities, tribes and First Nations, and elected and appointed officials. Within this context, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the Public Policy Research Institute at The University of Montana convened a Roundtable of recognized leaders to:

- Affirm the values that define the Crown;
- Identify the most compelling issues facing the region;
- Clarify who is doing what and what needs to be done; and
- Prioritize actions that should be taken.

This document summarizes the results of the two-day Roundtable.

What We Value

According to the interviews conducted prior to the Roundtable, most respondents identified *intact diverse ecosystem* as the most valued asset of the Crown of the Continent. This value was followed by *critical wildlife habitat, headwaters to the nation, large acreage in public ownership with protections in place, and strong community values*. Other values identified by respondents include water supply and water quality, legal protections on the landscape, tribal homeland and culture, and that there is still a chance to conserve these assets. Many commented that these values are inter-related.

During the Roundtable, the participants agreed to the additional values:

- A diverse, functioning, relatively intact ecosystem that is globally significant.
- A geographically unique natural area containing the headwaters of three water systems.
- Habitat for a diverse array and a significant number of native flora and fauna.
- Home for charismatic mega fauna, especially the grizzly bear that is strongly identified with this area.
- A natural landscape with breathtaking scenic vistas, wildness, quietude, dark skies that inspires a special connection between people and nature.
- A place that spans an international and tribal boundaries providing the opportunity to build across-border understanding through cooperation.
- Homeland to First Nations and Native Americans.
- A resource-rich area that supports economic activities (mining, logging, ranching, outfitting) that also fosters an appreciation and strong ties to the land.
- An area that is a compelling attraction to outsiders creating an opportunity for sustainable tourism that reinforces our heritage and special place.
- A place that supports ongoing dialogue about the appropriate balance between resource use and protection, and between private and community rights and responsibilities.
- Strong, unique, rural communities that foster the Crown way of life, including ranchers and other landowners that value conservation.
- Residents in close proximity to wilderness who have a special connection to the land and through traditional activities like hunting, fishing, and camping. Nearby wilderness.
- Functioning institutions and infrastructure.
- Native cultures (First Nations, Native Americans) that provide a tie to the very long-term history of the Crown.
- An opportunity to learn from and share the lessons of this special environment through education and research.
- A place valued for public access to public and private land to hunt, fish, and pursue other recreational activities.

The Issues We Face

According to the interviews conducted prior to the Roundtable, the largest number of responders identified *fragmentation of the rural landscape from subdivision, energy development, and road construction* as the biggest issue facing the Crown of the Continent. However, responders spread out their priorities among a variety of issues - including reduced water quality and quantity; habitat degradation from short-term recreational overuse; need for energy supply to meet human demands; need for sustainable economy; desire to maintain community values in the face of change; threats to loss of tribal culture and sacred lands; long-term global climate change; diplomatic friction between Canada and US over water use, energy development, and border security; and the lack of understanding about the importance of the Crown ecosystem and lack of framework for coordinating efforts. One respondent summed it up nicely by pointing out that it depends on the spatial scale you are talking about --- at a global scale it is climate change; at the sub-regional level it might be energy; and at the local scale it might be growth management. Also science, politics, and economics are the three drivers of what is important.

During the Roundtable, the participants focused on four key areas - a combination of issues and ways to address those issues:

Education

The Context -- Varying levels and kinds of knowledge exist among citizens. Residents for millennia or generations with close ties to the place have well-developed local knowledge of the ecosystem and its relationship to human communities. Newcomers bring new views and may be less knowledgeable of the ecosystem, but may have valuable skills. This diversity is important in developing a shared conception of the landscape.

There are a wide variety of educational and interpretive programs or entities already operating in the Crown. Some are formal, traditional educational opportunities and others are less formal, experiential opportunities.

- Education provides the foundation for action. How can we turn awareness into action to support broadly held values in the Crown?
- Need to learn from the public. Ideally, education should be a shared process, learning from each other in an exchange of knowledge.
- Critical to recognize and understand the interconnectedness of social, economic and ecological systems and how these components affect each other.
- How do we build capacity for integrated decision-making at multiple scales from the individual to the regional?
- What tools are there to balance the social, economic and ecological effects?

- Need to build understanding of commonalities and differences within the Crown.
- Need for broader recognition of the value of education as a foundation for further work.
- More financial, staff and materials resources are needed, especially for non-profits.

Public Lands, Water, and Air

The Context -- Federal, Provincial, Tribal, county, and local government agencies manage a variety of public lands, water, and air under different mandates, Acts, and legislation within the Crown of the Continent. While this creates the potential for one agency's actions to harm or be at cross purposes with another agency or agencies, it also creates opportunities to partner when there are shared management objectives, such as noxious weeds, exotic species, and fire. In Canada, the Provinces of Alberta and British Columbia manage a large proportion of the public lands --called Crown lands -- for natural resource development including mining, timber, and energy development. A smaller portion is managed as protected areas such as Waterton Lakes National Park. In Montana, a large portion of the federal lands are managed as protected areas such as Glacier National Park and federally designated wilderness areas. Others are designated National Forests and State Forests that are managed for timber production and recreation. Some transboundary wildlife species are endangered in the U.S. and therefore protected, while these same species are hunted across the border in Canada. Establishing compatible cross-border management strategies and agreements are critical to the successful management of these lands.

- Public land managers deal with issues that are discrete to particular areas. That said, many issues transcend political and jurisdictional boundaries and are most effectively addressed at a broader regional scale (e.g., cultural values and traditions, energy development, water quality and quantity, mitigate and adapt to climate change, etc).
- Protect and manage disturbance regimes (e.g. fire, insects...).
- Identify and protect wildlife corridors.
- Conserve and enhance environmental quality (e.g. forest health, water quality, encouraging a restoration economy).
- Build capacity at local level to better deal with “spillover” impacts.
- Create a system to track change overtime (e.g. indicators).
- Recognize that actions adjacent to the boundaries of public lands affect public lands.
- Recognize that public land is an economic engine.

Sustainable Economy

The Context - The economy in and around the Crown of the Continent is changing. To sustain livable communities, a rural lifestyle, and unique cultural values, it is essential to promote and support vibrant economies. The challenge for citizens and leaders alike is to strike a balance between the economic opportunities we currently have (e.g., timber, agriculture, tourism, government, schools, banking, social services, health care, infrastructure, etc.) and those that could be developed (e.g., second homes, resorts, etc.).

- Economy today includes timber, ranching, mining, real estate development, and tourism.
- Ranching is challenged by land conversion to real estate. Timber is challenged by lack of access to forest and weak market. What happens to those jobs?
- Tourism can be a growth industry but must be managed so that it enhances rather than endangers the Crown's sense of place.
- The development economy, especially in the U.S., could harm conservation values and is not a steady economic drivers.
- Private landowners must be directly engaged in protecting Crown values.

Conservation

The Context -- Native peoples to the Crown of the Continent called the area “the backbone of the world”, and the natural resources abundant here are integral to their culture and way of life. Likewise, newer residents of and visitors to the Crown of the Continent share a deep appreciation for the open landscapes, abundant wildlife and access to protected areas for enjoyment and recreation. These values and assets define what makes the Crown such an internationally important and unique landscape. It is the work conservationists today to conserve, support and respect those values and assets within the context of maintaining the social, economic and community fabric of the region.

- Land and wildlife conservation efforts have tried to protect environmentally significant land from fragmentation by rural subdivisions and transportation corridors and to buffer protected lands.
- Need to better manage a relationship with local communities to identify a spectrum of options for appropriate development, recreation growth, and land protection and conservation areas.
- Local and subregional efforts to conserve land and wildlife habitat need to be amplified and better networked to ensure that the landscape supports native species and traditional livelihoods in a complementary manner.

What Needs To Be Done?

Prior to the Roundtable, the participants identified a number of activities that could (should) be done to understand, celebrate, protect, and sustain the Crown. These ideas are captured in the report *Crown of the Continent Roundtable: Common Values, Parallel Actions* (October 22, 2008).

During the Roundtable, the participants discussed a number of options and generally agreed to the following menu of potential actions:

- Continue to share information and exchange ideas (e.g., web sites, CMP Annual Forum, COCEEC, Annual Conference, etc.)
- Support existing “communities of interest” - CMP, COCEEC, Geotourism Council
- Identify and work with “communities of interest” - private landowners, local government, tribes, sustainable economies, and conservation
- Continue to build regional identity and brand the region through extensive education, outreach, and marketing - start by clarifying the audience
- Support research to increase understanding of the Crown
- Develop a shared vision of the Crown
- Create a strategic plan to protect Crown values
- Develop and implement projects to protect Crown values
- Promote thoughtful land use plans and regulations - at a local, state, provincial, and Crown-wide level
- Promote and support a sustainable economy; recognizing a balance of uses
- Develop a climate change strategy for the Crown - mitigation and adaptation strategies
- Build the capacity of land trusts (funding)
- Develop tools/policies for land conservation (e.g., salable tax credits)
- Amplify community support to regional scale
- Build capacity for community-based collaboration by increasing the understanding of political leaders and others - it’s a long process
- Secure additional funding for education initiatives
- Define and sharpen “the message” about what we mean about the Crown and why it is a unique, special place
- Provide student/teacher-driven education
- Reach-out to landowners
- Find common ground
- Clarify/create pathways to engagement once we raise awareness and understanding
- Serve as ambassadors to actively plant seeds for a regional vision; create a speakers bureau and outreach tools

What We Should Do

Through a dot-voting exercise, the participants prioritized the following as the top-five action items.

1. Continue the Roundtable.
2. Clarify Crown-wide values by surveying broader groups of citizens and constituents.
3. Build regional identity/brand the region/promote and market the region.
4. Reach-out to private landowners, tribes, and local governments/elected officials.
5. Promote a sustainable economy.

Other options for action that were considered:

- Create a more complete body of information for the Crown - how to revise and update...
- Convene an annual Conference
- Sustain ...
 - i. Crown Manager's Partnership
 - ii. COCEEC
 - iii. Geotourism
- Organize the conservation community
- Organize/sustain the research community
- Select and implement a Crown-wide project (e.g., indicators of ecological health, weeds, climate change, etc.)
- Create a common statement of values about the Crown - ongoing, evolutionary
- Create a (voluntary) common a vision, goals, aspirations, and a framework for action
- Create a regional land-use framework

Next Steps

- LILP and PPRI will ...
 - Prepare and distribute a 2-page summary of the purpose and outcomes of the Roundtable by November 14th, 2008.
 - Prepare and distribute this meeting summary by November 21st, 2008.
 - Make some minor adjustments to the maps and GIS database.
 - Convene the Coordinating Committee.
- The Coordinating Committee will meet on December 11th at 10:00 a.m. to discuss next steps.

Best Possible Outcomes

During the opening session of the Roundtable, the participants identified the following ideas as the “best possible outcomes” for the meeting:

- Work collaboratively to conserve what we value
- Communicate information/research to a broader constituency
- Develop a strategy, in detail, to raise awareness
- Achieve more collectively than what we’re already doing on an individual level
- Increase awareness of players’ interests in Crown
- Create opportunities to bring a variety of groups together
- Explore economic development
- Find a way bring more landowners to the table
- Define what makes community-based collaborative conservation work; determine how to do this on a Crown-wide basis
- Develop bottom-up community-based conservation
- Find out how various efforts are coming together
- Look for opportunities where conservation can align with other interests
- Contribute a way to conduct business while keeping neighbor’s interests in mind (keeping Crown’s interests in mind)
- Identify/recognize opportunities
- Determine the role of the North Fork of the Flathead in the Crown; determine future direction of guides/outfitters
- Develop a shared vision - identify synergies
- Bring new knowledge into established plans
- Build a database (other than maps)
- Understand research needs - both social and scientific
- Improve understanding of paths of action
- Bring other people to the table or get information to them
- Keep broad-based strategies mindful of the current economy
- Build greater understanding of the bigger picture of all these overlapping efforts
- Tie the next generation back into sustainable resources on the ground
- Strengthen and build relationships
- Elevate significance of ecological, economical and social issues in the Crown; compete with GYE

Interests and Resources

| Who | Interest | Resources |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Lincoln Institute of Land Policy | The Crown is a great demonstration project on how to do regional collaboration at a landscape scale, and in a proactive manner; very interested in the role of climate change | Knowledge Partners Funding |
| Mary Sexton | Continue to convene a multiparty Roundtable | Staff Funding Time |
| Steve Thompson | Build regional identity Address climate change Create a political framework Generate funding Organize a conservation network Continue the Roundtable Convene a conference | Time |
| Anne Dahl | Clarify and communicate the global significance of the Crown Emphasize learning, educating, and doing | Some time Ideas on funding |
| Corleen Martin | Continue networking and sharing Promote a balance of uses and conservation | Time |
| Rich Moy | Clarify and communicate “the message” Sustain the Crown Manager’s Partnership | Time |
| Evan Berger | Articulate and act on a common Crown goal | Time Support |
| Renny Gritz | Articulate a common goal Share ideas Link to other land trusts | Some time |
| David Beranek | Protect the North Fork of the Flathead | Commitment Understand Canadian politics and how to get things done Meat! |
| Bob Rasmussen | Share information Seek opportunities to leverage interests and resources Identify and resolve conflicts | Time |
| Len Broberg | Promote learning Provide graduate student opportunities Make good things happen Continue the Roundtable to complement the Crown Manager’s Partnership | Graduate students Time A little funding |
| Kevin Wirtanen | Participate in the Roundtable to learn | Connections Advice |
| Jeff Fox | Articulate common goals and a vision for the Crown Identify and act on conservation priorities | Science Outreach Advocacy |
| Cathy Barbouletos | Manage a national forest within the Crown Sustain the Crown Manager’s Partnership as a scientific resource for the region | ? |
| Bee Hall | Share information Seek opportunities to leverage interests and resources | Time Network with private landowners and communities |

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| | Identify and resolve conflicts | Advice |
| Katie Deuel | Sustain the ecological integrity, cultural values, and economic opportunities in the region | A larger regional vision Network Convening capacity On-the-ground projects |
| Gary Sullivan | Echos much of what others have said Continue the Roundtable as a unique opportunity and forum Focus on how this group can help me! Work together to raise funding, lobby Congress, etc. | Time Agency leadership |
| Jim Stone | Network Leverage resources Work with landowners | Time |
| Jerry Sorenson | Share information Seek opportunities to leverage interests and resources Identify and resolve conflicts | Funding for projects Commitment to the economic future of the region |
| Mary Riddle | Committed to the Crown Committed to the Crown Manager's Partnership Clarify the global significance of the Crown | Science GIS data base Education Annual CMP Forum |
| Bill Dolan | Sustain the Crown Manager's Partnership Link to other stakeholders in the region | ? - retiring soon |
| John Russell | Protect the North Fork of the Flathead Network Leverage resources Work with landowners | ? |
| Lex Blood | Sustain and enhance COCEEC Maintain the Roundtable and a place at the table Focus on getting some things done | Experience Convening capacity Conduit and portal |
| Al Soobotin | Sustain the Crown Manager's Partnership Facilitate learning Celebrate success stories Seek funding for projects through the Roundtable | Technical expertise Conduit to leaders |
| Alsion Kardos | Provide research and learning opportunities Build and share knowledge | Graduate students Faculty at the University of Montana |
| Racene Friede | Clarify how the Crown translates to the business community Facilitate communication and education | Help share the message Links to lots of groups |
| Public Policy Research Institute | Create and sustain an effective approach to sustain the economy, community, and environment of the Crown | Staff the Roundtable Research on alternative models of landscape conservation National network of practitioners and scholars |