



REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP IN THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT: PATTERNS AND PROSPECTS

— WORKSHOP SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS —

INTRODUCTION

On May 30-31, 2007, 62 people representing conservation, community, and economic interests within the Crown of the Continent (see attached spreadsheet) met at Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish, Montana. The workshop was convened by the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy and the Public Policy Research Institute at the University of Montana. Co-sponsors included the Miistakis Institute for the Rockies at the University of Calgary and the National Parks Conservation Association.

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Build a common understanding of the Crown's social/cultural, economic, and ecological values.
- Build a common understanding of issues facing the Crown.
- Clarify who is doing what – formal and informal stewardship efforts at both region-wide and sub-regional levels.
- Identify affinities—common areas of interest.
- Explore how to improve regional stewardship in the Crown (networking, information exchange, etc.).

Participants agreed that the Crown of the Continent is one of the world's most unique, intact ecosystems. They discussed the value of exploring regional collaboration in the Crown of the Continent in order to conserve the region's unique natural resources, foster friendly communities with a high quality of life, and sustain the economic vitality

of the region. Based on these shared values, participants began to outline a number of “next steps” toward regional (and sub-regional) stewardship in the Crown (see page 5).

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Ralph Waldt, naturalist and author of *Crown of the Continent: Last Great Wilderness of the Rocky Mountains*, gave a slide show and spoke of the remarkably rich Crown ecosystem as the meeting place of boreal, Pacific, prairie, and southern Rockies species. Waldt said this diverse landscape may be “the last real hope” for grizzly bears, wolves, and lynx in the heart of the continent. He called for a concerted, integrated approach to preserving wildlands and habitat, in part through emphasizing sustainable ways of living in this landscape.

PARTICIPANT PANELS

Several participants described stewardship efforts at the local and sub-regional scale. On behalf of the **Coalition for the Rocky Mountain Front**, **Jennifer Ferenstein** said she sees many changes coming to the Crown, citing oil and gas leases as the biggest conservation concern on the Front. Other prominent concerns include public access, weeds, poaching, water and air quality, and trespassing. The recent retirement of oil and gas leases on the Front is proof of what a team effort can achieve. **Lorin Hicks**, with **Plum Creek Timber**, also sees change in the air. The company owns 1.25 million acres in Montana, and its focus is shifting toward conservation land sales, conservation easements, and sustainable forestry. **Jim Stone**, chair of the **Blackfoot Challenge**, cautioned participants to bear in mind that stewardship is often as much about the people as it is about the resource. Good things happen when people partner and work with their neighbors, and landowners are a key piece of any land and habitat conservation effort. **Gabe Furshong** (with the **Montana Wilderness Association**) introduced **Jim Paris**, of the **Ponderosa Snow Warriors**, who described a collaborative effort that reached agreement on recommendations for winter travel on the Lincoln area along the southern end of the Crown. The working group included the Montana Snowmobile Association, Montana Wilderness Association, Ponderosa Snow Warriors, and biologists from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Finally, **Carla Hoopes** talked about collaborative management of noxious weeds, noting that many resources are available through **Montana’s Noxious Weed Awareness and Education program**. As the program coordinator, Carla regularly works with public and private landowners and weed officials in the U.S. and Canada. She said the tools for fighting weeds across boundaries are already in place, somewhat ahead of awareness of the problem and available solutions.

A second group of participants spoke about region-wide stewardship efforts in the Crown. **Bill Dolan**, superintendent of **Waterton Lakes National Park**, reviewed the work of the **Crown Managers Partnership**, a six-year effort to foster cooperation and coordination among 21 federal, First Nations, provincial, and state agencies responsible for land and resource management in the Crown. CMP hosts an annual forum to focus on a specific stewardship issue each year, and has recently drafted a strategic plan and vision statement. **Steve Thompson** (with the **National Parks Conservation Association**) gave an update of the **Geotourism MapGuide** project with National Geographic. He said that residents of the Crown have a good understanding of where they live, but less awareness of the region as a whole. The MapGuide is proving to be a compelling catalyst for bringing diverse interests together and recognizing the qualities and themes that make the Crown a unique place. **Lex Blood** explained his work with the **Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Education Consortium**, emphasizing that COCEEC is strictly about education and operates more as an active “grouping” or network of educators and educational institutions than a hard-sided organization. COCEEC participants meet semi-annually to talk about ecosystem planning.

LESSONS FROM OTHER REGIONS

Bob Keiter, director of the **Wallace Stegner Center for Land, Resources, and the Environment at the University of Utah**, talked about integrating government and citizens around ecosystem issues. He defined regionalism as a “mutual sense of place, a shared concern for what the future may bring.” Bob reviewed six collaborative efforts aimed at landscape-scale stewardship: (1) the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee; (2) Northwest Forest Plan; (3) Sierra Nevada Framework; (4) Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management; (5) Canyon Country Partnership; and (6) Malpai Borderlands. Based on these case studies, Bob said that collaborative conservation works best when it is organic, home-grown, and pragmatic. Key principles include fostering fair and equitable processes, inclusivity, openness and transparency, accountability, common definitions and goals, and sustainability. Successful collaboration also tends to rely on adaptive management protocols.

Steve Frisch, vice-president of programs at the **Sierra Business Council**, said his organization’s 750 members are 85 percent local business owners. The remainder include representatives of local governments, land trusts, and other stakeholders. (Membership dues are \$200/year.) SBC is organized around sustainability in the face of both social and environmental challenges. The region is 400 miles long and 150 miles wide—this scale can make participants feel isolated from others, given the region’s relatively low population density. It also spans seven ecosystem types and includes 30 cities. The Sierra region is in transition; ranching is disappearing under urban

encroachment. These colliding values beg the question: how do you transition to a new way of doing business?

SBC's approach is to:

Engage diverse leadership – elected officials, agencies, and leaders from the private sector. Host a week-long leadership institute.

Create regional identity – breaking political boundaries and creating natural, cultural boundaries.

Find the right issues – the greatest barrier is our culture of conflict. So take small steps at first. Build an infrastructure and constituency for change. Let it develop organically. This results in both creation and destruction—chaos at times—but that's okay as long as you keep moving forward.

Do community planning – Manage relationships, be collaborative, mediate land-use disputes, link affordable housing to open-space planning.

Build success with direct, on-the-ground conservation projects.

Foster Sustainable business practices – Re-localize economies, energy, sustainable agriculture, waste management. "The private marketplace is strong engine of change."

Steve also cited four key lessons for engaging the private sector:

1. Identify/create value. Give recognition. Identify the business specifically.
2. Go to them. SBC has three people that go to the members, one-on-one. Timing and vocabulary must be just right.
3. Provide value. Every program must solve someone's problem, especially business owners' problems.
4. Be inclusive. Respect the diversity of the community.

NEXT STEPS

During breakout sessions and a final plenary session, participants began to outline a number of "next steps" toward regional (and sub-regional) stewardship in the Crown. Three of these generated considerable interest.

Web Resources – Everyone voiced support for PPRI's ongoing work to create a single web portal for "all things Crown," including prominent links to the geotourism MapGuide site, COCEEC, and the Miistakis Institute. We currently have a placeholder web page serving this purpose and will soon upload the Crown networking list of people and contact information, and also the organizational profiles, both of which we will continue to update and maintain as more people and groups get involved.

Crown Stewardship Council – In response to Bob Keiter and Steve Frisch’s presentations, many people expressed interest in developing a Crown Stewardship Council modeled after the Sierra Business Council and the best ideas from efforts such as the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem initiative. The existing Crown Stewardship Council that is steering the geotourism MapGuide project could serve as the foundation for a more inclusive, more broadly scoped council.

More Forums for Regional Collaboration – People also spoke in favor of convening more face-to-face meetings, specifically to address barriers to collaboration across international and inter-provincial/state borders, and around particular issues and interests. They would also like to explore other strategies for fostering regional identity and networking, such as drafting vision and mission statements for Crown stewardship.

Below is a more complete list of potential next steps, with items prioritized into what actions are ongoing now, which could be done sooner than later, and which can be started as time, resources, and enthusiasm allow. Several groups and organizations voiced interest in networking and partnering to continue or initiate stewardship work. These include the Crown Stewardship Council assisting with the National Geographic Crown of the Continent Geotourism Map Project, Crown Managers Partnership, the UM Public Policy Research Institute, Miistakis Institute, Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Education Consortium, and others.

The Crown Stewardship Council advising on the geotourism MapGuide also has two committees, one looking at web-based platforms for the map and strategies to foster and support stewardship efforts to sustain regional character. The other committee will be developing long-term options for the Council, including management of the web page, future uses and revisions of the MapGuide, and support of regional stewardship initiatives. (For more information on the Council, go to <http://www.crownofthecontinent.net> and click on Stewardship Council in the header menu. To participate in the Council, contact the regional MapGuide coordinator, Steve Thompson, at sthompson@npca.org.)

Please note that these next steps are just a starting point— we invite you to add to them and adapt them as new ideas emerge and more people become involved in regional stewardship in the Crown. Also consider this a call to action— this stewardship work belongs to all of us. Please let us know what tasks and projects you want to participate in.

Next Steps

Ongoing Now

- Develop a single Web site with links to Geotourism MapGuide, COCEEC, and CMP sites.
 - Upload network list of people and contact info, and organizational profiles to web site.
- Develop the Crown Stewardship Council—modeled on the Sierra Business Council and the best ideas from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem effort. Broaden the scope beyond the MapGuide.
 - Identify stewardship leaders within the Crown.
 - Invite others to the network and Council (who wasn't at the workshop but should have been?).
 - Collaboratively draft Crown stewardship vision and mission statements. Describe common interests and concerns.
 - Develop and implement talking points, a common vocabulary, and "Crown graphics" that groups can use to foster a shared regional identity. Explore other ways to foster a regional sense of place.
- Link people with common interests into workgroups or "stewardship circles" such as: private landowner conservation; data and information sharing; regional identity and values; land use planning and development; wildlife and critical habitat; noxious weeds; etc.

Do Sooner than Later

- Inventory activities that would add value to participating organizations.
- Take on one to three tangible, near-term projects to engage people, build trust, and engender success. Prioritize—what time constraints do we face? What values are most at risk? What needs to happen region-wide vs. sub-regionally? What can we do *now*?
- Convene a dialogue to address the specific international and inter-provincial/state boundary issues that complicate regional-scale thinking and acting.
- Convene more face-to-face meetings to incubate ideas and re-consider the role of the network, perhaps holding additional meetings in British Columbia and Alberta.

As Time, Resources, and Enthusiasm Allow

- Provide access to resources (spatial analysis and other decision-support tools) to help decision makers.
- Create an education/leadership program in the Crown.
- Gather regional success stories and find avenues for disseminating those stories.

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