

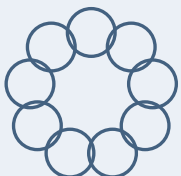
Summary Report

4TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Building Partnerships: Linking Local Actions & Landscape Outcomes

September 11 – 13, 2013

Glacier Park Lodge • East Glacier Park, Montana



**Roundtable on the
Crown of the Continent**

*Connecting People to Sustain & Enhance
Culture, Community, & Conservation*

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William K. Walker

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the many folks at Blackfeet Community College who provided local insight during the planning process and to Miss Blackfeet and the youth dancers, to Marvin Weatherwax Sr., and Sun Tours who welcomed us to their community.

A Leadership Team guides the Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent and the development of the annual conference. Many thanks to the 2013 members:

- Clayton Matt, Culture Co-Chair, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
- Stephen Legault, Conservation Co-Chair, Crown of the Continent Conservation Initiative
- Mary Sexton, Community Co-Chair
- Dylan Boyle, Crown of the Continent Geotourism Council
- Anne Dahl, Swan Ecosystem Center
- Ian Dyson, Crown Managers Partnership, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
- Shannon Frank, Oldman Watershed Council
- Dorothy First Rider, Kainai/Blood Tribe
- Dave Hillary, Kootenay Conservation Program
- Alan Rollo, Sun and Teton River Watershed Groups
- Erin Sexton, Crown Managers Partnership, The University of Montana Flathead Lake Biological Station
- John T. Shannon, U.S. Forest Service Regions 1 & 4
- Carole Stark, Water Matters
- Paul Travis, Glacier National Park Conservancy
- Matthew McKinney, Roundtable Co-Director, Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Policy
- Gary Tabor, Roundtable Co-Director, Center for Large Landscape Conservation

Recognition and thanks are also extended to the individuals listed below. They acted as recorders during the breakout discussions and panel sessions and their work fed directly into this summary report.

- Laura Caplins, Nature – Link Institute
- Stephen Edwards, The University of Montana
- Anne Grant, The University of Montana
- Kirsten Gruver, Big Sky Watershed Corps
- Sue Higgins, Center for Large Landscape Conservation
- Emma Horton, Big Sky Watershed Corps
- Nicholas Littman, The University of Montana
- Shelby Marshall, Big Sky Watershed Corps
- Clara Moulton, Big Sky Watershed Corps
- Kevin Stone, The University of Montana
- Jennifer Thomsen, Clemson University

Introduction

The Roundtable is an ongoing forum to bring together people who care about the Crown of the Continent. It is based on the observation that the future of the region is being shaped by over 100 government agencies, Tribes and First Nations, non-government organizations, and community-based partnerships. Through workshops, forums, policy dialogues, and conferences, the Roundtable: (1) embraces the 18 million acre region; (2) includes all perspectives and communities; (3) focuses on connecting people, facilitating communication, and catalyzing action; (4) supplements other activities; and (5) promotes sustainable communities and landscapes. The Roundtable is not any particular group of people, a government commission, or a new organization.

The annual conference serves as one of the primary vehicles to achieve the core mission of the Roundtable – to connect people to sustain and enhance *culture, community, and conservation* in the Crown of the Continent.

The 4th Annual Conference of the Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent had an organizing theme of “Building Partnerships: Linking Local Actions and Landscape Outcomes.” Over 160 representatives from nonprofit organizations, government agencies, local governments, businesses, tribes, First Nations, local communities, and universities traveled to East Glacier Park, Montana to celebrate the people, communities, and landscapes of this remarkable region. Participants also learned about partnerships along Montana’s Rocky Mountain Front and explored ways to partner with one another to sustain and enhance the culture, communities, and conservation values in the Crown of the Continent.

The objectives and expected outcomes included:

1. Exchange information and ideas, connect people working on similar issues, and foster a sense of regional identity;
2. Celebrate the links between the culture, community, and conservation values of the Crown of the Continent and how people are working to sustain and enhance these values; and
3. Examine some of the most compelling issues facing the Crown of the Continent and build our collective capacity to address these issues at a local and regional scale.

This summary report seeks to capture and record the ideas and possible next steps explored at the conference for the participants interested in carrying these conversations and actions forward and for the people who were unable to attend, but who would like to engage in the upcoming year.

Celebrating Partnerships Along the Rocky Mountain Front

Panel members: Jim Posewitz is a founding director of the Cinnebar Foundation and has spent most of his career with Fish and Wildlife Service, working on a variety of projects from the Missouri River to Yellowstone. Mark Korte serves as the executive director of the Rocky Mountain Front Weed Roundtable, a collaborative group addressing invasive species management. Stoney Burke is part of the coalition working to protect the Rocky Mountain Front and is involved in the efforts to pass the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act. Terry Tatsey spoke about the importance of bison and the role of the linnii Initiative in bringing the bison back to the region¹. Cheryl Cobb is a landowner – her husband’s family has been working the Charlois Cobb Ranch since 1946.

These panel members shared stories of their greatest successes or lessons learned with respect to community, conservation, and culture and some of the different partnerships working to sustain and enhance these values along the Rocky Mountain Front:

- Importance of private land ownership. All speakers emphasized the importance of private ownership in addressing long-term challenges and opportunities – both in the past and in the present.
- Don’t forget the history of this place. Our current conversations on community, culture, and conservation are possible because of people like Teddy Roosevelt, the landowners and their families who have been working this land for generations, and the Blackfoot Ancestors who knew how to utilize the land and harvest animals by season.
- Conservation is a slow and steady endeavor. In some cases, such as weed management, no change may be an indicator of success.
- Dialogue is essential. These initiatives began when neighbors started talking to each other, when the confederacies started talking, and realized they shared many of the same concerns. Dialogue is also the means of overcoming broad assumptions and learning the nuance of the issue and of the landscape.

The Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act

Bonnie Keller, staff member for U.S. Senator Max Baucus, and Jennifer Ferenstein, Outreach Coordinator for The Wilderness Society, provided an overview of the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act (Senate Bill 364).

Senate Bill 364 seeks to “establish the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Area, to designate certain Federal lands as wilderness, and to improve the management of noxious weeds in the Lewis and Clark National Forest, and for other purposes.” Since its beginnings, development of the bill has been guided by four driving principles:

¹ Video can be found at: <http://www.wcs.org/news-and-features-main/iinnii-initiative.aspx>

- No adverse economic burden on the people who use the land for their livelihood;
- Create manageable boundaries that use topography when possible;
- Respect good uses and create a balance of the different uses; and
- Think at a big-picture or landscape level, rather than on a specific hiking trail.

Senator Max Baucus, with the support of Senator John Tester, re-introduced the bill in February 2013. Although Senator Baucus remains optimistic about the bill's passage, several challenges must be overcome. First, Representative Steve Daines has expressed an affinity for the Rocky Mountain Front, but has yet to explicitly support the bill. An important next step will be for people around the region to make phone calls, and write letters to Representative Daines and to newspapers encouraging him to support the legislation.

Full text of the bill and an up-to-date progress report can be found at: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s364>. More information on the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act can also be found on Senator Baucus' website: <http://www.baucus.senate.gov/?p=general&id=86>.

Crown Café – What is happening in the Neighborhood?

This “open floor” session allowed any and all participants to share what they are doing in the Crown of the Continent, or to highlight emerging issues and initiatives. Below is a sampling of the updates that were shared.

- **Flathead Lakers- River to Lake initiative** consists of over a dozen partnerships and is currently interested in making connections with large landscape scale projects.
- **Miistakis Institute** has recently finished a documentary, “Highway Wilding,” which features an initiative to promote save wildlife passage across roads.
- **Headwaters Montana** is supporting the proposed North Fork Watershed Protection Act and working with locals to find solutions as part of federal planning process.
- **Wilderness Society – Bozeman** is working on adaptive management grant to the Southwest Crown of the Continent Collaboration. The Wilderness Society will be holding five workshops to share and learn about how these projects are affecting local communities and supporting landscape restoration.
- **Montana Conservation Corp** is inspired to hear about exciting projects around the region and to share opportunities for local conservation projects to utilize our Americorps resources.

- **Water Matters** is interested in supporting more strategic approaches for community involvement in decision-making and watershed protection in Alberta.
- **Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes** are finalizing a Tribal Climate Change Plan and soon hope to receive approval from the Tribal Council.
- **Wild Rockies Field Institute** offers courses through the University of Montana and opportunities to learn about conservation issues while backpacking and other outdoor activities. The Wild Rockies Field Institute is interested in finding more opportunities for students to connect with your projects.

Developing a 21st Century Conservation & Recreation Agenda

Faye Kruger, Regional Forester for Northern Region, U.S. Forest Service presented a vision for large landscape conservation, recreation, and access to open space through collaboration with federal programs and local efforts.

The America’s Great Outdoors Initiative (AGO) developed a framework to connect the American people to their public lands and to make “the federal government a better partner with states, tribes, and local communities.”² Rather than creating more bureaucracy, AGO seeks to turn to the local communities to build lasting solutions. Five demonstration landscapes, one being the Crown of the Continent, were chosen as “models for aligning, targeting, and better leveraging federal resources and achieving more strategic landscape conservation outcomes.”³

The goal to collaborate with local communities reflects a significant change in the way that federal agencies conduct business. In the past, federal agencies would provide opportunities for “public involvement,” but AGO provides a framework not just for federal agencies to work with local communities, but also for the federal agencies to work together. Since the launch of AGO in the Crown of the Continent, a new planning rule has been established, a framework for sustainable recreation developed, recreation information websites have been updated, and private lands have been protected through conservation easements. In addition, the network of local and regional partners continues to grow.

Integrating National and Local Priorities

Regional representatives – Julia Riber, U.S. Forest Service; Mary Riddle, National Park Service; Rick Hotaling Bureau of Land Management; and Yvette Converse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – reported on how the Crown is working to meet federal goals for large landscape conservation.

² www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/index.cfm

³ Conserving and Restoring America’s Great Outdoors: Large Landscape Conservation Demonstration Areas

The America's Great Outdoors Initiative came into existence and has evolved to meet the public's support for coordinated collaboration among the federal agencies. Those federal agencies developed a Memorandum of Understanding, which created a framework for the "federal family" to address three tasks: 1. Connect our lands, 2. Prevent the spread and reduce invasive species, and 3. Continue to refine ways to collaborate.

In addition to AGO, the Crown Managers Partnership and the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative seek to coordinate the many partner organizations at a broad landscape-scale and create opportunities to share resources and information. These initiatives have led to a coordinated database of targeted invasive species and ecological health projects.

These federal partnerships are also working to improve ecological connectivity, both at a local and a regional scale. Although chronically underfunded, the Land and Water Conservation Fund is a federal program that works to link public and private lands and has successfully provided funding for conservation easements in Montana. More information on this program can be found online: <http://stateparks.mt.gov/recreation/lwcf.html>.

For more information on these federal programs please visit:

- <http://www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/index.cfm> (information on AGO);
- <http://www.doi.gov/lcc/index.cfm> (background information on LCCs);
- <http://greatnorthernlcc.org/> (information on the Great Northern LCC); and
- <http://headwaterseconomics.org/interactive/atlas-gnlcc> (an interactive atlas depicting economic, land-use, and climate data.)

Regional Perspectives

This session provided an opportunity for provincial, state, tribal, and nonprofit leaders to reflect on federal conservation agendas. The following individuals spoke about the challenges and opportunities of collaboration at a large landscape scale:

- John Tubbs, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation;
- Gary Burnett, Blackfoot Challenge;
- Clayton Matt, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; and
- Ian Dyson, Crown Managers Partnership and Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

Since the volume of federal programs can still be difficult to comprehend, state agencies and local communities need a strategy for addressing decision-making authorities and to improve their ability to best leverage available resources, rather than act as competitors for those resources.

Tribes, agencies, nonprofits, and First Nations cannot work alone because no single entity

will curb the spread of invasive species, but by working together, the results of local actions can be amplified across the entire region. Such strategic planning and increased cooperation, however, needs to be precipitated by increased communication. The Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent, a panel member suggested, is in a position to facilitate that outreach and dialogue through events such as this annual conference.

Breakout Sessions: Building Partnerships to Achieve Common Interests

The breakout sessions were designed to highlight success stories and explore challenges and opportunities around five key issues – (1) indigenous perspectives; (2) sustainable economies; (3) working lands; (4) water; and (5) forestry.

These facilitated breakout sessions allowed participants to work together to address the following questions for a key issue:

1. What are the most successful partnerships addressing this topic in the Crown of the Continent, and why are they successful?
2. What are the emerging needs or opportunities relative to this topic?
3. How might these needs and opportunities be addressed, and by whom?
4. What additional people, information, and/or resources are needed to effectively address the emerging needs and opportunities?
5. Who is willing to do what to move this topic forward? Is there interest in convening some type of “working group” to continue this conversation?

Indigenous Perspectives: Participants in this breakout session discussed emerging priorities from an indigenous perspective.

Recording Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and integrating TEK into climate adaptation plans is a priority. The Blackfeet Community College, for example, has been meeting with elders from the Blackfoot Confederacy to record place names and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. “White society” stands to benefit tremendously from this wealth of knowledge, but the challenge will be to translate TEK in a way that doesn’t violate indigenous perspectives.

Other emerging needs or opportunities include:

- Connecting youth to nature.
- Need for cross-cultural education. Tribal peoples are not the same – this region is home to many different bands and Nations with differing treaties, protocols, and worldviews.
- Individuals from agencies and nonprofits should continue to build relationships, then work to develop partnerships.
- Conversations on projects and initiatives need to start at the beginning, not during the “consulting” phase.

Sustainable Economies: This session built upon the discussions at last year’s conference, “Pathways to Prosperity,” and explored ways that existing and emerging efforts are helping local communities and the region as a whole develop sustainable economic engines that can support vibrant local economies. Examples of such partnerships or initiatives include: Alberta SouthWest, Whitefish Legacy Partners, the Missoula County Open Space Bond and the resort tax enacted in Fernie, British Columbia and Whitefish, Montana.

Emerging needs or opportunities:

- Maintaining school enrollments.
- Expanding infrastructure (both basic and technology).
- Using natural and lifestyle amenities to draw an innovative young workforce to the region.
- Getting youth invested in their community.
- Developing a diversified economy that includes tourism, alternative energy, agriculture, and value added agriculture.

To address the issue of sustainable economies, the group noted the need to determine the indicators for a sustainable economy in the region and how to measure them. The group also identified the need for the conservation community to become involved in issues related to escalating land prices for local residents in areas such as the Swan Valley that have a significant amount of land marked for conservation.

Working Lands: Partnerships with private landowners play an important role in sustaining the culture, community, and conservation values of the Crown of the Continent. Although landowners certainly are an essential component, they are not the only players who need to be involved. Some keys to successful working lands partnerships include: conducting relevant research on land-use issues, utilizing local expertise, an ability to recognize strengths and weaknesses, acknowledging others, developing the approach together, and, of course, building trust among private and public land stewards.

Successful working lands partnerships also need to define the appropriate geographic scale at which to define the issue and recruit partners. The group observed that working toward landscape conservation requires a landscape-size conversation.

Emerging needs and opportunities:

- Expanding the toolbox. Conservation easements are a useful tool, but an inventory of available tools expands the range of options. Some current tools include the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan⁴ and America’s Great Outdoors.
- Coordinated investments in the landscape by federal, state, private, and tribal entities.
- Research to identify conservation goals, priority areas, and jurisdictional boundaries to reveal converging interests on the landscape as well as develop a full understanding of local, regional, provincial socio-economic and political realities.
- Bring the conversation to local communities, through a series of workshops around

⁴ <http://www.albertaefp.com/>

the region, to ensure that all values are represented and to increase the range of voices involved.

- Foster pride of place.

Water: This session was an opportunity for participants to map on-going and emerging efforts to balance competing uses (like recreation, agriculture, mining and industry), protect water quality, and make communities more resilient to fluctuations in water supply by quadrant. Many of these concerns were shared by other corners of the Crown, or, in the case of selenium levels in British Columbia, flowed into another quadrant.

Emerging needs or opportunities:

- Coordinated information sharing and gathering, such as through databases.
- Increased education and involvement schools, landowners, local communities – need to make water education interdisciplinary.
- Continued stakeholder engagement and education.
- Need to better understand current water policy and the opportunities to engage in revising the Montana State Water Plan.

Resources include:

- Project WET: <http://www.projectwet.org/>
- Montana Geographic Alliance: <http://www.umt.edu/mga/>
- Montana State Water Plan:
http://www.dnrc.mt.gov/wrd/water_mgmt/state_water_plan/default.asp

Forestry: Collaboration has a successful legacy of bringing communities, agencies, and the forestry industry together to achieve a balance of environmental protection, recreation, and economic development in forest management. Through collaboration, forestry has evolved into a tool for achieving many diverse interests, not just timber harvest.

Keys to past successful collaborations include:

- Extending invitations to people, not just organizations; connecting with politicians.
- An open process that clearly recognizes interests and builds trust and integrity.
- Work at an appropriate scale for each issue. For example, entities pursuing fuel management and forest restoration goals need to look for opportunities to partner at large geographic scales.
- Make a deliberate effort to invite indigenous partners.
- Work to integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

Challenges moving forward:

- Limited resources.
- Limited ability to commit to the collaborative process.
- High turnover in personnel.

Participants in the forestry breakout discussion confirmed the important role of collaboration in past successes and that collaboration will continue to help diverse interests address the challenges ahead.

Building Local Partnerships: A Dialogue with Local Elected Officials

This session featured local elected officials from five communities in the Crown who have engaged with nonprofit groups, businesses, federal agencies, and state agencies to advance the needs and interests of local communities. Although these communities face very different challenges and opportunities, the effects of their local planning and decision-making ripple across the region.

Whitefish, Montana (John Mulfeld, mayor): Ten years ago there was pressure to develop the 15,000 acres of state and private timber (held primarily by Stoltze Lumber) surrounding Whitefish. Members of the Whitefish community, with support from state agencies, county commissioners, and the Governor's office successfully developed the Whitefish Neighborhood Plan which led to the purchase of development rights and the protection of land for recreation, tourism, and the municipal water supply. A local bond measure, support of local philanthropists, user fees, and a portion of the resort tax contributed to the purchase of the development rights. Since launching the Whitefish Neighborhood Plan, Whitefish has seen an increase in tourism dollars and small businesses. To learn more about the Plan, visit: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/trust/wnp/>.

Improvement District #4 (Waterton), Alberta (Barney Reeves, chairman): Waterton is a small community uniquely situated within the boundaries of Waterton National Park. This situation creates jurisdictional challenges, often leaving a gap between the needs of the national park and the local community. These challenges have been met by looking for outside partners such as the Waterton Foundation, Chamber of Commerce, Alberta SouthWest, federal and provincial grants, and political support in the Alberta Parliament.

Glacier County, Montana (Michael DesRosier, County Commissioner): Nearly 80% of Glacier County lies within the boundaries of the Blackfeet Reservation. Tribal sovereignty has been a complicated issue within the County, but as more tribal members have been elected to county government, this relationship is changing. In the future, the County hopes to develop more formal agreements with the Blackfeet Tribe to address common issues such as road jurisdiction, fracking, and weed management.

Missoula County, Montana (Jean Curtiss, County Commissioner): Missoula County is located in the southwest portion of the Crown of the Continent. Since Missoula is the only incorporated city in the county, the County Commissioners are the only political representation for residents outside of Missoula. Partnerships and memoranda of understanding with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, public lands administrators, nonprofits, and environmental agencies are essential to balancing urban and rural needs and wild land protections and economic development.

Kainai / Blood Tribe (Mike Bruised Head, Tribal Council): Fracking and water quality are emerging concerns on the Reserve. Currently, steps are being taken to establish an environmental agency in the tribal government and to convene an environmental summit

in Lethbridge spring 2014, where scientists and First Nations' leaders can share information.

Building Crown-wide Partnerships

This session showcased four different Crown-wide partnerships that have emerged over the past 20 years to advance the efforts and accomplishments of people working on education, research, management, tourism, and conservation.

- The **Crown Managers Partnership** focuses on state, federal, provincial, local, and tribal governments to develop a broad strategic plan for promoting ecological health.
- The **Crown of the Continent Geotourism Council** was established in 2007 as a tourism stewardship model.
- In 2009, the **Crown of the Continent Conservation Initiative** was formed to coordinate climate adaptation activities among the many collaboratives already in the region.
- **Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Education Consortium** (COCEEC, pronounced Co-Seek) helps teachers and organizations teach students and community members.

These Crown-wide initiatives illustrated how people working at the local level throughout the Crown of the Continent can come together and create platforms for people with similar interests to learn from each other and work together to advance landscape-scale outcomes. In general, place-based collaborations have emerged as a way to bridge jurisdictional and ideological boundaries to solve complex issues that no one entity can solve alone. Such initiatives have often succeeded because people begin to develop trust across a large landscape through many face-to-face encounters. Despite the sheer size of the Crown of the Continent and finite resources for travel, the principles for collaboration are the same. As one panel member observed, "you have to get to know people beyond email addresses." Technology allows collaboration to function on a day-to-day basis, but in-person meetings are still key ingredients for developing new relationships.

In response to a hypothetical question, panel members offered these pieces of advice to ranchers and farmers wishing to respond to increased flood events at a Crown-wide scale:

- Invite everyone to an in-person meeting.
- Have a consultant or person who can guide the group through the process of learning to talk and listen to each other, and to begin to identify the problem.
- Look for ways to build early successes – these results will help keep people at the table.
- AND, continually evaluate who is missing, and should be invited to participate.