

Crown of the Continent Government-to-Government Dialogue

May 12, 2010

Tribal Headquarters, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

Final Meeting Summary

*“People around the Crown are connected to a common landscape,
but they are not connected to each other.”*

On May 12, 2010, 14 policy leaders from tribal, state, provincial, and federal governments met at the Tribal Headquarters of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in Pablo, Montana. The purpose of the gathering was to provide a forum for government-to-government dialogue on issues related to the Crown of the Continent. A list of invitees and participants is attached to this meeting summary. I would only list attendees.

The specific objectives of this policy dialogue were to:

1. Develop a common understanding of the Crown (values, threats, and initiatives);
2. Review different government frameworks for management; and
3. Explore options and challenges to move forward.

Toward a Common Understanding

Gary Tabor provided an overview of the values, threats, and initiatives that define the Crown of the Continent. A copy of his PowerPoint presentation is available upon request.

The major challenges facing the region, according to Tabor’s presentation, are:

- Threats to ecological and cultural integrity
- Lack of regional identity and a common vision for the future
 - Across sub-regions, international boundaries, cultures, agencies, etc.
- Lack of a coherent regional strategy
 - What are the values and/or strategies to knit together various initiatives at multiple scales; think of initiatives being nested from smaller to larger spatial scales; use the idea or metaphor of a telescope to understand the multiple scales at which action is taking place
 - More a question of governance than anything else

- Need to engage all interests
 - First Nations and Native Americans
 - Communities
 - Private sector
- Need funding for:
 - Networking, collaborating, working together
 - Science
 - On-the-ground conservation

Clayton Matt then provided an overview of how the Crown of the Continent fits within the tribal homeland, and explained the fragmented nature of land ownership and natural resource management on the CS&KT reservation.

Review Government Frameworks

The participants examined four different government frameworks - (1) The MOU between Alberta and Montana supporting the Crown Manager's Partnership; (2) Alberta Land Use Framework; (3) Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative; and (4) President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative.

1. Crown Managers Partnership's Strategic Plan and MOU Supporting the CMP

The Crown Managers Partnership (CMP) is open to all public land and resource management agencies within the Crown of the Continent Region. CMP seeks to build common awareness of Crown interests and issues, shape relationships, and identify collaborative and complementary tasks that the various participating jurisdictions can pursue. The current strategic plan for the CMP emphasizes four strategic foci for achieving its vision: (1) improve understanding of ecological health; (2) raise awareness of the importance of ecological well-being; (3) promote collaboration; and (4) build internal capacity.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in 2007 by the State of Montana and the Province of Alberta (and open to additional signatories) supports the vision and objectives of the Crown Managers Partnership and recognizes the need to work together on cross border issues within the Crown ecosystem.

The participants seemed to agree that the Crown Managers Partnership is a terrific forum for mid-level managers. However, its potential is limited by intermittent participation, meaning that only about one-third of the agencies and governments with management responsibility in the Crown fully participate at any given time. Consistent funding is also an issue. CMP also does not include policy leaders/decision-makers - by design - so it has a limited ability to implement cross-boundary policies and plans.

2. Alberta Land Use Framework

The Alberta Land Use Framework was published in December 2008. It details seven strategies for achieving land use objectives that balance economic, environmental, and social interests in the Province of Alberta. Those strategies are: (1) develop seven regional land-use plans based on seven new land-use regions; (2) create a Land-use Secretariat and establish a Regional Advisory

Council for each region; (3) use cumulative effects management at the regional level to manage the impacts of development on land, water and air; (4) develop a strategy for conservation and stewardship on private and public lands; (5) promote efficient use of land to reduce the footprint of human activities on Alberta's landscape; (6) establish an information, monitoring and knowledge system to contribute to continuous improvement of land-use planning and decision making; and (7) include aboriginal peoples in land-use planning.

The portion of the Alberta Land Use Framework relevant to the Crown (the South Saskatchewan Region) will most likely be adopted some time in spring 2011. The regional land use plan will effectively zone different areas for different uses. It is very likely that the area connected to Waterton Lakes National Park, including the Castle Special Place, will be designated with the highest levels of protection.

3. Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and U.S. Geologic Survey are working together to develop scientific capacity to address climate change and other stressors to wildlife species and habitats in an integrated fashion within the Northern Rockies and Columbia Basin - the "Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative" (GNLCC).

The Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative is an ambitious undertaking designed to build the scientific capacity for large landscape conservation. Organizers have started reaching out to existing government and non-governmental groups to identify needs, interests, and priorities. It hopes to serve as a clearinghouse of scientific information.

4. America's Great Outdoors Initiative

On April 16, 2010, President Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors Initiative to: (1) reconnect Americans, especially children, to America's rivers and waterways, landscapes of national significance, ranches, farms and forests, great parks, and coasts and beaches by exploring a variety of efforts; (2) build upon State, local, private, and tribal priorities for the conservation of land, water, wildlife, historic, and cultural resources, creating corridors and connectivity across these outdoor spaces, and for enhancing neighborhood parks; and determine how the Federal Government can best advance those priorities through public private partnerships and locally supported conservation strategies; and (3) use science-based management practices to restore and protect our lands and waters for future generations.

America's Great Outdoor's initiative is designed to reconnect people with the great outdoors. It is fundamentally committed to large landscape conservation, and people within the Obama Administration at the highest levels are familiar with the work of various initiatives within the Crown. The initiative will be hosting a series of listening sessions some time this summer to identify what works, where, and why. There is a very sharp focus on getting things accomplished on the ground, not just meeting and preparing reports.

Additional Government Frameworks in the Crown

In addition to reviewing these four policy frameworks, the participants also identified a number of other policy frameworks that guide and/or govern land and water management in the Crown:

- Various tribal initiatives in Canada and the United States (including but not limited to Treaty Negotiations in Canada);
- Western Governors' Association wildlife corridors initiative and forthcoming conference in June in Whitefish, Montana;
- Water compacts among the State of Montana, tribes, and the US Government;
- Flathead Basin Commission;
- MOU between British Columbia and Montana regarding the Flathead River Basin;
- USFS Northern Region Integrated Restoration and Protection Strategy
- Multi-agency critical landscapes strategy, a collaborative effort of the USFS Northern Region, MT DNRC, MT FW&P, MT DEQ, and BLM
- This statewide effort is informing the Montana DNRC State-wide assessment directed by the Farm Bill
- Grizzly Bear Recovery Strategy, including various Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem working groups
- USFWS conservation easement program along the Rocky Mountain Front and the Swan Valley
- Trilateral Agreement among Canada, United States, and Mexico regarding Wilderness and Protected Areas
- UNESCO designation of Waterton Glacier International Peace Park as a World Heritage Site.
- State of Montana Trust Land management directives

Options to Move Forward

In response to a question about “what are the major gaps in governance, and/or what is most needed in light of existing/emerging government frameworks and all the non-governmental initiatives within the Crown,” the participants identified the following themes:

1. *Communicate and Coordinate*

After a spirited, wide-ranging conversation, the participants seemed to agree that *the biggest gap or need in the COC is the need for more communication and coordination across various initiatives*. As one person explained, “people working to sustain the Crown, at whatever level, are connected to the landscape, but they are not connected to each other.” This suggests that the primary role of the Crown Roundtable could be to serve as a forum for dialogue ... a forum that can be adapted to meet the needs and interests of different audiences; this may include sustaining a policy leaders forum, convening an annual conference, and organizing other forums as needed or desired.

The participants also seemed to agree that sustaining a government-to-government dialogue among policy leaders and decision-makers is essential, and nicely complements the Crown Managers Partnership and other region-wide initiatives. People really appreciated the hospitality of CS&KT and encourage additional dialogues at different native communities throughout the Crown.

2. Focus on Particular Projects and On-the-Ground Accomplishments

While the participants agreed on the fundamental needs to communicate and coordinate across various initiatives, there also seemed to be general agreement on the need to focus on particular projects and on-the-ground accomplishments rather than broad policy initiatives.

Some people suggested that it might be useful to focus on implementing the recently signed MOU between Montana and British Columbia. That said, it's not exactly clear how to proceed on this front.

Other project-specific ideas that emerged throughout the conversation included:

- Integrate “top down” and “bottom-up” initiatives via a regional framework that would serve to knit together various regional and sub-regional initiatives, all the while fully respecting the critical role of both “top down” support and resources and “bottom-up” solutions.

Such a framework might include (1) articulating a common vision for the Crown, building on and integrating the work of existing regional and sub-regional initiatives; (2) developing “guideposts” or principles to inform and inspire regional and sub-regional initiatives throughout the Crown; and (3) framing a short list of questions that people working throughout the Crown might ask themselves - regardless of the scale at which they are operating. The framework would be voluntary and non-binding.

Among other things, a regional framework could be useful in minimizing competition among sub-regional efforts for limited funding (both public and philanthropic). It might also be useful to share documentation of a framework with federal officials responsible for formulating America's Great Outdoors initiative. Policy leaders, representing tribal, state, provincial, and federal governments, may be in the best position to facilitate the development of such a regional framework - in consultation with existing initiatives and all stakeholders.

- Map cultural values, particularly the values associated with tribal heritage in the region (this might be something that the Geotourism MapGuide project could take on);
- Assess political trends in the region; clarify what is happening and why, and what is politically doable;

- Prepare a “watching brief” that reflects what is going on with respect to science throughout the Crown ... create a clearinghouse (does the flathead bio station, usgs, or other existing research facilitates already play this role???)
- Prepare a gap analysis on climate change - e.g., compare our understanding of possible future climate scenarios and current capacity to adapt to those conditions.
- Provide tools and social science research to accomplish conservation objectives (e.g., information on how to complete land exchanges and conservation easements) using the resources of groups like the Lincoln Institute and the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit managed by the University of Montana.
- Maintain an inventory of conservation success stories and other accomplishments in the Crown.
- Map what existing regional and sub-regional initiatives are doing (along these lines, see the inventory of regional and sub-regional initiatives on the Roundtable web site - www.crownroundtable.org).
- Build on and amplify existing university programs to build the next generation of scientists and collaborative leaders.

Participants
Policy Dialogue on the Crown of the Continent

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