

The Crown of the Continent Managers Partnership
Collaboration across agency boundaries in an international setting

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Background

Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta and Glacier National Park in Montana were established by the Canadian and United States governments in 1895 and 1910 respectively (Tanner et al , 2007). The two parks are joined at the international border and form the core of one of the most intact ecosystems in North America.

The Crown of the Continent Ecosystem straddles the North American Continental Divide and includes portions of the Provinces of British Columbia and Alberta and the State of Montana (Figure 1). This sparsely settled area is characterized by both prairie and mountainous ecosystems and by the dramatic interface where the two join. The Crown of the Continent Ecosystem is also characterized by numerous jurisdictional boundaries (Figure 2).

Because of the integrity of the broader ecosystem that encompasses Waterton and Glacier, the area's dramatic mountainous landscapes, diverse flora and fauna, and a long history of cooperation, Waterton and Glacier have received a number of special designations.

In 1932, with leadership from the Rotary chapters in Montana and Alberta, Waterton-Glacier was designated as an International Peace Park in legislation passed by the Canadian Parliament and the US Congress. This designation recognizes the peace and goodwill that exists between our two countries and underscores the need to demonstrate how two nations can protect an ecosystem that, like peace, transcends boundaries. As explained in this article, Glacier and Waterton are leading by example.

Waterton and Glacier were designated as biosphere reserves by UNESCO in 1979 and 1976 respectively. Reasons for these designations include the need to conserve for future generations the area's biological integrity; to protect a core area around which to foster sustainable economic development, and to provide areas for ecological research that will benefit all peoples of the world.

In 1995, the two parks received another international recognition when UNESCO added the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park to the World Heritage List. The Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park was found to meet UNESCO's World Heritage Site nomination criteria for natural areas and to possess outstanding universal values to the peoples of the world.

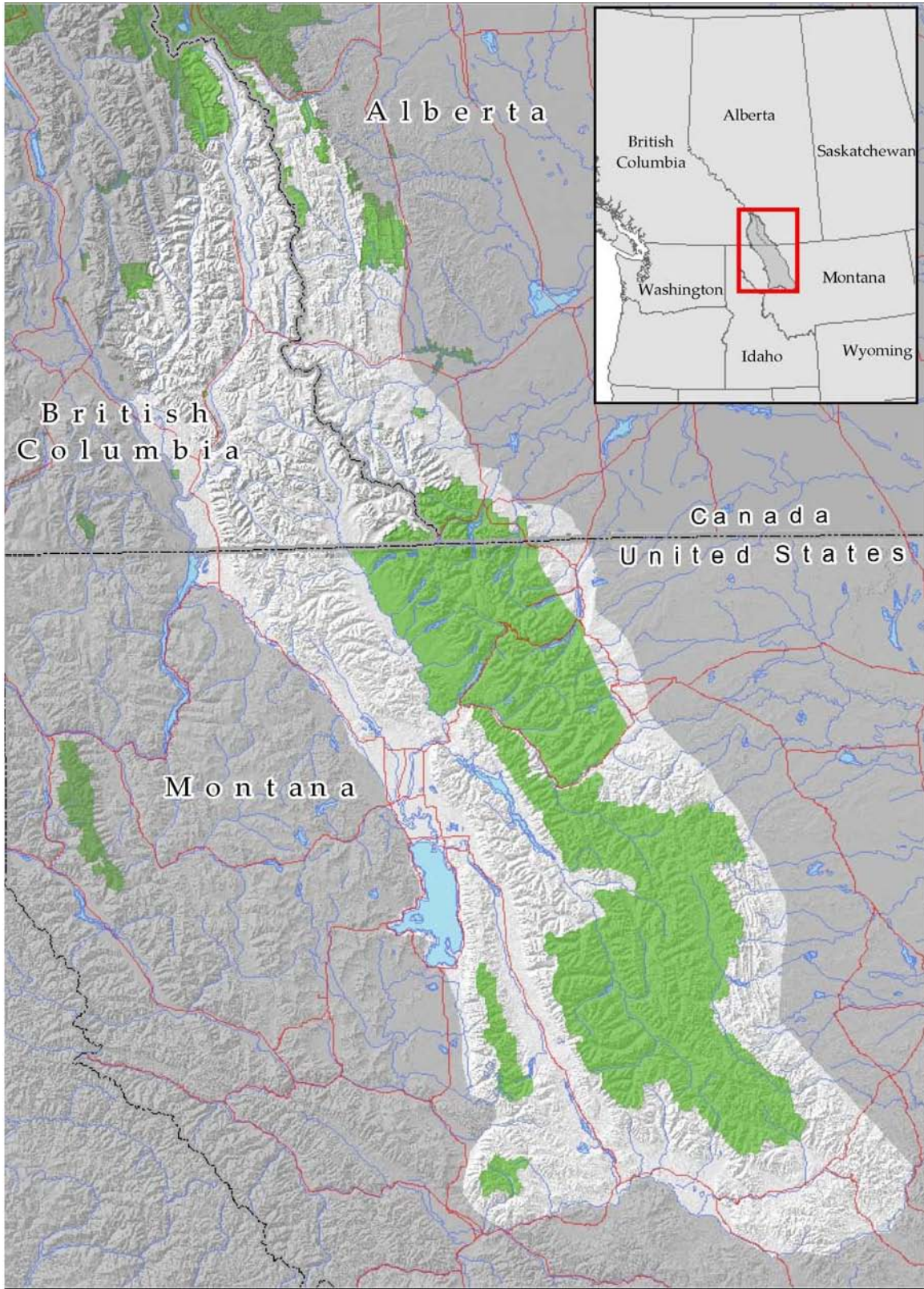


Figure 1 - Crown of the Continent Ecosystem (map by Miistakis Institute for the Rockies)

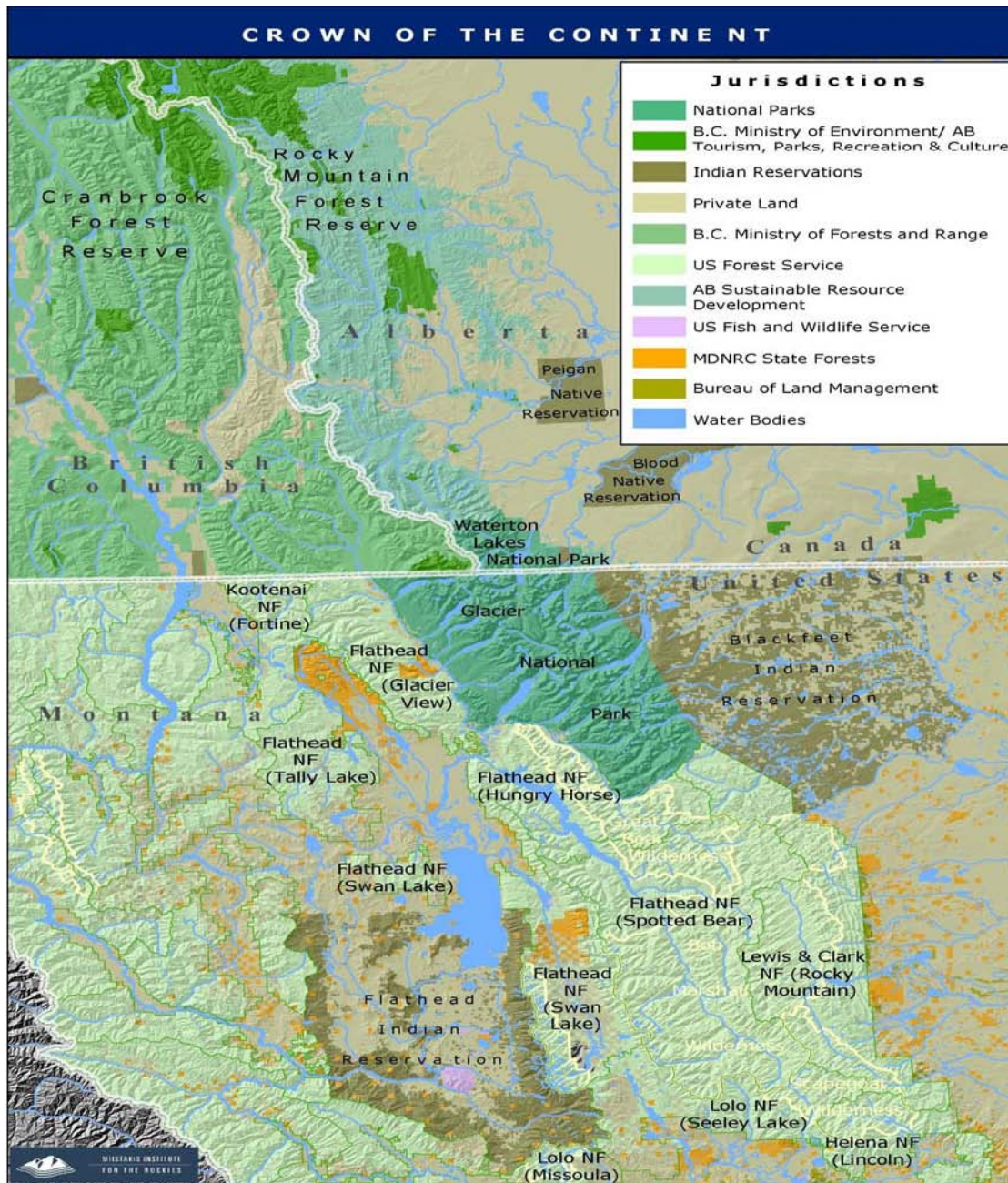


Figure 2 - Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Jurisdictions (map by Miistakis Institute for the Rockies)

The staffs of Waterton and Glacier cooperate in a number of resource management, administrative, and public safety areas. This close working relationship began nearly 100 years ago with the friendship and sense of common purpose that developed between the park’s first rangers. (Tanner et al, *ibid*) Examples of park partnership efforts now encompass such duties as search and rescue, vegetation restoration, education, interpretation (including the sharing of interpretive staff), and wildfire suppression. The two parks share expertise as management plans are updated and often include staff members from the sister park on planning teams. Public input on draft planning documents is sought in both countries.

In addition to day to day contacts among staff, senior management officials at Waterton and

Glacier (the two superintendents, division administrators, and other key staff) meet annually over a two day period to discuss current issues facing the W-GIPP and to develop a work plan for tasks to be cooperatively accomplished in the upcoming year.

The Crown Managers Partnership

During a meeting between the two management teams in 2000, discussions focused on what it meant to be an international peace park:

- *working together across common boundaries,*
- *supporting one another,;*
- *solving problems cooperatively,*
- *respecting differences,*
- *recognizing that no agencies lands can be effectively managed as if an island.*
- *providing an example as to how two nations at peace with one another can cooperate to the benefit of both countries peoples and to all citizens of the world.*

As discussed in papers by Pedynowski (2003) and by Sax and Keiter (1987) cooperatively addressing only national park issues is too limiting in scope if management in an ecosystem context is to be achieved in the Crown of the Continent. Federal to state, province to province, province to state, local government and tribal (First Nation) relationships are just as important and necessary. While the Crown of the Continent ecosystem is generally sparsely settled, land ownership is highly fragmented. (Figure 2) In 2000, park managers sought to develop relationships with adjacent agencies similar to that enjoyed between Waterton and Glacier.

The W-GIPP superintendents invited land and resource managers with jurisdictions adjacent to the Peace Park to a meeting in February 2001 in Cranbrook, British Columbia. Alberta Environment was also instrumental in organizing this initial meeting. For two days this group discussed common problems, trends, successes, and failures. Approximately sixty agency representatives were in attendance including First Nations participants. Participants agreed to begin an interagency effort that would focus on 5 areas:

- cumulative effects of human activity across the ecosystem,
- increased public interest in how lands are managed and how management decisions are made
- increased recreational demands and increased visitation
- data sharing and the need to standardize assessment and monitoring technologies.
- maintenance and sustainability of shared wildlife populations.

A Crown Managers Partnership Steering Committee was selected with the understanding that all steering committee meetings were open and that others were free to join at any time. Members include representatives from Glacier National Park (MT), Alberta Environment, The Flathead Basin Commission (MT), The Miistakis Institute for the Rockies (affiliated with the University of Calgary), The US Bureau of Indian Affairs, The British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, The Flathead National Forest (MT), Waterton Lakes National Park (AB),

and the Universities of Calgary and Montana. Other agencies involved in the CMP have included the Blood Tribe, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Alberta Community Development, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

This first Crown Managers Partnership (CMP) Annual Forum set the stage for 7 more to follow and for the development of both a strategic plan and annual work plans. (See Miistakis Institute for the Rockies, 2006, and Miistakis Institute for the Rockies 2001-2007)

Annual forums of the CMP rotate among British Columbia, Alberta and Montana. Each has a specific theme that represents current transboundary management challenges. Past forums have focused on such topics as preventing the spread of noxious weeds, protection of water quality in a basin wide context, and removing obstacles to the transboundary movement of ungulates and predatory species. For each forum subject matter experts are invited to address forum participants.

Initial efforts of the CMP have focused on data sharing among agencies, development of background information regarding the Crown agencies, coordination with Miistakis regarding mapping needs, development of a CMP Web site (www.rockies.ca/cmp) and, most ambitiously, an attempt to populate a cumulative effects model regarding future land use changes within the Crown of the Continent ecosystem (i.e. timber harvest, fire, road density).

Secretarial and project support for the CMP is provided by the Miistakis Institute for the Rockies a non-profit, non-advocacy organization affiliated with the University of Calgary (www.rockies.ca). Funding for Miistakis has come from annual contributions made by participating agencies as well as from grants that Miistakis has obtained on behalf of the CMP. Participation in the CMP by both the Faculty of Environmental Design at the University of Calgary and the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Montana have provided both student assistance to the CMP as well as assistance in grant writing.

The CMP's work plan for 2007-2008 focuses on 4 strategic priorities: (1) improving agency understanding of the ecosystem; (2) raising public awareness regarding the understanding the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem, (3) promoting collaboration, and (4) developing organizational strength. To help meet these priorities, the CMP is developing a Web based portal system whereby any area of the Crown of the Continent ecosystem can be queried and the user can determine what and where applicable data for the area can be obtained. Emphasis is initially being focused on an area of Southeastern British Columbia.

Other recent efforts include:

- sponsoring a workshop wherein participants discussed how to define a healthy Crown of the Continent ecosystem
- preparation of an invasive weed identifier that can be used by all agencies within the ecosystem
- development of a strategic communications plan to improve both internal and external communication regarding the CMP

Concluding Remarks

The CMP has successfully brought together land and resource management agencies from Federal, Provincial, State, First Nations and Local governments within a complex jurisdictional milieu. The partnership has been successful in building awareness and relationships amongst agency staff. This foundation has enabled the CMP to pursue common goals and objectives that are shared by most of the member agencies. The following are useful principles to consider when embarking on a multi-agency collaboration:

1. Involve others in your business before expecting the same courtesy.
2. Respect and work within constraints imposed by jurisdictional mandates and realities.
3. Be opportunistic.....take advantage of opportunities and circumstances to strengthen and advance the goals of the partnership.
4. Clearly link goals and objectives to common interests and concerns
5. Focus energies on common values and/or goals....agree to disagree on others.
6. Collaboration must work at all levels within and between agencies.
7. Start small....create results.....be patient and persevere.
8. Ensure the investment = benefits.

These principles have helped the Partnership in working through both challenges and opportunities. The partnership has been very successful in opening communication channels and building agency awareness around land and resource management issues. There has been some limited success in advancing common goals and products. However, recent political commitments (i.e. an MOU between the Province of Alberta and the State of Montana) and substantial fiscal investments by key agencies (most notably Parks Canada and US National Park Service) suggest a positive future for the partnership.

References

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