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The Realities of Regional Stewardship: From Urban Issues to Natural Landscapes

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The Realities of Regional Stewardship: From Urban Issues to Natural Landscapes

Matthew McKinney, Ph.D.¹

I. HOW WE APPROACHED THIS PUZZLE.....	124
II. WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED.....	126
III. OUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.....	128
A. <i>The Crown of the Continent: An Ideal Laboratory</i>	131
B. <i>Accomplishments to Date and Options for the Future</i>	136
IV. CONCLUSION	139

Countless examples across the country (and around the world) suggest that “working across boundaries” is fast becoming one of the major puzzles in land-use, natural resource, and environmental policy. This puzzle consists of three pieces. First, the territory of many land-use, natural resource, and environmental problems transcends the legal and geographic reach of existing jurisdictions and institutions (public, private, and other). In short, there is a fundamental mismatch between the geography of the problem and the geography of existing institutions. Second, the people and institutions affected by such problems have interdependent interests, meaning that none of them have sufficient power or authority to adequately address the problems on their own. Third and finally, given that no single entity has the power or authority to address these types of trans-boundary issues, there is gap in governance, and thus a need to create either formal or informal ways to work across boundaries.

Beginning in 2001, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the Public Policy Research Institute at The University of Montana started working together to build, test, and refine the theory and practice of what we now refer to as “regional collaboration.” The goals of this partnership were to (1) clarify the nature and scope of this governance puzzle; (2) identify and examine alternative responses to the gap in governance; and (3) develop a set of principles and strategies to assist citizens and leaders in working across boundaries.

The focus throughout this partnership has been to clarify the most effective process (or processes) to address land use, natural resource, and environmental issues that cut across jurisdictional, sectoral, and disciplinary boundaries. Focusing on an effective process is quite different from assessing existing policies or plans to deal with such problems, or even generating

1. Director of the Public Policy Research Institute at The University of Montana, Chair of UM’s Natural Resources Conflict Resolution Program, and Senior Partner, Consensus Building Institute. Along with Armando Carbonell at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, he has directed the program explained herein. Thanks to Will Harmon, Tina Bernd-Cohen, and various practitioners for contributing to this article.

additional substantive prescriptions. The distinction here between substance and process is not trivial. There is a huge difference between (1) what should be done about a particular regional, trans-boundary issue; and (2) how people who care about such issues should determine what ought to happen. The first problem is one of substance, and the Lincoln Institute clearly has something to say about the relative effectiveness of alternative land-use policies and plans. The second problem is one of process – how to bring together the appropriate people with the best available information to address land-use, natural resource, and environmental issues that cut across multiple jurisdictions, sectors, and disciplines. In sum, the goal of *regional collaboration* (a process) is *regional stewardship* (an outcome), defined as actions that promote vibrant economies, livable communities, and healthy environments.

During the past eight years, our partnership has engaged in a number of activities, learned many lessons, and is now in the process of packaging and presenting the lessons learned via a book and associated web site. We are also refining our focus on this increasingly important and challenging puzzle related to land use, natural resource, and environmental policy.

I. HOW WE APPROACHED THIS PUZZLE

Our partnership engaged in a mix of research, education, and demonstration projects to achieve the stated goals. In 2001, we convened two exploratory workshops – one in Cambridge and one in Salt Lake City. The intent of these workshops was to bring together a cross-section of regional practitioners from around the country, along with several notable scholars in this emerging field, to identify trends, needs, and opportunities.² The outcome of these workshops was a multi-year agenda designed to achieve the goals explained above.

One of the primary recommendations that emerged from the exploratory workshops was to sponsor, convene, and facilitate a series of clinics or demonstration projects. The objectives of these projects were to select representative regions around the country and help them initiate, improve, evaluate, and/or reinvigorate regional collaborative initiatives to address land-use and related issues. Our involvement in these projects typically consisted of research and interviews with key people up-front, convening one or more workshops, and providing a follow-up report and assistance.

For each project, we documented the results in the form of reports, articles, and lessons that can be shared with others. As revealed by the follow-

2. See *Regionalism in the West: A Working Session with Practitioners* (A Summary Report, 2002), on file with the author; see also Matthew McKinney, et al., "Regionalism in the West: An Inventory and Assessment," 23 Pub. Land L. Rev. 100-191 (2002).

ing table, our efforts not only spanned North America, but also focused intentionally on different geographic scales and issues:³

Project	Date	Focus & Scale
Crown of the Continent	2007 to present	Creating a new model for landscape-scale conservation and regional resource management
Twin Cities, Minnesota	2006	Adapting a long-standing regional governance body in an urban setting
Nashville, Tennessee	2006	Developing an implementation plan for a regional civic association
San Luis Valley, Colorado	2005	Building capacity in a remote area defined by rural communities and federal lands
Pawcatuck Region, CT and RI	2005	Catalyzing a regional initiative in a rural area surrounded by urban areas
New York – New Jersey Highlands	2005	Establishing a regional conservation strategy
Delaware River Basin	2004	Developing strategies to respond to historic population growth in a rural-urban interface

To supplement these demonstration projects, we convened an annual workshop on regional collaboration to both share what we were learning, and to provide a forum to build additional knowledge on what works, what doesn't, and why. Each of these workshops was attended by 50 to 100 people, including representatives of civic associations, non-government organizations, government officials, university centers, and others. The workshops were usually co-sponsored by local institutions and organizations, along with the National Association of Regional Councils, Alliance for Regional Stewardship, Land Trust Alliance, and the American Planning Association. The following table indicates the geographic distribution of the workshops:

Location	Year
Winnipeg, Manitoba	2008
Calgary, Alberta	2007
Seattle, Washington	2006
Orlando, Florida	2005
Cambridge, Mass	2004
Salt Lake City, Utah	2003

In addition to capturing and sharing lessons learned via region-specific reports and workshops, we synthesized our work on regional collaboration

3. Reports associated with each one of the demonstration projects are available at www.umtpri.org.

through a number of publications.⁴ We also prepared a variety of curriculum materials.⁵

II. WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Based on this mix of research, education, and demonstration projects, we have learned several lessons about regional collaboration – all of which are captured in a forthcoming book. This section highlights four primary lessons.

The first, and arguably most important lesson, is that there is no single model for regional collaboration. The most effective regional initiatives are “homegrown.” That said, the most effective regional initiatives adhere to several common principles or key ingredients.

- **Principle # 1 – Catalyst:** People are most likely to work across boundaries when there is a compelling purpose, and people believe that they are more likely to achieve their needs and interests through regional collaboration than by acting independently.
- **Principle # 2 – Leadership:** Regional collaboration requires a certain type of leadership. In contrast to exercising authority by taking unilateral action and employing a command-and-control model of leadership, regional leaders readily cross jurisdictions, sectors, disciplines, and cultures to forge alliances with diverse interests and viewpoints. Collaborative leaders have the ability, credibility, and legitimacy to engage a broad cross-section of people to take ownership of a shared vision and values, work hard to bridge differences, and nourish networks of relationships.
- **Principle # 3 – Representation:** Engaging the right people is critical, and is most often determined by what a regional initiative is trying to achieve. Determining who is interested in or affected by a particular issue or place, who is needed to implement any outcome, and who might oppose the process or outcome is one of the best ways to identify key

4. *Working Across Boundaries: A Blueprint for Regional Collaboration on Land Use, Natural Resources, and the Environment* (forthcoming book, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy 2009); Matthew McKinney, et al., “Learning to Think and Act Like a Region,” *Land Lines* (January 2006); Matthew McKinney, “Planning Across Boundaries: Approaches to Regional Land Use” *Lincoln Lecture*, delivered at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge (October 2005); Matthew McKinney, “Working Across Boundaries: A Framework for Regional Collaboration,” *Land Lines* (July 2004); *Deliberative Approaches to Regional, Trans-boundary Issues* (a series of white papers produced in partnership with the Kettering Foundation); Matthew McKinney, et al., “Regionalism in the West: An Inventory and Assessment,” *Public Land and Resources Law Review* 23 (2002): 100-191; *Regionalism in the West: A Working Session with Practitioners* (Final Report of the Exploratory Workshop convened December 6-7, 2001).

5. *Convening a Regional Land-use Initiative* (a multi-party simulation); *Regional Collaboration: Best Practice for Common Problems* (problem-solving scenarios).

stakeholders. The bottom-line is that you need to identify people that are ready, willing, and able to collaboratively solve problems.

- **Principle # 4 – Regional Fit:** The spatial scale of a regional initiative is most effectively determined by defining the region according to the problem (the so-called “problemshed”) and people’s interests.
- **Principle # 5 – Capacity:** In addition to engaging the right leaders and stakeholders, and defining the region in a way that is consistent with the problem (or opportunity) and the interests of the participants, it is critical to assemble finances, information, and organizational resources required to support a regional initiative. Often, this is best done by multiple jurisdictions and sectors sharing resources.
- **Principle # 6 – Strategy:** Building on jointly developed information and knowledge, an explicit strategy of action is essential. It should clarify where you want to go (the end) and how to get there (the means), and typically helps build a sense of regional identity, vision, and action plan.
- **Principle # 7 – Implementation:** Once a strategy has been developed, the next challenge is to move from vision to action. The most effective regional efforts do this by communicating their message, linking their agenda to formal decision-making systems, and following through on individual and joint commitments to take action.
- **Principle # 8 – Evaluation:** Taking action is usually followed by evaluating what was accomplished. Are we reaching our goals? The idea here is to measure progress, learn as you go, and adapt as needed.
- **Principle # 9 – Governance:** In some cases, there may be a need to sustain regional collaboration. The challenge here is to create an appropriate governing arrangement (which does not necessarily mean another layer of government).

The second lesson that emerges from our research and practice is that the most common response to regional issues tends to be ad hoc, bottom-up approaches. Over the years, citizens and leaders have experimented with a variety of regional approaches to land-use, natural resource, and environmental issues – including metropolitan planning organizations,⁶ regional planning councils, charters and compacts, and regional governing bodies. While many examples of these more formal responses can be found, the dominant and emerging trend revolves around informal networks, partnerships, and collaborative relationships. In some cases these ad hoc approaches address a single issue and then disband. In other cases, they adapt from issue-to-issue, and eventually mature into an appropriate organization.

6. See Doug Porter, “The ABC’s of MPOs,” draft manuscript on file with the author.

A third lesson learned from our work over the past eight years is that there has been far more work – both in theory and practice – on regional approaches to urban issues.⁷ This is not surprising, given that urban areas are the center of population, resources, and need. There has also been a fair bit of work on regional approaches to watershed management and the governance of trans-boundary river basins.⁸ Somewhat surprising, perhaps, is that the least amount of attention has been dedicated – in both theory and practice -- to regional approaches to landscape-scale conservation, ecosystem management, and regional resource management.⁹

Fourth and finally, we have discovered that there is in general a lack of institutional leadership and capacity to promote and support regional collaboration. Exceptions include the National Association of Regional Councils that supports metropolitan planning organizations and regional councils of government, the American Planning Association that has drafted a model code for regional planning and maintain a regional planning section, and various planning schools that offer regional planning courses. But as yet, there is no clearinghouse that synthesizes experiences across spatial scales, issues, and institutional variations.

By and large, the lessons learned from our research, education, and demonstration projects reflect the general trends in regional collaboration – at least in North America.

III. OUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Based on these and other lessons, we are now ready to focus our attention on two major gaps in the theory and practice of regional collaboration. First, we plan to maintain and expand our emerging web site on regional

7. Some of the best sources of information on regional approaches to urban issues include Doug Henton, et al., *Regional Stewardship and Collaborative Governance: Implementation that Produces Results* (Alliance for Regional Stewardship, March 2006); Gilles Paquet, *The New Governance: A Baroque Approach* (University of Ottawa Press, 2005); Judith Innes and Jane Rongerude, *Collaborative Regional Initiatives: Civic Entrepreneurs Work to Fill the Governance Gap* (James Irvine Foundation, November 2005); Douglas R. Porter and Allan D. Wallis, *Exploring Ad Hoc Regionalism* (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2002); and Kathryn A. Foster, *Regionalism on Purpose* (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2001).

8. See e.g., Douglas S. Kenney, *Coordination Mechanisms for the Control of Interstate Water Resources: A Synthesis and Review of the Literature* (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1994); John Thorson, *River of Promise, River of Peril: The Politics of Managing the Missouri River* (University Press of Kansas, 1994); Gary Weatherford, *From Basin to Hydrocommons: Integrated Water Management Without Regional Governance* (Natural Resources Law Center, University of Colorado School of Law, 1990); and Michael Donahue, *Institutional Arrangements for Great Lakes Management: Past Practices and Future Alternatives* (Michigan Sea Grant College Program, 1987).

9. Some of the primary sources of information on landscape conservation and regional resource management include Tony Prato and Dan Fagre, eds., *Sustaining Rocky Mountain Landscapes: Science, Policy, and Management for the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem* (Resources for the Future, 2007); Charles C. Chester, *Conservation Across Boundaries: Biodiversity in an Interdependent World* (Island Press, 2006); Richard L. Knight and Peter B. Landres, eds., *Stewardship Across Boundaries* (Island Press, 1998); Arlene Kwasniak, *Reconciling Ecosystems and Political Borders: A Legal Map* (Environmental Law Centre, 1998); and Steven L. Yaffee, et al., *Ecosystem Management in the United States: An Assessment and Current Experience* (Island Press, 1996);

collaboration. Given the lack of a clearinghouse to gather, analyze, and share information on regional approaches to land use, natural resources, and environmental issues, this is proving to be a very timely and useful resource. Our vision is to make the web site an interactive learning network where regional stewards can share stories and lessons learned, as well as seek input, advice, and guidance. Second, we propose to increase our investment in regional landscape stewardship, and to integrate research, education, and demonstration projects around one region.

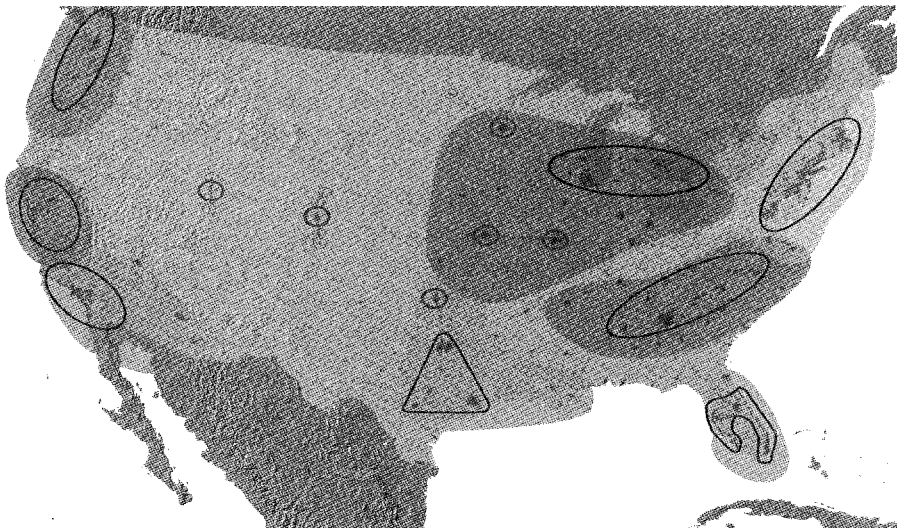
We have identified four primary reasons to focus our efforts on regional landscape stewardship for the next period of years. First, this subject represents the most significant gap in the theory and practice of regional collaboration. Relative to the amount of activity and lessons learned on regional approaches to urban areas, watersheds, and river basins, there is much to do and more to learn on regional approaches to landscape-scale conservation, ecosystem management, and regional resource management.¹⁰

Second, the emerging megaregions of the United States, no matter how large their metropolitan footprint, include and rely on significant natural areas.¹¹ Cascadia encompasses not just Seattle and Portland, but the open space, habitats, recreational opportunities, and natural resources of the North Cascades, Puget Sound, the Olympic Peninsula, and the Pacific Coast. The Florida “molar” grows around the Everglades and includes coastline, islands, and the ocean itself. Even the “old” megalopolis of the Northeast cannot extricate itself from its co-dependency with coastal fisheries, the Adirondacks, Catskills, Delaware Water Gap, New York-New Jersey Highlands, Pawcatuck Borderlands, etc. In every case, the remaining natural areas provide resources the cities cannot live without—clean, copious water; food; open space and recreational opportunities; wood products; minerals; and energy. Clearly, these megaregions are defined not just by their urban centers, but also by their natural ecosystems and resources as well. The natural amenities draw people to these regions. Ultimately, the cities and populations there will exist and grow only as long as their natural systems continue to support them.

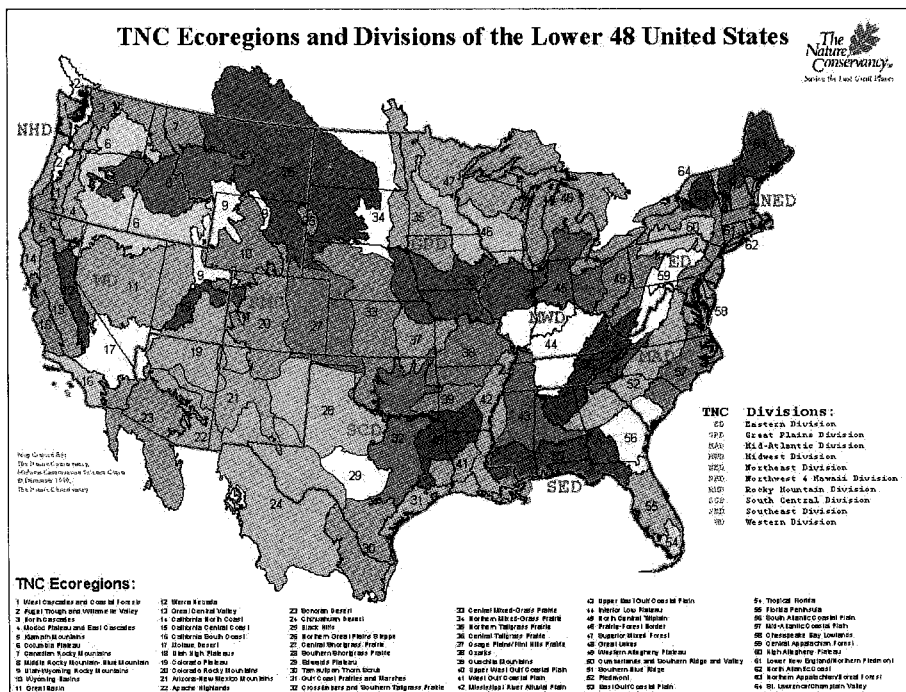
10. One excellent resource on this topic is Charles H.W. Foster, *Managing Resources as Whole Systems; A Primer for Managers* (John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, undated manuscript on file with the author. See also Mary Doyle and Cynthia A. Drew, eds., *Large-Scale Ecosystem Restoration: Five Case Studies from the United States* (Island Press, 2008).

11. For more on the emerging idea of megaregions see Margaret Dewar and David Epstein, “Planning for Megaregions in the United States,” 22 *Journal of Planning Literature* 108-124 (2007).

Emerging Megaregions of the United States (University of Pennsylvania):



Third, several land conservation organizations – including The Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Club – have recently started projects that seek to prioritize endangered landscapes, and to develop conservation plans for these regions. The following map provides one example of this work:



Fourth and finally, the political timing appears ripe to develop, test, and transfer lessons on more effective models for regional collaboration at this scale, particularly in landscapes or ecosystems that are defined by a mix of public and private land, and surrounded by fast-growing communities. With the dawn of a new political administration in Washington, D.C., there may be renewed interest in regional approaches to landscape conservation and planning.

A. *The Crown of the Continent: An Ideal Laboratory*

As revealed in the attached table on *Selected Regional Resource Planning Efforts*, many past efforts to address landscape-scale conservation have been largely top-down and government-driven:

**Selected Regional Landscape Stewardship Efforts
(A Preliminary Profile)**

Project	Year Initiated	Goals & Aspirations	Response	Strategies & Accomplishments
Crown of the Continent Network	2006	Promote stewardship	Informal network to link individuals and organizations	Web site, listserv, annual conference, stewardship circles, etc.
Sierra Nevada Framework	2004	Improve federal land management	National Forest Plan amendment	Various land management practices
Highlands Conservation Plan Act	2004	Coordinate public and private land use and conservation	Federal legislation creating a regional conservation plan	Coalition building across sectors to implement plan and federal dollars to support private land conservation
Yellowstone Business Partnership	2001	Link businesses interested in sustainable development in the GYE	Regional NGO	Education, information collection and sharing, and leadership development
Great Valley Center	1997	Promote economic, fiscal, cultural, environmental values	Regional NGO	Data/information creation, education, and communications
Northern Forest Center	1997	Improve economic development and community vitality	Regional NGO	Cooperative ventures
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration	1996	Improve environmental quality	Congressionally established interagency coordination	Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)
Balcones Canyonlands	1996	Protect endangered species and promote sustainable communities	City-county-federal partnership	Regional conservation plan and reserve

Northwest Forest Plan	1994	Protect endangered species and promote sustainable resource use	Interagency plan and coordination	Multi-agency land and resource management plan
Sierra Business Council	1994	Promote social, economic, environmental health	Regional NGO	Multiple strategies; helped create the Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Interior Columbia River Basin Ecosystem	1993	Sustain forest and resources	MOU promoting interagency coordination	Scientific-sound ecosystem-based management strategy
Long Island Pine Barrens Commission	1993	Protect unique natural environment	Created by NY legislature	Regional land use plan
Cape Cod Commission	1990	Protect unique natural environment	Regional agency created by state law	Regional land use plan
Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee	1985	Promote and support ecosystem management on federal lands	Interagency coordination	Various communication and coordination mechanisms
Grand Canyon Trust	1985	Preserve and protect Colorado Plateau	Regional NGO	Research, lobbying, and negotiating Multiple notable accomplishments
Greater Yellowstone Coalition	1983	Preserve and protect the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem	Regional NGO	Research, policy development, lobbying, collaboration, and communication Many notable accomplishments
San Bruno Mountain Cooperative	1982	Protect endangered species and promote sustainable communities	Public-private partnership	San Bruno Mountain Habitat Conservation Plan
New Jersey Pinelands Commission	1979	Protect unique natural environment	State and federal legislation	Regional management plan and actions
Adirondack Park Agency	1971	Multipurpose – growth, environmental, cultural	Regional agency created by state law	Regional management plan and action
Lake Tahoe Regional Authority	1969	Protect environmental quality and manage growth	Bi-state regional organization created by state and federal law	Management plans and growth and development standards
Appalachia Regional Commission/ NGS Partnership	1963	Address poverty, unemployment, and related economic issues	Created via executive order of the President	Geotourism Mapguide
Regional Plan Association	1929	Improve quality of life and economic competitiveness of the Highlands Region in NY-NJ	Regional NGO	Research, planning, and advocacy

When the landscape includes a large portion of public lands, it is of course imperative to engage the responsible agencies. However, the table above also illustrates the larger trend in regional collaboration – that non-governmental organizations or associations are increasingly taking the lead to convene, coordinate, and implement actions to promote regional stewardship. This trend in regional collaboration, when applied to large-scale, mixed ownership landscapes, raises important questions about “governance” and the role of government and non-government organizations in governance.

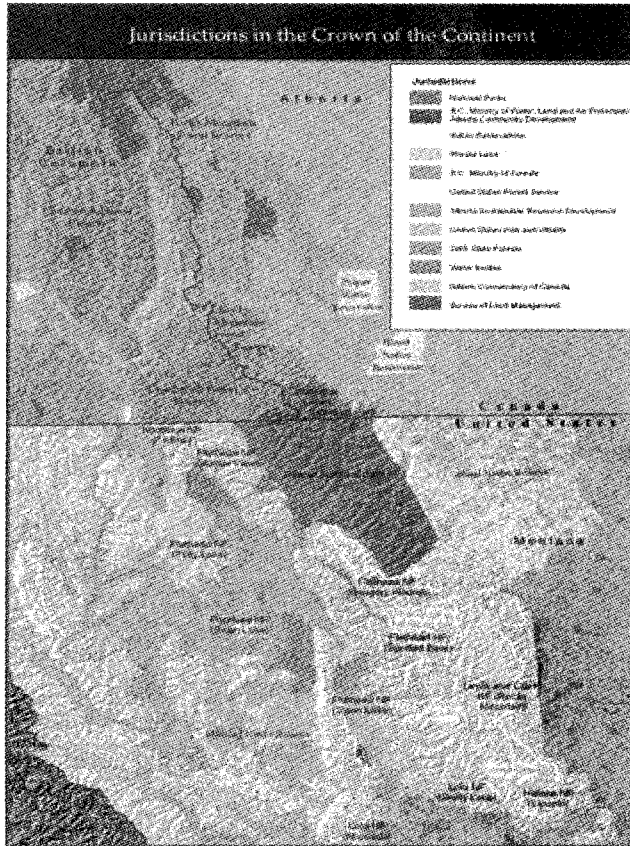
One of the core propositions of our work is that regional governance is an iterative process of naming issues, framing options, and taking actions – regardless of authority. In the best-case scenario, it also involves learning from results and adapting strategies appropriately. According to this definition, governance is more than government. It is much more inclusive, engaging both formal and informal actors and institutions.¹² How this proposition plays out on large-scale, mixed ownership landscapes is of course an open question.

Over the next few years, we propose to build on this general trend in regional collaboration and to critically examine this proposition. In short, we propose to develop, test, and transfer lessons on regional approaches to landscape-scale conservation and regional resource management. And we propose to use the Crown of the Continent as our primary laboratory.

The Crown is an ideal laboratory for this type of work. This remarkable landscape covers approximately 16,000 square miles of land (about twice the size of Massachusetts), making it one of the largest intact ecosystems in North America. It has the highest non-coastal density of grizzly bears in North America, with plant communities ranging from old-growth cedar-hemlock forest to short-grass prairie. The Crown has a rich and diverse cultural heritage, including First Nations, ranchers, farmers, miners, foresters, hunters, anglers, and other recreationists.

12. This rather broad definition of governance allows us – in fact compel us – to examine the role of law, courts, special designations (such as biosphere reserves and international peace parks), local communities, informal place-based partnerships, and individual leaders in governing natural resources.

The Crown of the Continent Region



Jurisdictionally, the Crown includes two 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, three national parks, five wilderness areas, the Flathead Wild and Scenic River, and habitat for six endangered species.

In light of this rich ecological, historical, cultural, and institutional landscape, the Crown of the Continent faces four drivers or categories of problems and opportunities.¹³ First, the Crown is a mixed ownership landscape

13. For a review of the literature on the Crown of the Continent, see Tony Prato and Dan Fagre, eds., *Sustaining Rocky Mountain Landscapes: Science, Policy, and Management for the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem* (Resources for the Future, 2007); Joseph Sax and Robert Keiter, "The Realities of Regional Resource Management: Glacier National Park and Its Neighbors Revisited," *Ecology Law Quarterly* 33 (2006): 233-312; Ralph Walcott, *Crown of the Continent: The Last Great Wilderness of the Rocky Mountains* (Riverbend Publishing, 2004); Dena Pedykowski, "Prospects for Ecosystem Manage-

where land conservation and urban form issues are percolating on high. The Crown's core ecosystem remains robust and, for the most part, unfragmented. No major metropolitan area directly competes for land and resources here, although Calgary's economic engine is beginning to drive changes in land values (and so land uses) in the northern end of the region. Many small collar cities (Lethbridge, Pincher Creek, Fort McLeod, Cardston, Fernie, Cranbrook, Whitefish, Kalispell, Columbia Falls, Missoula, Helena, Great Falls, and Choteau) are rapidly growing and morphing into service centers for amenity-driven residential and commercial development. Increasingly, second homes, resorts, shopping centers, and other developments are encroaching on the Crown's natural lands, watersheds, and wild-life habitats.

Second, the Crown is also a ripe, sensitive lab for understanding climate change.¹⁴ Already, plant and animal communities are changing as species move north and upward in elevation in response to warming average temperatures. Milder winters may also be driving land use changes, from increases in second-home and retirement home development to timber management on forests impacted by unprecedented incursions of pine bark beetle. Climate effects are likely influencing the Crown's ecosystems, economies, and social/cultural scaffolding.

Third, change also erupts at the sub-regional level. Congress recently imposed a moratorium on gas and oil exploration along Montana's Rocky Mountain Front, but Alberta and British Columbia continue to develop their energy resources. The Cline coal mine proposal on B.C.'s upper Flathead is seen by some as a serious threat to water quality on both sides of the US/Canada border. Even "green" energy has its downsides. Wind turbines sprout like kudzu east of Crowsnest Pass south toward Alberta's Waterton Front, changing the viewshed and clubbing eagles and other raptors out of the sky. Canola and other biofuels replace native shortgrass prairie. Also, a proposal to double U.S. Highway 2 to four lanes is gaining traction at the same time grizzly bear mortality sky rockets due to bear/vehicle collisions. And the largest private landowner in the U.S., Plum Creek Timber, is selling off several million acres along the western edge of the Great Bear and Bob Marshall wilderness areas in Montana. The cumulative effects of such sub-regional activities threaten to fragment the natural landscape and tug local economies in unsustainable directions.

ment in the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem, Canada-United States: Survey and Recommendations," *Conservation Biology* 17(2003): 1261-1269; Lex Blood, et al., *Crown of the Continent: Profile of a Treasured Landscape* (The Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Education Consortium, 2002); G. F. Darrow, et al., *The Crown of the Continent Project: A New Approach for Integrated Research, Education, and Interpretation of Ecological and Human Relationships within the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem in Montana, British Columbia, and Alberta* (Glacier National Park, 1990); and Joseph Sax and Robert Keiter, "Glacier National Park and Its Neighbors: A Study of Federal Interagency Relations," *Ecology Law Quarterly* 14 (1987): 207-264.

14. See the work of Dan Fagre, U.S. Geological Survey at www.nrmcs.usgs.gov/staff/fagre.html.

Fourth and finally, we can build on a heritage of trans-boundary collaboration in the Crown that dates back at least 75 years to the creation of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, the world's first. Unfortunately, past efforts to constructively guide change have struggled to engage local communities, tribes and First Nations, and certain social sectors. We now see, however, signs of an emerging and growing capacity for regional networking, planning, and policy responses to the changes facing the Crown. There is a robust sense of subregional identity in places such as the Rocky Mountain Front, the Flathead Valley, and various watershed groups and other place-based partnerships throughout British Columbia, Alberta, and Montana. And, these somewhat fragmented initiatives are beginning to reach across their boundaries to coordinate efforts and share resources with similar groups. The Crown Managers Partnership (a group of public resource managers from across the region) and Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Education Consortium both 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.¹⁵

Despite this emerging interest and capacity to think and act regionally, there is no single forum – either public or private – to promote and support regional stewardship in the Crown of the Continent. The lack of such a forum provides an ideal opportunity to test drive regional collaboration at the landscape-scale – to develop and test alternative models, such as ad hoc and formal networking, government-citizen interaction, the interplay of urban form and land conservation, adaptive management in the face of climate change, and international trans-boundary collaboration.

People know each other in the Crown, the relationships and interdependencies are more readily apparent and comprehensible here than in larger metropolitan megaregions. Continued climate change, economic globalization, and population growth compel the region to think more holistically, and to act at every conceivable scale – local communities, watersheds, and the ecosystem. With an entire, intact ecosystem at stake (and communities and economies, too), regional systems of governance are no longer just an option on a flipchart—they are essential and fundamental to the continued integrity and health of the Crown.

B. Accomplishments to Date and Options for the Future

To develop some baseline knowledge about the Crown, and to provide some practical advice to land and resource managers as well as to other

15. For more information on this project, go to www.crownofthecontinent.net.

people who care about the Crown, we completed the following activities during 2007 and 2008:¹⁶

- Created profiles of more than 50 place-based partnerships focused on stewardship within different subregions of the Crown. These partnerships are focused on particular places within the Crown; generally embrace a vision of sustaining communities and landscapes; and for the most part are catalyzed, convened, and coordinated by citizens and non-government organizations.
- Prepared a communications plan for the Crown Manager's Partnership to improve internal and external communications.
- Convened one of the first conferences on the Crown of the Continent to facilitate networking and collaborative stewardship. The primary outcome of this conference was a request by the participants for an informal network – largely supported by the web site mentioned below.
- Participated in the creation of the Crown of the Continent Geotourism MapGuide, a project co-sponsored by the National Geographic Society and the National Parks Conservation Association to promote “geotourism” in the region.¹⁷
- Created a web site to promote and support the Crown of the Continent network and foster a sense of regional identity.

Over the next 3 to 5 years, we plan to build on this foundational work. At the time of this writing, we are exploring several options with various players in the Crown (please note that the following options are not presented in any order of priority):

Option 1 – Maintain and enhance the existing networking capacity. This includes a regional web site, directory of players, and list serve. It might also involve convening an annual conference to exchange ideas and forge partnerships. At the annual conference we convened in spring 2007, most of the participants agreed that a simple networking capacity would be valued and an appropriate investment at this time.

Option 2 – Build the capacity to think and act regionally, and create a regional vision by linking people with common interests into workgroups or “stewardship circles.” The best approach here may be to start by working with private landowners, public land managers, the business community, and wildlife conservation advocates. Each circle could develop a regional-scale vision for sustaining and enhancing stewardship values within their

16. All of these products can be found at www.crownofthecontinent.info and at www.umtpri.org/projects.

17. For more information on the National Geographic's Geotourism MapGuide work, go to www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable.

area of interest. The circles could come together at an annual forum to dovetail their visions into a unified future scenario for the Crown.

Option 3 – Prepare a State of the Crown Report to build a sense of regional identity and to measure progress toward agreed-upon goals. Many regions throughout North America use these types of reports. The first step is to identify a set of indicators that people are interested in tracking and knowing more about, and to then develop metrics to measure progress toward each indicator. The indicators are typically based on participants' desired outcomes (both procedural and on-the-ground), and on measurable improvements in environmental health, economic prosperity, and quality of life within a particular region. An initial State of the Crown report might also provide a set of prescriptions on how to promote and support regional stewardship in the Crown.

Option 4 – Create an accessible, regional GIS database to facilitate the exchange of information and promote joint problem solving. Currently, data overlays are at different scales, in different software, or secreted away in unsearchable hard drives. This database should include basic features and values such as land ownership, land use, vegetative cover, watersheds, population density and trends, transportation, and so on. Access would be open to anyone working in the Crown, which will not only support the work of stewardship circles and support a State of the Crown Report, but also help foster a sense of regional identity and purpose.

Option 5 – Focus on private land in the Crown to promote and support stewardship activities. Private land constitutes about 17% of the land area in the region, and it may be easier to mobilize and engage private landowners relative to public land agencies (see next option).

Option 6 – Build the capacity of public land and resource managers to work across boundaries. Seeking high-level political commitment for the Crown Manager's Partnership, implementing the communications plan, and establishing a "leadership institute" for public resource agencies might facilitate this objective.

Option 7 – Create a non-government organization to advocate for the region. This organization, which might be named "Friends of the Crown," and could be modeled after one or more of the non-government organizations listed in the table of Selected Regional Landscape Stewardship Efforts. While it is valuable to learn from other organizations, whatever type of organization might be developed for the Crown must be homegrown – it must address the unique needs, interests, and capacities of this region.

Option 8 – Convene a group of practitioners and leaders within the Crown to clarify next steps. In many respects, this may be the most responsible option, and could certainly consider all of the other options presented here. The idea would be to examine who is doing what, explore what needs to be done, identify gaps in capacity, and develop an agenda for the future. This workshop could also serve as a forum to document lessons learned

from the multiple efforts at regional stewardship in the Crown of the Continent.

All of these activities are designed to supplement and spark ongoing efforts in the Crown, building on and fostering collaboration among the many good initiatives already underway. By raising people's awareness, understanding, and capacity to work across boundaries, these activities will strengthen regional identity and purpose, empower people to expand the audience for stewardship in the Crown, and enable advocates to tackle on-the-ground environmental, economic, and community issues.

Unlike other regional resource management efforts in North America that have been largely top-down, government-driven efforts, we propose to develop and test an approach that is more bottom-up, driven by citizens and stakeholders. Ultimately, such an approach would integrate public and private land stewardship in a way that will protect an intact ecosystem, sustain livable communities, and support vibrant economies.

To inform and invigorate efforts in the Crown of the Continent, we also propose to convene *National Policy Dialogue on Regional Landscape Stewardship* in 2009. The purpose of this policy dialogue would be to examine alternative models of landscape stewardship,¹⁸ identify keys to success, and to develop a multi-year agenda that might include research, education, demonstration projects, and policy proposals.¹⁹ Among other products, a national policy dialogue would result in a report that builds and disseminates knowledge on what does and does not work with respect to regional landscape stewardship, as well as a policy memorandum to the next administration on how to promote and support regional approaches to landscape conservation and ecosystem management.

IV. CONCLUSION

Our preliminary work in the Crown is already helping us identify and refine best practices for regional collaboration at the landscape scale. We're clarifying the importance of formal and informal networking and refining our understanding of how various types of networks function. We're also building knowledge on the interplay of changing land uses and land values, particularly here in the West as new amenity economies dramatically rearrange land markets. These lessons transfer well to other regions, particularly landscapes and ecosystems that directly support and supply metropoli-

18. Including but not limited to government initiatives, the role of non-government organizations, and lessons to be learned from river basin governance and international experience.

19. A preliminary list of candidates to serve on a national advisory committee to help organize this policy dialogue include Bob Keiter (public lands law and policy), John Thorson (river basin management), Jim Leavitt (innovative land and resource policy and finance), Julia Wondolleck (collaboration and ecosystem management), Ken Snyder (application of decision-support tools to ecosystems and landscape conservation), and Peter Pollock, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

tan areas. Ultimately, such landscapes support life as we know it on the Earth, and we are reminded of Thoreau's prescient statement that "In Wilderness is the preservation of the World."

The Lincoln Institute's investment in the *process* of regional landscape stewardship (rather than in specific conservation outcomes) is leading-edge and will no doubt set a precedent for others to follow as work at this ecosystem scale emerges as the critical challenge in responding to climate change, increasing energy demands, and continued population growth. Already, people in Europe, Africa, and Asia are looking to the Crown as a model for international parks and ecosystem management. This presents a tremendous opportunity to shape not just the future of the Crown of the Continent, but the promise of landscape-scale regional stewardship around the globe.