

**Network Governance, Connected Futures:
Crown of the Continent Communities, Conservation, and Collaboration**

**Presented at:
Crown of the Continent Conference
September 2010
Calgary, Canada**

By Lynn Scarlett

I am delighted and privileged to join you. Yesterday, I learned that I am from oo oo oo ma, in the language of a local tribe. I come from far away—Washington, DC. Yet, sometimes, connectivity stretches across continents. Sometimes we interconnect through shared ideas—ideas about people and place and shared visions of healthy lands, thriving communities, vibrant economies and the power of conversation, collaboration, networks and collective action.

Two years ago, in the fall, I hiked a stretch of trail in Glacier National Park. With others, I then hiked another stretch here in Waterton National Park. I savored the magnificence of these two places. I savored the vistas of craggy peaks, the aquamarine glacial lakes, the wetlands rich in wildlife, the meadows golden and shimmering in the wind. I tasted berries, plump and perfumed. I saw golden grizzlies—far off across the hillside.

I celebrate the significance of these parks. I celebrate the significance of the partnerships among people, organizations, and governments to lend a caring hand to these parks and surrounding places.

Later, after my hikes, I visited ranchers, firefighters, bear biologists, community leaders, and First Nation peoples whose lives and livelihoods are linked to lands and waters along this Crown of the Continent. Those gathered, our many colleagues, neighbors, and fellow travelers are all engaged in distinct, yet increasingly linked social, environmental, and economic enterprises. These enterprises enhance—not merely sustain—lands, communities, and economies.

These efforts are not easy, but those gathered are not alone in these ventures. While I served for nearly 8 years at the U.S Interior Department—first as Assistant Secretary, then as Deputy Secretary—I was privileged to meet with folks along the Duck Trap River in Maine, along Winyah Bay in North Carolina, at Las Cienegas in Arizona, the Swan Valley in Montana, and so many other places. At each of these places, I met people clustered in constellations of collaboration to conserve places and enhance communities.

As I contemplate this efflorescence of action, this emergence of organizations, and their interconnection into larger networks, I am reminded of the words of former

US Secretary of the Interior Steward Udall as he described himself. I am, he said, “a troubled optimist.” As I contemplate communities, conservation, and landscape-scale collaboration, I guess I, too, am a troubled optimist. I am troubled because—as we have heard these two days—the issues are increasingly complex. Their scope transcends jurisdictional and property boundaries. The pace of change quickens. Climate change and its effects on land, water, wildlife, and people are vast and varied. Land fragmentation, invasive weeds, water quality and availability, the quest for energy, and the travails of succeeding in a global economy, even the survival of languages and stories and cultures all challenge us.

But, as the Chinese proverb reminds us, our challenges are also our opportunities. And therein emerges my optimism. Communities are coalescing in partnered problem solving. But, as we have heard these past two days, these efforts are hard work. These efforts are hard work; action gaps remain; and coordination within and among these efforts requires persistence.

I want to highlight several themes that test the capacities of collaborative endeavors of people and place.

First is the imperative of knowledge-building. Relevant science is often complex and sometimes uncertain. What will future rainfall patterns be? How will species respond to climate changes?

But yesterday we heard about another dimension of knowledge—local knowledge. Local knowledge includes the knowledge of time, place, circumstance, situation, experience, culture, and tradition. It includes the knowledge of experience that comes from working and living on lands. Such knowledge is critical to defining the doable and pinpointing the possible. It is also imperative for effective action.

I think of yesterday’s tale of the dugout canoe, which was alien and cumbersome and ill-suited to local conditions. It could not perform like the local canoe—one that was lightweight, portable, and strong. It was the kind of canoe essential to terrain and waters requiring long-distance portaging.

In local knowledge also reside the wisdom of culture and the font of local values. Central to collaborative endeavors is how to assure settings, conversations, and means of tapping this local knowledge in decision processes. Yet local knowledge alone is insufficient. Such decision processes also need ways to generate relevant scientific information.

A second related theme that tests the success of collaborative endeavors is the need for measures and metrics of success—a clear sense of what one is trying to do and how to know if one is achieving the stated goals.

A third theme that recurred through nearly every comment yesterday is the imperative of inclusive dialogue. Author William Isaacs once wrote that dialogue is

conversation with a center, not sides. About conversation, he wrote that: “To listen is to develop an inner silence.” Yesterday, we heard a related observation: sometimes we must try to see through someone else’s eyes.

A fourth—and obvious challenge—is the need for funds and other capacities to undertake action.

I want to spend more time on a fifth theme. That theme centers on the imperative of sustaining processes and decision structures that coordinate action and nurture cooperation. A year ago, I joined people from around nation to discuss landscape-scale conservation and collaboration. Those assembled identified six characteristics they perceived as important to sustaining structures and networks through which people can pursue shared values and actions to sustain places. I offer a quick summary of those characteristics as a prelude to providing concluding thoughts about the Crown of the Continent.

The first characteristic is the need for governance—whether formal or informal—that provides accountability and resilience. Put another way: who’s responsible for doing what? And how can decisions and actions adjust nimbly to new circumstances?

A second theme, much repeated these past two days, is the imperative of inclusivity in collaboration. Governance structures and processes need a context that gives expression to multiple values and points of view. Those processes require, too, some shared agreement on decision processes and rules—whether formal or informal. How much consensus is enough? When can an idea become a decision?

Governance structures and processes also must, as Sara said, establish the conditions for ongoing learning. That learning needs to include ways to identify information gaps, uncertainties, and methods for generating relevant knowledge. But learning also needs to encompass incorporation of local and experiential knowledge into deliberations and the information or knowledge base.

Finally, collaborative governance must be nested within a policy context in which regulatory and other policy tools help collaborative efforts to coordinate action and strengthen connections. The Crown of the Continent—and its affiliated participants—operate nested within a larger formal governance context. That context is one in which land and resource management responsibilities and oversight are divided and distributed among multiple agencies—a silo context. Agency rules and processes often are not well-designed to facilitate partnerships, collaboration, and cross-jurisdictional action. This context presents challenges for collaboration.

But informal and nongovernmental initiatives and place-based collaborative efforts face their own internal and intersecting governance challenges—challenges of how to keep efforts glued together and moving forward.

So, what might the future hold here for the many, many peoples and intersecting places that make up the Crown of the Continent? How can the whole be greater than the sum of the parts while affirming the distinct identities of the many participants? How can participants strengthen linkages among initiatives and fill gaps? How can participants and processes nurture a network of networks?

I want to offer a couple thoughts. Sometimes associations of associations begin to explore how to sustain their blended efforts. There are many organizational options along a continuum of very formal organizations to a more informal, organic blending of network participants.



At one end of the spectrum are initiatives such as that which resulted in formation of the congressionally designated Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. There, we see a formal organization, but one that displays an unusual structure of public and private lands, cross-boundary coordination, and shared projects. Coordination is accomplished through cooperative agreements that advance goals established by a comprehensive conservation plan.

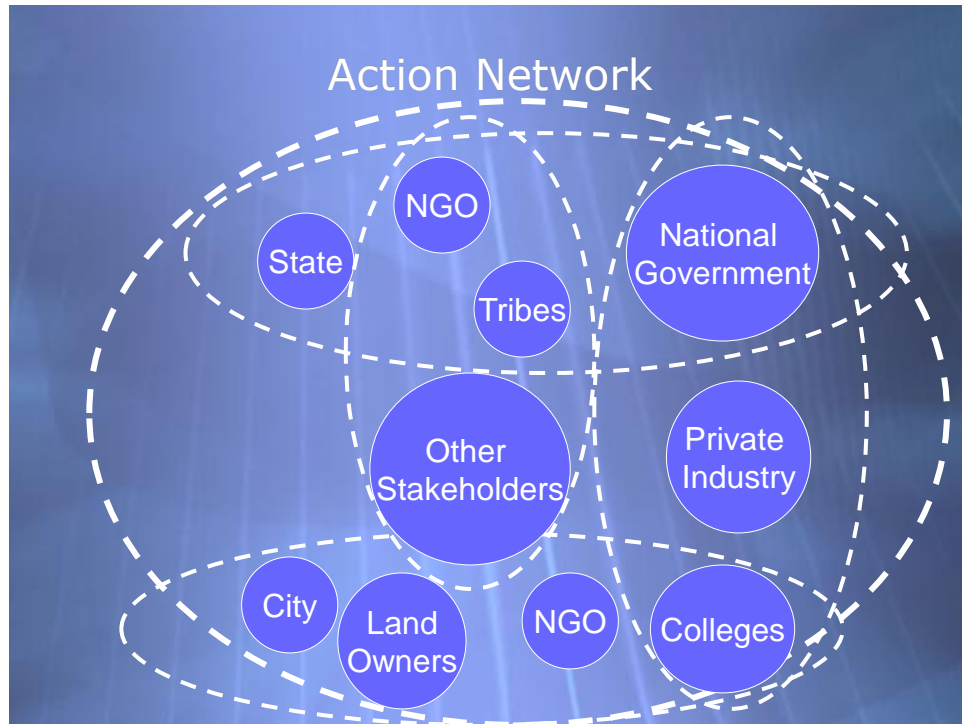
Sometimes we see formation of a new nonprofit, overarching “meta-group” of groups as in the Las Cienegas Watershed Collaboration. There participants formed an organization of organizations with a formal nonprofit status, staff, budget and shared actions.



Sometimes, at other end of the continuum, individual identities and purposes of different place-based efforts operating in a linked landscape are sufficiently unique that blended efforts take the form of a loose constellation of actions through what might be called an Action Network.

Such an Action Network involves a loose affiliation of clusters of organizations that form and reform around shared goals and conversations while continuing to pursue their own unique purposes. Such Action Networks help fill gaps and cement together intersecting actions.

Each of these governance structures creates a context for facilitating coordination and collaboration among people and organizations with shared goals and intersecting interests. I have offered three models along a continuum. But there are infinite governance forms. Which form is appropriate depends on the purposes, composition, duration, and needs of those people and organizations striving to coordinate their goals and actions.



The future of the Crown of the Continent is a story still unfolding. Those here from communities of the Crown will write your own future with your colleagues. It may be an evolving story with evolving decision making and governance structures tailored to the time and circumstances.

I want to end my remarks with a personal story of my own dream that connects me to this place. This dream came to mind as I listened yesterday to the tale of the California condor.

My real home is not Washington. It is Santa Barbara, California. Over ten years ago, while hiking in the San Rafael Wilderness, I heard a haunting, whistling rustle. I looked up and saw six condors—recently released—soaring overhead. At the time, just 15 condors had been set free into the wild.

Three years ago, I had the great, great privilege of holding a California condor in my arms—assisted by two FWS staff, one who held the beak and one the legs. I grasped my arms around the 20-pound torso of this magnificent bird. Together, on the count of three, we stood forth, opened our arms, and released this bird into the wild.

A year or so later, I returned to the wild lands behind Ojai, California. I returned there with a close friend and one of my heroes, John Ogden. Over 25 years ago, John, a scientist, led the team that scaled cliffs and hiked mountains to retrieve from the wild the last remaining California condors and bring them into captivity to breed them with the hopes of rebuilding a condor population to return to the wild. I stood shoulder to shoulder with John, 25 years after he had set forth to save the bird amid much

controversy and even threats. Yet John and his colleagues persisted. We stood shoulder to shoulder watching the fruits of that labor as 12 condors soared overhead and, at dusk, glided in to roost upon snags where once their ancestors, too, had presided. Yes, one person with a dream can make a difference.

It is my hope that one day my home in California where these birds once again soar will be linked through this grand bird to the Crown of the Continent where it might also soar.

Thank you very much!