Building Communities That Engage Invested Stakeholders

Who will be the next generation of leaders in the Crown of the Continent?

We posed this question to over 250 members of the Crown community at the 6th Annual Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent conference this fall. In attendance were the Governor of Montana, the Mayor of Missoula, 150 students, tribal leaders and numerous nonprofit organizations. At this “neighborhood” meeting, community members heard from citizen scientists who were monitoring huckleberries, water quality, and animal migrations. Other sessions heard about recent project successes from innovative businesses, tribes, landowners and government agencies. Successes also came from Jeff Mow, Glacier National Park Superintendent and Regional Forester Leanne Marten, who spoke about activities in their regions. Attendees learned about Blackfeet Tribal language protection and revival, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe’s water compact, and geo-tourism in the Crown neighborhood. We shared ways to tell the Crown of the Continent story through media, maps and art. We honored the local tribes for their work on water issues, landscape protection and cultural heritage. Basically, we got all caught up on neighborhood news and renewed our connection to each other and this landscape. The youthful spirit of the many young leaders in attendance was inspiring, to say the least.

Water, Western Landscapes & Drought

Water is key to the health of our landscapes and communities. Climate change is increasing drought across the west and we’re seeing changes in winter snowpack, stream runoff patterns, water temperatures and water availability. Among those who feel the strongest impact are farmers, ranchers, fish, wildlife and recreationalists. Watershed groups in the Missouri Headwaters (Gallatin, Jefferson, Madison Rivers in SW Montana) know they need to plan for drought but lack the people and funds to use scientific tools which are available. Federal and state agencies have developed drought mitigation and forecasting tools, but lack information on local drought planning needs. We are working with the National Drought Resilience Partnership, state and local communities to build a drought resilience pilot program in this basin. By working on this nationally recognized program, we hope to demonstrate that through collaborating and application of science tools to drought response, we can have a more drought resilient watershed that supports land uses, wildlife, and natural processes.
Advancing Science That Informs Conservation Decisions

Our NEW Global Atlas Map of Large Landscape Initiatives

Large landscape conservation, the new paradigm for conserving habitat and wildlife at a large scale, is now recognized as a global necessity. At Patagonia’s request, we created a user-friendly atlas of 125 landscape conservation initiatives from across the globe. Just click on the global map to select a landscape and learn about the percentage of habitat protected, its important species, and link to the local initiative. The atlas allows for conservation practitioners, funders, and the general public to learn about global large landscape initiatives. Furthermore, it demonstrates where gaps in these initiatives exist. Check it out! www.globescapes.org

Will Wildlife Corridors in the Northern Rockies Stay Connected as the Climate Changes?

We are thrilled to be able to use cutting-edge data and state-of-the-art US Geological Survey facilities to help us better understand where crucial wildlife corridors are, how their conditions may change, how animals might respond to that change, and what our partners who manage the land can do to keep wildlife on the move. This climate change vulnerability assessment is supported by the North Central Climate Science Center in partnership with the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative, state and federal agencies, and private land trusts.

Coordinating Connectivity Conservation from British Columbia to Wyoming

Currently, we’re in our second year working with the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative sharing success stories, discussing priorities, and starting to shape a strategy for conserving region-wide connectivity. Last year, we successfully built a comprehensive online atlas of terrestrial connectivity data as well as hosted practitioners from throughout the Great Northern Landscape region at a local workshop. This year, we’re expanding that atlas to include connectivity data for birds and fish. Furthermore, we’re developing a ‘toolbox’ of actions practitioners can use on the ground, as well as hosting workshops in landscapes in need of coordinated action. Our goal is to bring these components together and refine our region-wide connectivity strategy. We are very pleased with the connections and friendships we made in our first year, and look forward to even more in 2016.
Did the Elk Cross the Road?

You bet it did! We caught it on one of eight camera traps CLLC and local Jackson partners placed on Highway 89 south of Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The cameras are located at the future sites of wildlife underpasses to be built from 2016-2020. CLLC and our partners are monitoring wildlife crossings before construction begins at each site. Monitoring will continue afterwards as well. Recently, Jackson residents were invited to a public meeting to learn about proposed underpass designs and to see a show of the critters (deer, elk, moose, bear and one very curious elk) caught on the camera traps. If a picture is worth a thousand words then these photos really made a statement. Over the next year, we’re encouraging Jackson Hole residents to get involved by helping assess and catalogue the camera trap images.

Can Ecology & Engineering Mix?

Absolutely! At the International Conference on Ecology and Transportation, CLLC’s Renee Callahan spoke about planning and implementing wildlife crossings. We also presented two posters on developing new wildlife crossing solutions and how to prioritize crossing sites. We co-authored three presentation papers on: estimating the impacts of community growth and future traffic on wildlife connectivity; top strategies for reducing the costs of wildlife overpasses; and, key advantages of using roadside fencing for wildlife.

Considering Wildlife’s Needs in Western Transportation Projects

After two years of hard work, CLLC and the Western Transportation Institute finally completed the project entitled “Developing Sustainable Strategies Supporting Transportation Planning and Conservation Priorities Across the West” on behalf of the Western Governors’ Association. We are optimistic the recommended strategies will help federal, state and tribal transportation agencies increase the use of newly available digital wildlife data. Our goal is to better incorporate the needs of wildlife into transportation planning and projects, such as new roads and bridge replacements. Download the report here.

How Can We Encourage National Forests to Include Corridors and Connectivity in their Plans?

Every national forest has a management plan that is updated about every 20 years. New federal rules say they must now include consideration and protection of ecological connectivity. Montana’s Flathead National Forest is updating its plan and we wanted to make sure the bar is set high for subsequent forest plan revisions. In order to do so, we helped write a guidebook of the new federal regulations, wrote a letter to the Flathead NF sharing sources of wildlife corridor information, studies and maps, and in conjunction with six other conservation groups, wrote yet another letter describing connectivity and corridor requirements that must be adhered to. Concurrently, we conducted a study on the impacts of roads in NW Montana on key wildlife species. We are delighted that the proposed Flathead Forest Plan has over six pages of connectivity provisions for things like carnivore habitat, riparian habitat, lynx corridors, grizzly corridors and even connectivity among peatlands. What a great success!
New Faces

Deb Davidson consults with CLLC by supporting our fundraising and programmatic efforts. She has been in conservation for 20 years working on wildlife corridors, land conservation policy, and road ecology with American Wildlands and the Wilburforce Foundation. She’s been an environmental educator and a conservation philanthropist. Deb is currently the president of the Bozeman Community Food Co-op board, and is an advisor to the Gallatin Valley Land Trust. She is a passionate cook, avid gardener, and raises chickens and bees. She spends her free time hiking, riding horses, rafting, skiing, traveling, and exploring the natural world with her two girls and husband.

Julia Smith is our new GIS Analyst consultant. She holds a B.A. in Environmental Studies from Bowdoin College and an M.S. in Geography from the University of Montana. Her previous work includes tropical marine conservation projects in Tanzania, Madagascar, and the Netherlands Antilles, as well as permafrost monitoring initiatives in northern Alaska. At CLLC, she is working on maps for a connectivity atlas and corridors initiative. Julia enjoys spending her time outside in Montana -- hiking, boating, cross country skiing, weekend cabin trips, long dog walks, and even the occasional SCUBA dive in the Firehole River in Yellowstone National Park.

Kim Davitt is the new coordinator of the Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent. She has worked on conservation and public health issues in the U.S. Northern Rockies for the last 14 years, most recently working on air pollution and climate change issues for the American Lung Association and previously with American Wildlands on regional landscape connectivity. Kim lives in Missoula, Montana with her husband and two children and is also an extraordinary huckleberry picker.

Cross River Gorilla Review in Africa

The US Fish & Wildlife Service’s International Branch has asked our Executive Director, Gary Tabor, to evaluate their investments in a landscape conservation approach to protect the Cross River Gorilla. It is Africa’s most endangered great ape species and is found in a region that straddles Nigeria and Cameroon. In response to their request, Gary will be working in the field with members of Wildlife Conservation Service. In 2009, Gary and Fred Sowers proposed a landscape scale initiative to support the fragmented habitat of this gorilla species. The USFWS agreed to this investment with a five year cooperative agreement, which Gary is returning to evaluate. Learn more about the Cross River Gorillas here.

Recent Publications

Our new primer, Adapting to Change in the Crown of the Continent: An Ecosystem Scale Approach to Collaborative Management, highlights the Adaptive Management Initiative of the Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent. The natural resources of the Crown of the Continent (lands surrounding the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and Bob Marshal Wilderness Complex) are being threatened by changing climate and land uses. This initiative addresses changes at the landscape-scale with a suite of on-the-ground adaptation measures. The primer includes background information, case studies, and evaluation measures of the work to make this incredible region resilient to the manifold changes it is confronting. Click here to download the primer or click here to request a copy.