



## Heart of the Continent Partnership

*Working together to sustain and celebrate the lakes, forests and communities on the Ontario/Minnesota border*

**MINUTES**  
**Heart of the Continent Partnership**  
**Mink Mountain Resort**  
**Neebing, Ontario**  
**June 1-2, 2012**

### **Participants on Friday, June 1, 2012 and Sat, June 2**

Ann Schwaller, Superior National Forest; Bev Dale, Municipality of Neebing; Brian McLaren, Lakehead University; Chris Stromberg, Quetico Provincial Park; Clara Butikofer, Neebing Econ. Dev; Dawn Kilgour, Neebing Council; Doug Franchot, Voyageurs National Park Association; Ed Shields, Neebing Economic Dev.; Frank Jewell, St. Louis County; Jeff Bonema, Quetico Provincial Park; Joanne Cannaday, Neebing Economic Dev.; John and Beverly Miller; Jordan Boileau, Ontario Parks—Quetico; Judy Ness – Superior National Forest; Julie Sullivan, Ontario Parks; Kathleen Przybylski, Voyageurs National Park; Kathy Ball, Thunder Bay; Kirsten Spence, Trans Canada Trail; Kurt Lysne, Voyageurs National Park Association; Lisa Radosevich-Craig, Superior National Forest; Lynda Horman, Sleeping Giant; Ora Jewell Busche; Pam Cain, Neebing Econ. Dev; Paul Pepe, Thunder Bay; Peter Boyle, Fort William Historical Park; Roger Shott, Neebing Council; Shaun Hamilton, Trust for Public Land; Sue Duffy, Superior National Forest; Sue Gammon, Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines; Tim Cochrane, Grand Portage National Monument; Tim Sullivan, Ontario Parks NW; Ziggy Polowski, Mayor Neebing

### **Friday, June 1, 2012**

Friday a.m.

***Thunder Bay Waterfront Tour— Paul Pepe, Manager Thunder Bay Tourism***

Prior to the meeting Paul gave a tour of the upgrades to the Thunder Bay Marina and waterfront. Sister Cities Presentation between representatives of the City of Duluth and the City of Thunder Bay.

#### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Doug Franchot, Voyageurs National Park Association, welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave an overview of the Heart of the Continent Partnership (HOCP).

#### ***Border Crossing Presentation—***

Craig Kalar, Grand Portage Port Director, U.S. Customs  
Shane Danielson, Grand Portage Port Supervisor, U.S. Customs  
Tracey Gagnon, Canada Border Services Agency

Customs officials from each country came to present and discuss border-crossing issues, current barriers, how we can help improve outcomes for everyone.

**General Q'S and A's:**

*When passports are swiped what do you see?* The same information you see on the passport.

Canada - scanning documents logs passage into the country.

*Paddling on the Pigeon River do you need a Remote Area Border Crossing (RABC) permit?* For US, if you enter other country's water and do not reach shore or dock up with another boat you don't need a RABC. For US, if you don't touch soil in Canada you don't have to report your return with the I-68. If you touch soil, you need a RABC or Canada wants to know....

Best to get a RABC

*Crossing with kids – need for passports?* Age 15 and under do not need a passport, birth certificate suffices, 16 and over traveling individually or with family need a passport, groups (i.e. school or sport teams) regardless of age birth certificate suffices

*Is there a responsibility for a community promoting trails, etc that cross the border to provide information or is it the responsibility of the individual?* Individual

Other points:

Passport speeds things up, birth certificate only takes more time because the person has to come in and the information has to be set up

They don't profile, they target – removing sunglasses is for picture verification, countries visited may meet a target

Canada – people are randomly assigned to talk to people and ask more questions

US protects Ontario's fishing resources by asking questions relative to fishing regulations

Webster-Ashburton Treaty – still need to have documentation

Customs and Border – rely on the public to report suspicious things

**Ontario Parks Canada – Julie Sullivan, Senior Park Planner**

Julie Sullivan gave an overview presentation on the history and organization of Ontario Parks.

- Responsible for provincial parks in Ontario
- First Provincial park was Algonquin in 1893
- 87% managed by Ontario gov'n't as Crown lands; this includes all provincial parks
- 335 prov parks – 114 operating – staff and budget and charge fees and 221 non-operating no staff or funds, open to the public but no formal facilities provided or maintenance like trail clearing (no funds)
- 10 million visits annually
- largest provider of camping opportunities in Ontario
- part of Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

- most of the Superintendents in the Northwest Zone are responsible for multiple parks, both operating and non-operating – for example, Lynda Horman is responsible for 13 parks
- the main principal is Ecological Integrity – keeping natural processes intact and native species intact
- four objectives: protection, recreation, education, and science
- Julie explained different types of parks (e.g., cultural heritage, wilderness, nature reserve, recreation, natural environment and waterway); not all waterway parks are wilderness
- marketing the parks – newsletters, merchandise and trade shows
- provincial parks – no logging, mining, or industrial development; commercial trapping
- Far North Act – striving for 50% protection through community based land use planning - no forestry, no mining, no extraction
- Brian McLaren – talked about Conservation Authorities Act

### ***Sister Sites Arrangement***

The Canadian and U.S. federal agencies who manage land in the Heart of the Continent region recently signed a [Sister Sites Arrangement](#), pledging to seek ways of working together on joint projects in their respective public lands for mutual benefit. We heard more about that arrangement and discussed if/how it might be used as a model for cooperation among more local units of government, and/or among smaller organizations on both sides of the border.

Tim Cochrane – overarching idea was to have a symbolic document for parties to sign and point to the fact that there is significant integrity and informal arrangements – this document provides an umbrella to do things together and provide a framework for future work on projects and sharing resources – the document also shows that there is an ongoing effort to do things together

Lynda Horman –; LaVerendrye is a non-operating park included in the sister sites arrangement. Staff from Quetico, Kakabeka and Superior NF are going to do some trail clearing together within LaVerendrye in June.

Frank Jewell – from the point of view as a county commissioner, how might this type of arrangement be a model that can apply to other cross border government groups or Sister Cities relationships? If groups can make connections and work cooperatively, these efforts could go a long way.

- other examples – governmental groups
- border communities would benefit from emergency response services agreements to help each other on both sides of the border
- Tim’s point of view – build on existing or small step efforts when it comes to cooperative border arrangements
- Frank asked what the equivalent on the Canadian side would be for county government if he wanted to start working on a “Sister Sites” type arrangement – Municipalities would be the equivalent
- Shaun Hamilton suggested that we look at historical societies or Chambers of Commerce – identify affinity groups and see where the connections are; may go beyond governmental jurisdictions

- agreements between universities – Lakehead University and University of Minnesota-Duluth have an agreement
- Brian – signage means a lot – common signs would have an impact (i.e. Lake Superior Circle Tour)
- Kurt Lysne – there are agreements between medical facilities in International Falls and Fort Frances
- Kathleen – International Falls and Fort Frances work together on a variety of projects, especially Canada Day and 4<sup>th</sup> of July and the International Tug of War – Pulling for Peace

### ***National Geographic Geotourism Website Joint Project – Doug Franchot***

In the wake of last October's International Community Congress, the National Geographic Society has expressed a strong interest in collaborating with Heart of the Continent Partnership to develop a geotourism website highlighting the region. The development of such a site would involve local input as to tourism destinations to facilitate wise stewardship of cultural, historic, and natural resources.

HOCP is currently at the information and discussion stage, and trying to understand the concept and what this potential project would involve.

- The partnership/project results in a map and website
- what does it mean for HOCP? perhaps this could be HOCP's next big project
- \$200,000 cost – ca. ½ could be in-kind
- commitment would be significant so the decision about the project cannot be taken on lightly
- anyone interested in this project is encouraged to join the conversations
- Nat Geo brings a lot of credibility to a product
- what did Paul (Thunder Bay tourism) say? – record questions we should ask
- the volunteer effort could weave into a map project
- geographic boundaries would have to be well defined; core is easy to decide, but the periphery will be harder to define
- question was asked about trip planning online versus the usefulness of a map; Doug responded that the website is the central part that comes out of this and the connections it has to other websites

### ***Canadian Heritage River Initiative – Peter Boyle***

Currently the Pigeon River to Lac La Croix is designated as a Canadian Heritage River. A committee has nominated the section from Lac La Croix to Lake of the Woods and the Kaministiquia River for designation as a Heritage River as well. Peter Boyle brought an update on that application for an expanded designation.

- The selection committee is made up of provincial representatives and organizations
- three umbrella – natural, cultural, and recreation – need to be superlative to make them suitable for designation
- the process takes a long time
- no law or regulations come with a designation; no legal muscle

- Boundary Waters-Voyageurs Waterway from Grand Portage to Quetico is the current designated route; new initiative wants to add the northern route – Fort William to Rainy River
- status – plan has been submitted to Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society and OMN for feedback
- nomination has to go through a number of review and revision steps until it goes to the selection committee for review and hopefully recommendation for acceptance
- if nomination is secured the following are required obligations: management plan/strategy within 1-3 years, submit annual checklist of values, develop a management plan every 10 years
- someone asked if the name of the current designation would change if the new one is accepted; Peter replied that it is a sensitive issue, but there is no determination yet
- there may be short overlap with the Path of the Paddle project

### ***International Community Congress Team Reports***

Ten teams of community leaders are currently implementing the action plans they developed in last October's International Community Congress (held in Thunder Bay and Grand Portage). Team representatives presented an update of their progress.

#### *TransCanada Trail team – Kristen Spence*

- Path of the Paddle project – long distance water trail
- broke trail into five segments
- plans in place to work with Quetico Park this summer
- met with Neebing Council and approve 113km kayak trail connecting the community into Pigeon River – developing campsite on municipal land; trail opening planned for July
- TransCanada trail is the longest trail
- working on community and First Nations consultation
- a guide book will be developed

#### *Connecting Volunteers in the Heart of the Continent team– Ann Schwaller*

- want to create a volunteer page on the HOCP website that would outline needs and volunteer opportunities or the volunteer project could have its own website with a link on the HOCP website
- goal is to have pilot project this year in Quetico and Superior – Quetico will have a trout project this summer that needs volunteers
- project received \$5000 for HOCP Coordinator Bret Hesla to help coordinate this project
- committee wants each organization/agency to come up with 5 well-defined projects for 2013
- Ann is interested in what we do with volunteers and how we coordinate volunteers
- the website could also be a place for organizations/agencies to go to review volunteer applications
- needs to be well planned so we don't ask for volunteers and then don't have anything for them to do; try with some specific projects

#### *Destination Voyageurs National Park team– Kathleen Przybylski*

Have completed their project—a marketing plan  
Now seeking donations

*Ranier Team*

- have completed their project—a map
- KP showed map

*North of Superior Parks team – Peter Boyle*

- working on the travel app; trying an app on an experimental basis
- there is some funding available

*North Shore Scenic Drive team– Judy Ness*

- recommended waysides – supporting a traveler experience...
- scenic travel corridor
- the group has a work plan
- Ride Lake Superior has been a catalyst
- trying to develop other coastal tour initiatives

*Iron Range team – changed name to the Laurentian Connection*

- sent written update

*Neebing team – Clara Butikofer*

- Middle Falls area within Pigeon River park – wanted to have a grand opening July 1, 2012,
- but it will likely be July 1, 2013 because of the process needed to get an agreement in place between the Municipality of Neebing and Ontario Parks

***Next Meeting***

***October 2012 in Ely area*** – possible visit to Wolf Island on Lake Vermilion

**Saturday, June 2, 2012**

**Trail Work at Pigeon River Provincial Park**

We celebrated National Trails Day by going to Pigeon River Provincial Park to work with Ontario Park staff on trail maintenance.