

Heart of the Continent Partnership

An Idea Becomes Reality

Spanning the international border between northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Ontario lies an international treasure: the largest expanse of public greenspace in the heart of North America. Several separately managed natural areas are encompassed by this landscape at the “heart of the continent,” including Quetico Provincial Park, the Superior National Forest (including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness), Voyageurs National Park and numerous smaller Minnesota state forests and parks and Ontario provincial parks. (*See map.*)

In February 2007, under the banner of the Heart of the Continent Partnership (HOCP), groups managing these areas, along with other nonprofit and community organizations with a stake in the region’s ecological and economic health, began actively working to develop a long-term vision for this magnificent landscape. By May 2007, the group adopted vision, mission, and value statements and agreed on an organizational structure. HOCP is a nonpolicy partnership; as a group it will not take positions nor attempt to influence the policies of others. All told, at this time, 25 organizations have attended meetings of the HOCP, and participation is growing. (*See Who’s Involved.*)

Mission

The Heart of the Continent Partnership seeks to sustain and celebrate the health, beauty, diversity and productivity of the natural and cultural resources of the border lakes region through collaboration to meet the needs of present and future generations.

Ten-Year Vision (set in 2007)

By 2016 the people at the center of the North American continent will protect, manage and enjoy their natural treasures in the region with conscious intent to maintain its cultural and ecological linkages.

Action Strategies

Strategic collaboration among the stakeholders in this landscape could impart many benefits for land management, conservation, and the local communities in the region. By fostering a dialogue on a shared vision for the larger landscape, the HOCP collaborative can identify opportunities for engagement that transcends ownerships and the international boundary. To this end, the HOCP members have identified five broad action strategies:

- Developing an identity for the region and supporting socio-economic growth and cultural empowerment in the surrounding communities
- Providing a forum for collaborative engagement
- Cooperating in the areas of scientific research and management, and promoting the region as a global scientific research opportunity
- Collaborating in education, outreach, and support for public lands in the HOCP region
- Sharing resources for capital improvements such as trail development and maintenance

Who’s Involved So Far?

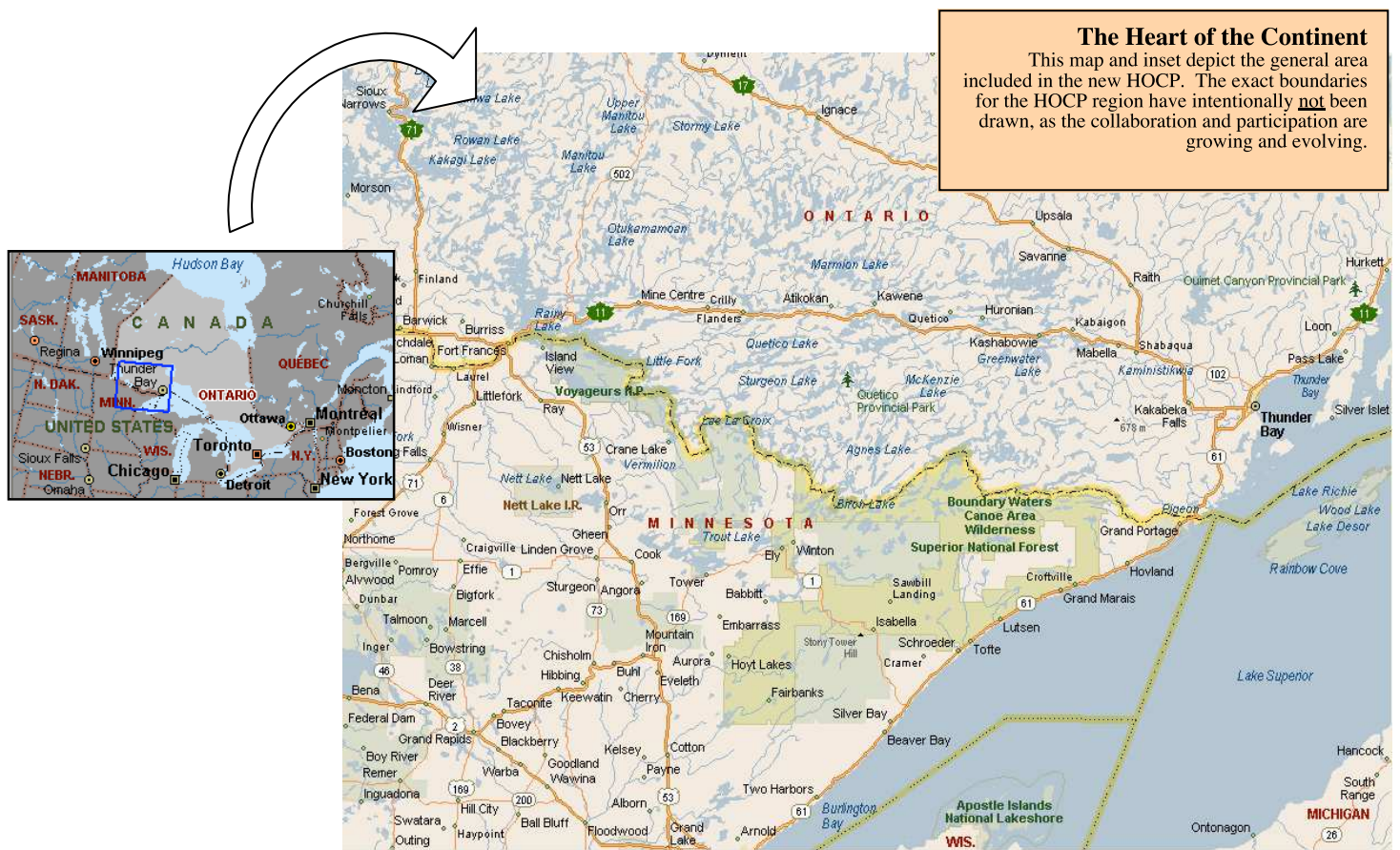
The HOCP collaboration continues to grow as groups perceive the benefits of working together to promote the land and communities of these areas. The following organizations, listed alphabetically, have participated in one or more meetings (“*” indicates steering committee): Ad/Venture Group, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS), Canoeing.com Limited, Eaton Associates, Ely Chamber of Commerce, Ernest Oberholtzer Foundation, Fort William Historical Park, Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness*, Friends of Quetico Provincial Park, Friends of Voyageurs National Park, Grand Portage National Monument, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Izaak Walton League, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*, Minnesota Forest Resources Council, Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, Ontario Parks, Quetico Foundation*, Quetico Provincial Park*, Quetico Superior Foundation, Rainy Lake Conservancy, Rainy River First Nations, Superior National Forest*, The Nature Conservancy*, Trust for Public Land, Voyageurs National Park, Voyageurs National Park Association*, Wilderness News.

What's in a Name?

The name *Heart of the Continent* evolved from the geographical and geological significance of this unique region. The core of this natural area includes Quetico Provincial Park, Superior National Forest and Voyageurs National Park. These places are geographically located near the center of the North American continent. Geologically, they are part of the Canadian Shield, a stable core of North America around which the rest of the continent has grown through geological processes.

Plans for 2009-2010

In addition to quarterly meetings, HOCP partners are jointly planning several activities in conjunction with the upcoming centennial celebrations of the Superior National Forest and the Quetico Provincial Park. These include a "Canoe the Heart" expedition with local celebrations (2009), and a Heart of the Continent Amateur Art Celebration (2009) and a Heart of the Continent Science Lecture Series (2009) and Science symposium (2010).



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