



Mission: The Heart of the Continent Partnership works to inclusively build vibrant and resilient communities that value and protect public lands in northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Ontario

Notes from the Roundtable

Voyagaire Lodge and Crane lake Chapel
Crane Lake MN—2019

Oct. 2nd

Land Managers Meeting
Bike the Heart
Science Symposium
Sustainable Recreation

Evening Presentations

HOCP Introduction
Travel the Heart website
International Partner portage
Dark Sky Presentation

Oct. 3rd

Tourism and Recreation
Proposed Crane Lake Visitor Center



*"The importance of the all lands approach" is to work together to achieve a common goal of maintaining strong partnerships and collaboration across the landscape and across borders."
Connie Cummins, Superior National Forest Supervisor*

Heart of the Continent Partnership

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www.heartofthecontinent.org - organization site

www.traveltheheart.org - geotourism web-site

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Land Managers Meeting

Attendees:

Bob DeGross—Superintendent, Voyageurs National Park
Connie Cummins—Forest Supervisor, Superior National Forest
Rosalind Wu—a/Forest Wilderness Program Manager, SNF
Chris Stromberg—Heart of the Continent Partnership Coordinator
Patty Thielen—Northeast Regional Director, MNDNR
Lisa Radosevich-Craig—External Affairs and Tribal Liason, USFS
Craig Hansen—Superintendent, Grand Portage National Monument
Carol Young—a/District Ranger, LLC Ranger District SNF
Molly MacGregor—NE Regional Planner—MN DNR
Holly Larson—Outdoor Recreation Planner—RTCAP—NPS
Megan Impson—Forest Recreation Program manager—SNF



Because the Heart of the Continent is an interconnected whole, a region-wide vision is necessary to ensure its environmental, social and economic sustainability.

The ecosystem's landscape is divided by all sorts of boundary lines, park and forest boundaries, county and even an international border.

Over ten years ago, along with insightful stakeholders, the Heart of the Continent Partnership was founded by the land managers from the border lakes area.

It was agreed that a larger agency mission was beneficial to collaborate on shared common goals to benefit of the public lands and gateway communities.

In 2011 a Sister Sites Arrangement was signed by representatives from Ontario Parks, United States Forest Service and the National Park Service. The management has changed over time but in 2017 the Sister Sites Arrangement was re-signed and included the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. This collaboration continued in Crane Lake in October. The goal of Heart of the Continent Partnership is to serve as the "umbrella" for the talks among land managers.

Topics included but were not limited to:

- Science symposium and science partnerships
- Connecting Volunteers, Partnerships
- Sustainable Recreation
- Crane Lake Inter-agency Visitor Center
- Funding the HOCPP organization
- Joint management issues and projects
- Field projects along the border and across Park/Forest Boundaries
- Future Land Manager meetings

Around the table were some new faces and a newly revived and vested interest. A common goal to protect public lands and improve commerce in the neighbouring communities was shared around the table and across the borders.

The economy of the Heart of the Continent region is hugely reliant on each other for our successes.

It is surprising how interconnected we truly are and the things that we could be doing together to create more growth, through shared initiatives.

Continued integrated conversation could easily make this region a lot stronger, more sustainable than it is even today.





Roundtable Gathering



Tonia Kittelson, Chair of the Heart of the Continent, welcomed everyone to Crane Lake. She started the meeting with a big shout out to the Atikokan Economic Development Corporation for its ongoing support, office space and helpful staff. She also said that Chris Stromberg's position as coordinator has been the glue for keeping our organization together and has kept us moving forward. She emphasized the need to have continued funding to support that position. Tonia spoke of her passion for the Heart of the Continent Partnership and her position as Chair, but felt there is still a need to have a co-chair on the Canadian side of the organization.

An executive committee or design teams were also previously talked about and should be considered. Tonia expressed thanks to the people that have been taking the reins on our big projects:

- Jesse Engebretson and Molly MacGregor for the Science Symposium,
- Frank Jewell for his championship of the "Bike the Heart" events.
- Bob DeGross and the folks involved in the HOCP Dark Sky designations.

These projects can take a lot of heavy lifting so we need to continue to try to recruit. Engagement can be in a broad way or as a member of a project committee. Project committees include finance, event planning, science and marketing.

In discussion, steering committee members resolved to explore the following options:

- Sustainable Recreation—How are member organizations are addressing this effort? How can HOCP's past work on this help the current effort? Lisa Radosevich-Craig volunteered to lead this.
- Possible multiple-agency natural resources volunteer training effort—Of interest to the US Forest Service.
- Potential Outstanding Resource Value workshop—To be led by the National Park Service.
- Designation of the Pigeon River in the US as a National Wild and Scenic River—It is a Heritage River on the Canadian side.
- Bike or hike event on the Echo Trail, connecting Crane Lake to Ely.
- Science-oriented workshops for land manager staff—Topics such as cultural archaeology, as opposed to a full-blown Science Symposium.

Tonia shared details of our finances and our challenges to keep up with our payments to our coordinator, which should become regular starting January 1st. We reviewed HOCP's organizational structure and the roles of steering committee members. HOCP has been funded by contributions from members, grants and by dues paid by businesses using the website. The members agreed to stabilize funding to assure smooth operations.

The HOCP 2020 winter meeting will be determined soon.



2019 Bike the Heart

[https://
www.traveltheheart.org/](https://www.traveltheheart.org/)

Evening Presentations

Dark Sky Initiative

The night sky within the Heart of the Continent region is an outstanding resource. The ability to experience northern lights, view the Milky Way, and see meteor showers without the hindrance of light pollution on our public lands is astounding.

Bob DeGross—Voyageurs National Park Superintendent, presented on the benefits of preserving our dark skies. Bob never skipped a beat in telling us how light pollution can have an affect on living creatures including humans. Bob was able to demonstrate the light pollution affects across North America, the myths of over-lighting for safety and even the benefits a protected dark sky can be for tourism. As the world population increases the ability to see stars in the sky decreases. It is becoming exceedingly popular for travelers and astro-photographers to seek our protected dark sky areas. As one local outfitter said “ the dark skies and stars may not be what draws them to Voyageurs at first, but is often one of the highlights of their trip and has them return each year”.

An article about the field work being done can be found at—<https://www.ontarioparks.com/parksblog/international-dark-skies-quetico/#more-29289>

National Geographic Geotourism Web-site Travel the Heart

Chris Stromberg shared with the group the proposal to migrate the geotourism website, which has the potential to save costs substantially and to improve the product for customers. Chris showed how to use the site for showcasing favourite places, and for businesses to promote their unique products, facilities and adventures. He demonstrated how pages can be linked to their own web site and how an affiliation with “traveltheheart” can be made by using the National Geographic badge links available. Geotourism creates an authentic visitor experience and benefits its residents economically, environmentally and culturally, which helps achieve the goal of the member organizations of the Heart of the Continent Partnership. Steering committee members endorsed the migration proposal. <https://www.traveltheheart.org/>

Collaborative Field Project

A quick presentation of collaborative work of Ontario Park and Superior National Forest wilderness rangers in La Verendrye Provincial Park and the BWCAW. International ranger crew partnered up to improve a flood prone portage on the Granite River - <https://queticosuperior.org/blog/international-ranger-crew-partners-to-improve-flood-prone-portage>

Heart of the Continent Partnership encourages becoming stewards of the places we love and connecting people to our public lands. Not only with sweat and hard work in the backcountry, but within the hearts and minds of the people that work, live and visit the Heart of the Continent.



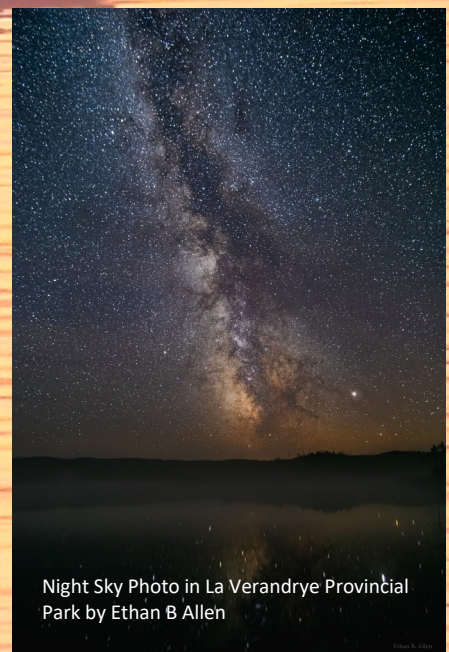
Crane Lake is a lovely unique community. It was a pleasure to meet some of the people from the town and the folks at Voyageurs were great hosts.



Ontario parks and Superior National Forest collaborate on a rock causeway in La Verandrye Provincial Park



Night presentations included HOCP Dark Sky Initiative and collaborative field projects



Night Sky Photo in La Verandrye Provincial Park by Ethan B Allen



Sustainable Recreation

Superior National Forest Supervisor, Connie Cummins, presented on and encouraged group discussion on Sustainable Recreation and Tourism:

- Are we meeting the needs and demands for recreation?
- Are we maintaining the facilities based on the demands?
- Partnerships, cultivating relationships, citizen and community involvement
- Housing volunteers that come from distances
- Making smarter investments for long term sustainability
- Continued protection of public lands with the increased numbers of visitation and popular sports such as mountain biking and ATV use.

There are increased challenges with decreased funding. It was agreed on that there should be a HOCP sub-group to help work on those challenges and dust off the ideas that came from our past recreation/tourism summits to see what we are already doing well and how we can share ideas to improve. The talks segwayed nicely into the talks of the proposed Crane Lake Facility.

Proposed Crane Lake Inter-agency Facility

Holly Larson from Outdoor Recreation Planner Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program presented on the proposed inter-agency facility for the township of Crane Lake. An interpretation of the facility was shown in an artist's drawings and blue prints. The possibilities to best utilize the facility as well as funding were discussed. Talks included a training facility, housing for volunteers, a community center and the ability to create opportunities for neighbouring public land agencies to benefit from the center.

Goals

- To make the entrance to Voyageurs NP and this significant gateway to Quetico and the BWCAW a more enjoyable experience for visitors.
- Spur economic growth for Crane Lake with increased visitors and lengths of visit.
- Promote Crane Lake as a four season destination.

Vision

- Voyageurs National Park Visitor Center
- Voyageurs National Park Campground
- State boat access
- Redevelopment of the former resort property
- Space for community functions and commercial activities
- Public beach, playground and picnic area
- Public dock
- Bunkhouse and/or volunteer lodging



Conceptual design



Artist's rendition

Attendees

The background of the page is a photograph of a sunset over a calm lake. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and red, with the sun's reflection visible on the water. In the distance, there are silhouettes of evergreen trees. In the foreground, two people are sitting in a small canoe on the water, their figures silhouetted against the bright sunset.

Chris Stromberg	HOCP
Rosalind Wu	USFS
Doug Franchot	VNPA
Molly MacGregor	MNDNR
Holly Larson	RTCA NPS
Craig Hansen	NPS
Tonia Kittelson	HOCP
Bob DeGross	Voyageurs National Park
Serena Swenson	Crane Lake Visitor Bureau
Jeff Miller	Lake Country -Realtor
Megan Impson	USFS
Brenda Pohlman	Nelson's Resort
Jerry Pohlman	Nelson's Resort
Char Bystrom	Crane lake
Lee Stewart	USFS
JoAnn Pohlman	Crane Lake Twp
Shirley Sandborn	Handberg's Resort
Gretchen Janssen	Voyagaire Lodge
Caitlin Chacin	Handberg's Resort
Lori Sanborn	Handberg's Marine
Emily Schwanke	Voyageur Guide Service
Ryan Barnes	Voyageur Guide Service
Andy Hubley	ARDC
Carol Young	USFS
Patty Thielen	MN DNR
Connie Cummins	USFS
Lisa Radosevich-Craig	USFS