

Charter and Mission:

Crown of the Continent Ecosystem High Five Working Group

Mission Statement

To protect and restore functional whitebark and limber pine ecosystems by fostering transboundary collaboration and coordination to transfer sound scientific knowledge, leverage funding opportunities, and optimize restoration and conservation efforts within the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem.

Rationale/Background

The Crown of the Continent Ecosystem (CCE) is one of North America's most ecologically diverse and intact ecosystems. Overlaying this extraordinary landscape is a complex arrangement of borders that delineate lands managed by numerous federal, provincial, state and local governments, tribes and First Nations, private landowners, industry and conservation interests, each with their own objectives and mandates. Recognizing that no single agency has the mandate or the resources to focus on the ecological integrity of the entire region, the Crown Manager's Partnership was formed in 2001 to provide a venue for cooperation and stewardship of the CCE. In March, 2016, the Crown Manager's Partnership, in partnership with the Crown Conservation Initiative, the Wilderness Society, and the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation convened a workshop to investigate how governments, agencies, organizations, communities and individuals could work together to address the precipitous decline of five-needle white pines in the CCE. The result was agreement to establish a working group, inclusive in nature, to work towards the shared objective of conserving and restoring five-needle pines in the CCE.

The CCE includes two high elevation five-needle white pines (known as the 'High Five' from the pine subgenus *Strobus*), which provide wildlife habitat and ecosystem services, including snow retention, regulation of downstream flows, and protection from avalanche and soil erosion. Whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*), a foundation and keystone species of upper subalpine and treeline forest communities, is widely represented throughout the CCE, growing at the highest elevations and on the harshest sites. Limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*) forms small to large stands after fire or other disturbance, and occurs from the lower forest boundary to the highest elevations. It also grows as a dominant in climax stands on harsh sites or alongside whitebark pine in subalpine and treeline communities. Both pines produce large, wingless seeds which are important food for wildlife, including grizzly and black bears as well as birds and small mammals, and have a rich culture of traditional uses by indigenous peoples. Both pines depend on Clark's nutcrackers for seed dispersal.

Whitebark and limber pine are declining rapidly as a consequence of anthropogenic disturbances. The main agent of decline is the introduced fungal pathogen *Cronartium ribicola*, which causes white pine blister rust in five-needle white pines. The CCE has the highest infection and mortality rates from this pathogen across the range of both pines. Blister rust impacts trees of all ages, killing seedlings, saplings, and mature seed producers, diminishing

seed production and the future forest structure. This loss is compounded by mortality of large-diameter trees from historical mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*) outbreaks as well as the recent outbreak, which was exacerbated by warming trends. Furthermore, fire suppression practices have led to advanced successional replacement of both pines within seral communities, while global warming trends are shifting pine distributions, altering local hydrology, and leading to mortality of large, old pines. Without these two species and the communities that they anchor, carrying capacity for wildlife declines, high and low elevation forests are more geographically restricted and homogeneous, and multiple ecosystem services are diminished.

Restoration protocols, tools, and technologies are available and being implemented for whitebark pine and, to a limited extent, for limber pine by individual agencies, each conducting this work independently. However, consensus exists that the pace and scale of restoration must be dramatically increased and sustained if these species are to persist within the CCE. Cooperation and a partnership among all interested jurisdictions is essential to enable this level of restoration to be achieved. For this reason, a High Five Working Group is necessary to prioritize and advance collective efforts to effectively monitor, conserve, and restore five-needle pines in the Crown of the Continent.

Role of the CCE High Five Working Group

The CCE High Five Working Group will:

- (1) collaborate on and coordinate restoration protocols, tools, technology and resources across jurisdictional boundaries, wherever possible and beneficial;
- (2) include representation from all government and private jurisdictions and interested organizations, including federal, tribal, First Nation, state, provincial, industrial, non-profit, and private within the region;
- (3) function as a collaborative group whose primary responsibility is to promote the conservation and restoration of CCE whitebark and limber pine to levels that will enable the persistence of these species;
- (4) accomplish its work through exchange of information, leveraging and sharing work capacity and resources where possible, and providing guidance for cost-efficient conservation and restoration of whitebark and limber pine;
- (5) guide its work by (a) identifying where whitebark and limber pine are in need of conservation and restoration, (b) identifying appropriate conservation and restoration actions, including climate change adaptation actions, (c) prioritizing restoration activities with respect to consensus-based guidelines, and (d) establishing consistent methods for monitoring of species' condition and trends, and restoration activity outcomes.

The CCE High Five Working Group acknowledges that accomplishment of its role and mission may require decades of persistent effort to ensure that whitebark pine and limber pine ecosystems remain important, functional components of the CCE landscape.

Working Group Membership

General Membership: Membership to the High Five Working Group is open to all interested individuals. The High Five Working Group will strive to maintain membership from the following general categories of land jurisdictions within the Crown: tribes and First Nations, federal, state and provincial agencies, and private, non-profit and industrial interests.

Organizational Lead Contacts: For each participating jurisdiction or organization, one official representative should be appointed as the Lead Contact for the organization. The Organizational Lead Contact agrees to relay relevant information or work products from the Working Group to their respective organization, identify individuals within their entities who may be interested in participating in Working Group subcommittees and keep organizational leaders apprised of Working Group actions, needs, and accomplishments and to seek input, as necessary. The Organizational Lead Contact also agrees to participate, through the Working Group's consensus decision-making process, in important decisions related to furthering the mission of the High Five Working Group (i.e. including, but not limited to, engaging in decisions related to amending this charter).

Working Group Leadership Team

The Working Group Leadership Team will be comprised of the Working Group's Co-Chairs, Associate Co-Chairs, Subcommittee Leads, and one current member of the Crown Managers Partnership (to serve as a liaison between the Working Group and the CMP).

Co-Chairs and Associate Co-Chairs: The working group will select two Co-Chairs, one from Canada and one from the U.S. for a general two-year term. In addition, two Associate Chairs will be selected, one from Canada and one from the U.S. Each Associate Chair will help coordinate activities, support Co-chairs, and fill in when their Co-Chair is not able to attend a meeting or complete an assignment. Associate Chairs will become Co-Chairs at the end of their two-year term, entailing a four-year commitment, and new Associate Chairs will be elected on two-year cycles. Initially, the Co-Chair and Associate Co-Chair from either Canada or the US (which will be decided by coin toss or declaration) will have a three- year term, to stagger the rotation of Co-Chairs and Associate Co-Chairs. Individuals may run for no more than two consecutive terms on the leadership team (i.e., run for Associate Chair consecutively after being Co-Chair for 2 years).

The Co-Chairs and their Associates will be principally responsible for communicating with group members, setting the working group agendas, and ensuring forward progress on working group goals and objectives. The Co-Chairs and their Associates will work closely with subcommittee Leads to help develop plans within the working group for obtaining adequate resources, problem-solving, and other support required to accomplish subcommittee goals and the overarching goals of the CCE High Five Working Group

Subcommittee Leads: The Working Group will stand-up and maintain subcommittees as needed to advance its mission and objectives. Subcommittee Leads for each active subcommittee will be part of the Leadership Team, providing timely updates on subcommittee progress, and

identifying outstanding needs or new opportunities within their subcommittees. Having the Subcommittee Leads interacting on the Leadership Team is meant to foster synergies among subcommittees, and ensure the Co-Chairs and Associate Co-Chairs can effectively support the progress of the subcommittees.

Working Group Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the CCE High Five Working Group will include establishing a set of yearly objectives sufficient to attain timely achievement of the goals of the working group as described above. Subcommittees will be formed to advance specific goals, as needed, and a Subcommittee Lead (or, if desirable, co-leads) will be designated for each active subcommittee. If resources other than in-kind personnel time are needed to achieve yearly objectives, the Working Group and/or its subcommittees would seek funding for those tasks (e.g., requests to membership agencies, grants, partnerships).

The Working Group will meet formally once a year in person, alternating between a Canadian and U.S. location within the CCE and by conference call (or other appropriate technology) at least two additional times within a given year.

The Working Group will strive for consensus whenever a decision is required within the context of the duties spelled out in this charter. If consensus cannot be reached, then final decisions will be made by the Leadership Team with a simple majority vote.

The charter itself may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the working group organizational lead contacts and members of the leadership team.

Prior to each annual in-person meeting of the CCE High Five Working Group, each Subcommittee Lead will submit a report of its progress, accomplishments, and/or challenges. The CCE High Five Working Group will post meeting agendas and minutes from each in-person and conference call meeting on a publicly accessible web-site.

Members of the Working Group Leadership Team agree to attend the annual in-person meeting, and attend the bi-annual Working Group conference calls.

Active subcommittees have been formed around specific goals and charges, as outlined in *We need the needles: An implementation strategy to coordinate action and conserve 5-needle pine forests in the Crown of the Continent*, dated May 24, 2016. The **subcommittees** include the following:

- **Loss Mitigation Subcommittee:** Develop a mitigation strategy and best management practices to avoid degradation or loss of whitebark and limber pine.
- **Inventory and Monitoring Subcommittee:** Launch a CCE-wide inventory and monitoring database.
- **Restoration Strategy and Action Plan Subcommittee:** Draft (and implement) a Crown-wide restoration strategy and action plan.
- **Protected Area Restoration Strategy Subcommittee:** Develop recommendations to guide approaches for whitebark and limber pine restoration in highly protected areas.

- **Fire Management Subcommittee:** Develop recommendations to guide pro-active fire management in whitebark and limber pine forests.
- **Communications Strategy Subcommittee:** Develop a multi-faceted communications strategy to raise awareness and support for whitebark and limber pine restoration and conservation.

The CCE High Five Working Group may add, consolidate, or eliminate subcommittees as objectives are met or new needs arise. All final plans and recommendations that come from subcommittees as well as the working group itself will be posted on the CCE High Five Working Group website and compiled as a reference document.

APPENDIX 1:

The list of Working Group members and Organizational Lead Contacts will be updated annually. Working group members and Organizational Lead Contacts as of March, 2017 include :

Organization	Organizational lead member	Member	Member	Member	Member	Member
Alberta Agriculture and Forestry	Jodie Krakowski	Pam Melnick	Margriet Berkhout			
Alberta Environment and Parks	Brad Jones	Robin Gutsell				
Alberta Environment and Parks - Parks Division	Megan Evans	Jenny Burgess	Joyce Gould	Travis Sjovold		
BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations	Michael Murray	Lindsay Anderson				
Blackfoot Challenge	Signe Leirfallom					
Bureau of Land Management	Michael Albritten	Kyle Johnson	Ken Reed			
Canadian Forest Products Limited	Kari Stewart-Smith	Stephanie Keightley				
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes	Roian Matt					
Crown Conservation Initiative	Regan Nelson					
Environment and Climate Change Canada	Kella Sadler	Brad Langman	Undine Thompson			
Flathead National Forest	Melissa Jenkins	Janette Turk	Rick Connell	Michael Reichenberg	Chip Weber	Robert Davies
Glacier National Park	Dawn LaFleur	Mary Riddle	Rebecca Lawrence	Jeff Mow		
Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest	Tanya Murphy					
Individual (Parks Canada Scientist Emeritus)	Peter Acuff					
Lake Louise Ski Resort	Veronica Whitney-Crosland					
Lolo National Forest	Elliott Meyer					
Montana Conservation Corp	Clifford					
Montana Dept Nat Res Cons	Amy Gannon					
Nature Conservancy of Canada - BC	Adrian Leslie					
Piikani Nation	Noreen Plain Eagle					
The Nature Conservancy in Montana	Dave Hanna					
The Wildlife Society	Anne Carlson					
USFWS Montana ES Field Office	Mike McGrath					
Waterton Lakes National Park	Rob Sissons	Dennis Madsen				
Whitebark Ecosystem Foundation	Diana Tomback	Cyndi Smith				
Whitebark Ecosystem Foundation - Canada	Randy Moody					
Wildsight - Golden, BC Branch	Corinna Strauss					

APPENDIX 2:

The Working Group Leadership Team and their terms (where applicable) as are follows:

- **U.S. Co-Chair:** Melissa Jenkins, Flathead National Forest (2016-2018)
- **Canada Co-Chair:** Brad Jones, Alberta Environment and Parks (2016-2019)
- **U.S. Associate Co-Chair:** Dawn LaFleur, Glacier National Park (2016-2018)
- **Canada Associate Co-Chair:** Randy Moody, Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation of Canada (2016-2019)
- **Crown Managers Partnership Liaison:** Linh Hoang, U.S. Forest Service Region 1 (no term)

Working Group Subcommittee Leads:

- **Loss Mitigation Subcommittee:** Randy Moody, Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation of Canada
- **Inventory and Monitoring Subcommittee:** Gregg DeNitto, U.S. Forest Service Region1
- **Restoration Strategy and Action Plan Subcommittee:** Robert Sissions, Waterton Lakes National Park and Michael Murray, British Columbia Forest Service
- **Protected Area Restoration Strategy Subcommittee:** Anne Carlson, The Wilderness Society
- **Fire Management Subcommittee:** Robert Keane, Rocky Mountain Research Station
- **Communications Strategy Subcommittee:** Megan Evans, Alberta Environment and Parks