

## Crown Managers Partnership High Five Working Group Charter and Mission

### 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 Crown Managers (CMP) High Five Working Group**

The CMP 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 CMP 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.

### Working Group Leadership Team

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

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 CMP 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 CMP 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, within the CCE and by conference call (or other appropriate technology) at least once 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 CMP High Five Working Group, each Subcommittee Lead will submit a report of its progress, accomplishments, and/or challenges. The CMP 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 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 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.
- **Restoration Implementation Subcommittee:** Develop a plan to provide implementation support for the Crown-wide restoration strategy and action plan.

The CMP 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 CMP High Five Working Group website and compiled as a reference document.

## **APPENDIX 1: CMP High Five Working Group Membership**

Alberta Environment and Parks  
 Glacier National Park  
 Forest Service Region 1 (Northern Region)  
 Kootenay-Boundary Region Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development  
 Forest Service Flathead National Forest  
 Forest Service Kootenai National Forest  
 Forest Service Northern, Rocky Mountain, Southwestern and Intermountain Regions  
 Emeritus - Waterton Lakes National Park  
 Mistakis Institute  
 Environment Canada Federal Recovery plan  
 Confederated Salish and Kootenay Tribe  
 Ktunaxa Nation  
 The Nature Conservancy  
 Parks Canada - Waterton National Park  
 Canfor  
 Whitebark Ecosystem Foundation  
 The Wilderness Society  
 Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute  
 R1, Flathead NF, Hungry Horse RD  
 Pacific Northwest Forest Service  
 US Forest Service, Region 6 (Washington/Oregon)  
 British Columbia Parks  
 Bureau of Land Management  
 Nature Conservancy of Canada  
 Teck Resources  
 Riverdale Resources  
 US Department of Agriculture  
 Lolo National Forest  
 Montana Fish and Wildlife Service  
 Alberta Agriculture and Forestry  
 Piikani Nation  
 Blackfoot Challenge  
 Parks Canada, Jasper  
 American Forests

**APPENDIX 1: continued**

Montana Conservation Corp  
Forest Lands and Natural Resources Dept, Government of BC  
BC Wildfire Service  
Lake Louise Ski Resort  
US Geological Survey  
Wildsight  
Castle Crown Wilderness Coalition  
Municipality of Crowsnest Pass  
Blood Tribe  
Great Northern Landscape Cooperative  
Private Land Owners  
Bob Marshall Wilderness Assoc  
University of Idaho  
Salish Kootenay College  
East Kootenai Invasive Species Council

## APPENDIX 2: WORKING GROUP LEADERSHIP TEAM AND SUB-COMMITTEE LEADS

The Working Group Leadership Team and their terms (where applicable) as of December 2020 are as are follows:

- **U.S. Co-Chair**
  - Dawn LaFleur, Glacier National Park (2019-2020)
  - Karl Anderson, Flathead National Forest (2021 - 2022)
- **Canada Co-Chair:**
  - Brad Jones, Alberta Environment and Parks (2016-2019)
  - Randy Moody, Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation of Canada (2020 – 2021)
- **U.S. Associate Co-Chair:**
  - Karl Anderson, Flathead National Forest (2019-2020)
  - Rebecca Lawrence, Glacier National Park (2021 – 2022)
- **Canada Associate Co-Chair:**
  - Randy Moody, Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation of Canada (2016-2019)
  - Rob Sissons, Parks Canada (2020 – 2021)
- **Crown Managers Partnership Liaison:** Linh Hoang, U.S. Forest Service Region 1 (no term)
- **Crown Managers Partnership Conservation Priorities Coordinator:** Natalie Poremba

Working Group Subcommittee Leads as of December 2020:

- **Loss Mitigation Subcommittee:** Randy Moody, Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation of Canada
- **Inventory and Monitoring Subcommittee:** Vacant
- **Restoration Strategy and Action Plan Subcommittee:** Rob Sissons, Parks Canada
- **Protected Area Restoration Strategy Subcommittee:** Anne Carlson, The Wilderness Society
- **Fire Management Subcommittee:** Robert Keane, Rocky Mountain Research Station
- **Communications Strategy Subcommittee:** Vacant