

*Working TOGETHER
to SUSTAIN and
CELEBRATE the
LAKES, FORESTS and
COMMUNITIES in the
border lakes region.*



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.

SHARED VALUES

A key requirement for success among the Partnership is trust in a fair, open and communicative process. The Heart of the Continent is a non-partisan forum where diverse groups can meet and seek new ways to work together. As a non-policy partnership, the group does not take positions nor attempt to influence the policies of participants.

VISION

Within the next 10 years 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 culture and ecological linkages.

*HOCP Fact Sheet
March, 2010*

Who We Are

The Heart of the Continent Partnership is a Canadian/American coalition of land managers and local stakeholders working together on cross-border projects that promote the economic, cultural and natural health of the lakes, forests and communities on the Minnesota/Ontario border.

From out of a broad collection of separate entities, the HOCP is seeking to develop a common identity and sense of belonging to the larger cross-border area, the



Heart of the Continent, which consists of over 5 million acres (2 million hectares) of public lands. Along with the development of a

common identity is the desire to create and sustain economic stability for the communities that surround these public lands.

The Need for the Heart of the Continent Partnership

Because the *Heart of the Continent* ecosystem is an interconnected whole, a region-wide vision is necessary to ensure its sustainability. The ecosystem's landscape is divided by all sorts of boundary lines: park and forest boundaries, county lines, even an international

border. These divisions have historically posed barriers to collaboration. Communities could better work together to reap benefits from marketing the region as a whole. Land managers could increase cooperation on plans that make sense for the connected natural areas in a

larger context. Cooperative leadership among the Heart of the Continent Partnership is fostering increased knowledge, trust, projects, funding and effectiveness, which in turn will increase stature and sustainability of the region's public lands.

Heart of the Continent Partnership Goals

- ▶ To build region-wide dialogue, cooperation and capacity among communities, public land managers, and conservation and recreation and industry groups to benefit our border region to enable vibrant communities to flourish alongside healthy public lands.
- ▶ To create opportunities for groups to work together in new ways that can benefit the lakes, forests, wildlife and people of this ecosystem.

HOCP ACTION STRATEGIES

Participants have identified five broad action strategies as they work together on common goals and cross-border projects.

▶ **Developing an identity for the region** as a single whole, and supporting economic growth and cultural empowerment in the surrounding communities.

▶ **Providing a forum** for separate groups to plan and work together on projects that reach beyond their separate borders and to build mutual respect and understanding.

▶ **Cooperating in the areas of scientific research** and management, and promoting the region as a global scientific research opportunity. An example of an issue needing cooperation is Climate Change.

▶ **Joining forces in education**, outreach, and support for public lands in the Heart of the Continent region.

▶ **Sharing resources** for capital improvements such as trail development and maintenance.



Partnership Events

CANOE THE HEART OF THE CONTINENT—CENTENNIAL CANOE VOYAGE

In 2009, HOCP organized a nearly 350-mile (563 kilometers), 18-day canoe expedition across the region where 60 partners took part in paddling a 27-foot (8.2 meters) canoe as a way to meet two of its goals—build awareness of the region as an interconnected whole, and build relationships and good will among the diverse stakeholders in the region. Along the route, community celebrations included historic, interpretive presentation, voyageur canoe rides, crafts and presentations on Non Native Invasive Species and Leave No Trace principles. Many paddlers have commented on the lasting benefits of the trip: paddling side-by-side with someone who might have been seen as the opposition before, and now has become someone known and better understood as a potential partner. The voyage was held in conjunction of the 100th anniversaries of Quetico Provincial Park and Superior National Forest.



REGIONAL MEETINGS

Representatives from participating organizations meet quarterly and the steering committee at least monthly, building relationships and developing ways to work together. HOCP's efforts to date have been largely focused on forming the partnership itself: building new relationships, engaging the various public land agencies, forming a network of interested participants from around the region, and beginning to publicize the effort. The partnership has held approximately 12 general meetings in a variety of cities. Scientific topics have included: Fire ecology in the HOCP region, a talk by researchers about sturgeon in the HOCP region and a presentation on the history and culture of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa. These gatherings have led to an increase of knowledge and respect among the many stakeholder groups in the area and have contributed to improved communications and have spawned new relationships in the region. Check the website www.heartofthecontinent.org for information on upcoming meetings and topics.

Looking Forward

▶ **Balancing Nature and Commerce in Communities that Neighbor Public Lands**

▶ **Heart of the Continent International Community Congress 2011**

HOCP plans to focus much of its work in 2010 on building understanding and connections between gateway communities around the cross-border region and the public lands that surround them. In particular, HOCP will work to foster broad public dialogue around the Heart of the Continent region on how healthy communities can flourish alongside healthy public lands.

In Jan. 2010, a HOCP team attended Balancing Nature and Commerce in Communities that Neighbor Public Lands. In 2010, they and others in the region will form a design team to work with communities to increase their vibrancy and economic sustainability focusing on their connection to their public lands. Plans will be developed to hold a similar workshop for gateway communities to be offered locally in 2011. Interested parties can contact us by email at: HOCP@heartofthecontinent.org.

Getting Involved

HOCP is open to all organizations who support the organization's mission and who have a stake in the long-term health of the lakes, lands and communities on the Ontario/Minnesota border. At this time, HOCP is not a membership organization, but a loose network.

► **REGIONAL MEETINGS:** HOCP welcomes interested organizations to attend its quarterly meetings, which are a great opportunity to share ideas, meet colleagues and participate in HOCP's ongoing activities.

► **EMAIL COMMUNITY:** HOCP uses a listserv to make it easier for participants to communicate with each other, have discussions and share ideas. In addition, HOCP uses this listserv to send information about upcoming meetings and projects. As a participant you can easily send messages to all participants. It is a forum to connect with partners and participate in ongoing discussions on various topics and issues. Sign up at :

www.heartofthecontinent.org/get-involved/

HOCP Contact Information

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Steering Committee Members - Affiliation

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Lynda Horman - Kakabeka Falls Provincial Park
Rich Kelley - Quetico Foundation
Brian McLaren - Lakehead University
Kathleen Przybylski - Voyageurs National Park
Lisa Radosevich-Craig - Superior National Forest
Robin Reilly - Quetico Provincial Park

Landscape of the HOCP

The Heart of the Continent region spans the international border between northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Ontario. Stretching between Rainy Lake and the western shores of Lake Superior, the Heart of the Continent region includes the largest expanse of public green space in the heart of North America: more than 5 million acres (2 hectares) of working forest, rugged scenery, pristine watersheds, abundant wildlife and outstanding biodiversity.

Several separately managed natural areas are encompassed by this landscape at the "heart of the continent," including Quetico Provincial Park, Superior National Forest (including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness), Voyageurs National Park, Fort William Historic Park, Grand Portage National Monument and numerous smaller Minnesota state forests and parks and provincial parks in Ontario.



HOCP Leadership

HOCP is led by a strong, active steering committee, whose membership reflects the evolving diversity of the general partnership. The steering committee is currently composed of the heads (or lead staff) of all the public land agencies, as well as major nonprofit players and community leaders. These are individuals with a long history of involvement in the region and a deep interest in the future of the heart of the continent region.



HOCP Regional Meeting, Ely, Minnesota (2009)

Partner Organizations

The HOCP collaboration continues to grow as more and more groups perceive the benefits of working together to promote the land and communities of these areas. More than 25 organizations have participated in one or more meetings. Since meetings are rotated to locations throughout the region, each meeting has brought in one or two new participant groups to the process.

Heart of the Continent Region—Map



Who's Involved

The Heart of the Continent Partnership 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,

- 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 the Cloquet Valley State Forest
- 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
- Ryder-Walker Alpine Adventures
- Superior National Forest
- The Nature Conservancy
- Trust for Public Lands
- Voyageurs National Park
- Voyageurs National Park Association
- Wilderness News