

**Summary of Issues and Discussion from
Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center
Roundtable May 28, 2003
Glacier National Park Headquarters**

Thirty [participants](#) from research, park resources and interpretation, and education gathered together for a three-hour roundtable discussion on objectives and priorities for the newly established Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center. The Roundtable was designed specifically to solicit input on their needs and vision for the newly established Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center. Discussions ranged from the general (e.g. what the scope of the center should be; what the name of the center means to different individuals and groups) to the specific (e.g. particular research topics and decision support needs the CCRLC could help address).

To start the discussion, four people were asked to take the lead in identifying major issues and themes from their particular area of interest ([Natural Resources](#), [Cultural Resources](#), [Research](#), and [Education](#) respectively) where they see knowledge or information gaps that the CCRLC could help to fill. Participants then divided into smaller groups to discuss and refine those issues. Summaries of the issues outlined from each of the four groups are available by clicking on the links highlighted above.

An overarching theme from all discussions centered on the need for better communication and information exchange among park managers, resource specialists, research scientists, interpreters, and educators. The Learning Center can and should provide a forum for communication and a means for building support toward environmental sustainability and stewardship. Roundtable participants, from both small group and large group discussions, repeatedly used words like 'bridge', 'join', 'link', 'bring together', 'disseminate' etc. to describe their needs and their perceptions of how the CCRLC can most effectively carry out its mission. The following list represents some specific suggestions that were offered during roundtable discussions for how this might best be accomplished.

- 1) Help assemble historical baseline data
- 2) Consolidate and summarize information and make it available on a public website
- 3) Identify gaps in existing information/knowledge and post this information
- 4) Bridge information gaps with contacts (management \leftrightarrow science)
- 5) Help managers fit their specific environmental information needs into broader research contexts
- 6) Foster collaborative efforts for acquiring needed data/knowledge
- 7) Facilitate communication between a number of entities and the transference of needs/information from one to another
- 8) Ensure research projects are developed in a way that consider education/outreach objectives from the beginning
- 9) Disseminate results of successful collaborations both inside and outside the park

When asked to identify particular ‘themes’ or issues that park managers are grappling with that require a scientific underpinning AND are opportunities for education and learning, several topics came forth. The following is not an exhaustive list but represents areas where more detailed discussion took place.

- Recreational impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat (riparian areas; backcountry)

- Fire (ecology/effects/history/severity/mapping)

- Exotics (invasion vectors/mapping/monitoring)

- Biodiversity (inventories; identifying and monitoring ‘vital signs’)

- Climatic context (range of variation/trends)

Several of these topics tie in together (e.g. fire frequency/severity and climatic forcing; invasive species and recreational impacts) and all are areas where humans interact with the environment. Thus, the concept of disturbance is common to each of these topics. In many cases this is exactly where existing research results can be brought to bear on management issues. But these are not easy issues to tackle and there are no simple answers. However, these are real issues we need to understand better, and they are important to scientists, managers, and the public. These are exactly the kinds of topics the Learning Center can help focus attention on by building collaborations, identifying needs and gaps in information, and providing intellectual bridges between topics and across traditional knowledge boundaries.

An important initial focus for the CCRLC should also be to develop a strong web presence. It is clear that a well-maintained, informative, and interactive website is going to be vital if the CCRLC is to be successful in brokering information across a wide variety of sectors.