

Texas Hill Country Conservation Network

Network Models and Lessons from Across the U.S.

Working Draft; October 25, 2017



HCCN

HILL COUNTRY
CONSERVATION NETWORK

Network Models and Lessons from Across the U.S.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, networks have emerged as a powerful and widely-used approach for advancing progress in large landscape conservation and in numerous other environmental and social issue domains. While there is no definitive census of conservation-focused networks, web research conducted in September 2017 indicates that there are hundreds of different conservation networks operating in the U.S. at different scales which have emerged over the past 20 years.

This report summarizes findings from research on networks, exploring questions such as: What is a network? Why use networks? What types of networks are being used to support conservation? And what lessons can be drawn from the experiences from other networks? The findings and information in this report are drawn from a literature review of publications, articles, and websites on networks; interviews with more than 20 network experts and practitioners from across the U.S.; and review of materials related to several examples of networks focused on conservation or other environmental issues. This report includes a brief synthesis of findings related to the key questions outlined above, as well as brief profiles of six networks in the U.S. that are focused on conservation or other environmental issues.

What is a network?

A network is “an arrangement where two or more autonomous individuals and/or organizations come together to exchange ideas, build relationships, identify common interests, explore options on how to work together, share power, and solve problems of mutual interest.”¹ Importantly, network participants retain their individual autonomy but engage together around areas of mutual interest.

Why use networks?

Networks are not new, however there has been increasing interest in network approaches to conservation over the past decade. The literature on networks, which grew precipitously around 2010-2012, and interviews with experts commonly cited the following reasons for using a network approach to conservation or other complex environmental or social issues:

- **Complexity of issues:** Conservation, natural resource management, and community development issues are complex, with diverse scientific, economic, social, and environmental dimensions requiring varied solutions supported by organizations and individuals with a broad range of skills, programs, strengths, and

¹ Lynn Scarlett (The Nature Conservancy) and Matthew McKinney (University of Montana). “Connecting people and places: the emerging role of network governance in large landscape conservation,” *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. 2016; 14(3), pp. 116.

assets. Achieving transformational or systemic change often requires multiple actors to be pushing from multiple directions and levels.

- **Scale of focus:** There are important strategic reasons and economies of scale for working at the large landscape level. While work in specific communities and watersheds can be meaningful and important, progress in one area can be overwhelmed and undermined by broader pressures if the large landscape scale of need and opportunity is not addressed. However, working at scale cuts across many jurisdictions and boundaries which requires enhanced coordination and collaboration to align multiple actors and activities around more ambitious shared goals.
- **Value of differentiated but coordinated roles:** Different organizations and individuals have different skills and strengths. Making progress on complex issues typically requires “outside game” advocacy and organizing efforts, complemented by “inside game” efforts to inform and influence key institutional actors. It also may require organizations running a broad range of programs—which draw on varied technical, financial, outreach, educational, and communications skills and expertise. No one organization can deliver on all these related but separate fronts. In addition, different organizations also have different constituencies that they serve and engage. It is difficult for any single organization to earn the trust and support of all constituencies. Different organizations play distinct roles in the field, but there is value in coordinating across these roles to enhance impact, identify collaboration opportunities, and to minimize redundancies.
- **Impact of aligned messages and clear stories:** Building public support and political power and will often requires clear and compelling stories and messages that capture hearts and minds. When multiple organizations and individuals reinforce clear, consistent messages, they can break through the noise and shift dominant narratives in ways that create space for action and change. Simple messages, from trusted messengers, repeated often. Networks can help participants to align and share messages, to translate messages for different constituencies (where necessary), and to strategically coordinate and sequence participant organizations’ communications activities.
- **Efficiencies from shared assets or investments:** Some network experts point to the value networks offer in helping organizations and individuals tap and share assets, skills, and resources across network participants. For example, it may be cost-effective for several organizations to piggyback efforts in conducting landowner outreach workshops or in procuring public opinion polling or geographic information systems mapping services that benefit multiple partners. Some networks take the shared service model even further, sharing personnel, HR services, or other organizational assets, functions, and resources to avoid each organization procuring them independently at higher cost. While there are limits to these efficiencies, they can be an important benefit and opportunity enabled by a network.
- **Fundraising and relevance to strategic philanthropy:** Importantly, an increasing number of foundations and philanthropists are taking “strategic philanthropy” approaches where rather than just making contributions to individual non-profit grantees, “they articulate and seek to achieve clearly defined goals; they and/or their grantees explore and then pursue evidence-based strategies for achieving those goals; and both parties monitor progress toward outcomes and assess success in achieving them in order to make appropriate course corrections.”² This means that donors increasingly expect grantees to have a

² Paul Brest. “Strategic philanthropy and its discontents,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. April 27, 2015. (see https://ssir.org/up_for_debate/article/strategic_philanthropy_and_its_discontents)

clear strategic action plan that is coordinated and aligned with those of other organizations to enhance impact and avoid redundancy. Donors are increasingly thinking about the strength, capacity, coordination, and effectiveness of the full field of organizations working on an issue. To the extent that networks can help improve and tell the story of this type of coordination and alignment, networks can help attract investment in both individual organizations participating in the network and in collaborative ventures.

Experts and practitioners interviewed for this research universally cited two primary **reasons not to use or participate in a network**:

- **Opportunity costs:** Coordination and collaboration take valuable time. All organizations must calculate whether the benefits of participating in a network outweigh the costs (time, attention, resources). If you can't get the benefit to burden ratio right, network participation doesn't work.
- **Organizational or individual conflicts:** Sometimes long-standing tensions or conflicts among organizations or individuals make it difficult for these entities to participate in a network together, particularly if these dynamics are not well managed. Simmering tensions and conflicts can also fray the interest and commitment of other partners to collaborate in a network context.

What types of networks are being used to support conservation?

Interviews, literature review, and research indicates that there are a variety of different types of networks used to support conservation. Key types—primarily differentiated by purpose and participants—are summarized below, although the lines between these different network types can be blurry and there are variations and hybrids.

- **Multi-jurisdictional governance networks:** These networks are primarily comprised of governmental organizations—including different agencies across different levels or orders of government (federal, state, regional, local, tribal). These governance networks typically support coordinated governmental decision making, often in areas with significant public lands or shared resources (e.g., lakes, rivers, aquifers, forests). These networks often have some processes for other stakeholders, such as NGOs, businesses, and universities, to participate in the network in an advisory capacity. (*Examples: Puget Sound Partnership, Great Lakes Regional Collaboration*)
- **Multi-party collaborative governance networks:** These networks involve a full range of stakeholders—including government, business, civil society/NGOs, landowners, and universities, among others. These may often be a “network of networks” that serve to coordinate diverse stakeholder groups who are relevant to the conservation of the landscape. These networks can be difficult to construct unless there is substantial shared appreciation of the need for conservation or stewardship or of the threats facing a landscape. These networks recognize that different stakeholders have distinct roles and decision-making authorities and they seek to enhance communication, coordination, and (where appropriate) collaboration across diverse stakeholders. (*Examples: Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent*)
- **NGO networks:** These networks seek to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration among different types of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to enhance their effectiveness and impact across varied issues relevant to landscape-scale conservation. They often have some form or coordinating body or steering committee, with different topical “tables” (some permanent, some ad hoc and temporary) to facilitate communication and coordination among interested parties on specific topics. While these networks primarily focus on NGO coordination, they frequently seek to accommodate

participation by other conservation-focused partners, such as relevant programs or departments in government or universities. Sometimes these NGO networks are “branded” and other times they operate behind the scenes (“unbranded”), although an “unbranded” NGO network may launch or participate in a “branded” campaign to engage diverse partners in working towards a specific goal. (Examples: *Colorado River Collaborative*, *Clean Energy Key States Initiative*)

- **NGO advocacy coalitions:** Sometimes NGO networks (both formal and informal, branded and unbranded) arise around a specific topic or issue to form a coalition working towards a specific goal. These often have a strong advocacy component and they are only designed to last for the period while the specific issue or topic is relevant. These coalition networks tend to be highly focused on a specific advocacy campaign or programmatic objective.

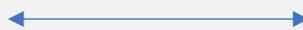
What lessons can be drawn from the experience of other networks?

The lessons and insights outlined below are drawn from the interviews, literature reviews, and case examples. It is important to note that there has been substantial debate in the field of network studies over the past decade on a range of fronts. These insights and lessons seek to elevate key take-aways that have emerged from these debates.

1. **There is no one right way to design a network – effective network design involves careful consideration of context and purpose, weighing of trade-offs, plus a lot of iteration and adaptation during implementation.** Nearly every expert interviewed indicated that there is no one right network model. There are many dimensions relevant to network design where there are continuums on which one must choose where to settle—where you choose to land on the continuum can have both benefits and drawbacks. It is important to recognize that this can (and should) be a dynamic process where the location on these continuums will change over time as the network evolves. Some commonly-cited dimensions and continuums include:

Network Scope

Multi-issue/Broad scope



Single-issue/Narrow scope

The scope of the system, issues, and goals that a network chooses to focus on are important. If the network focuses its scope narrowly, it can better concentrate its attention and resources in ways that enhance the likelihood of success. However, defining the scope of focus too narrowly in a complex system may miss opportunities and risks that undermine the likelihood or durability of success. Focusing too broadly can diffuse precious resources and make it difficult to get meaningful traction in any single area. Figuring out the right balance on scope is vital (and is an art). The scope should evolve over time based on real-time learning and adaptation in the network.

Importance of Shared Vision/Mission

Strong Shared Vision/Mission ← → **Loose Shared Vision/Mission (Focus on Comms)**

Some networks and experts emphasize the importance of having a clear, strong shared vision and mission to connect network partners in common cause and to ensure that they are working in aligned ways. Some experts (see “collective impact” model discussion below) take this even further to emphasize the importance of having measurable goals and objectives underpinning the shared vision and mission. Other experts note, however, that you can still have an effective and productive network that takes a looser approach to shared vision and mission. In these situations, the emphasis is on improving communication and coordination around pockets of alignment in ways that build trust. Several experts indicated that networks often start with a looser shared vision/mission and work to refine and strengthen it over time as trust is built and as there is a more compelling need to communicate clearly about the network’s goals and objectives. All experts indicated that it takes substantial work to develop a compelling shared vision, mission, and goals that strengthens the network bonds without pushing some partners away.

Locus of Control and Binding Force

Centralized Hub Model ← → **Decentralized Node Model**

Different network models serve different functions. Over the past decade, there has been substantial debate around how important it is to have a strong central “hub” or backbone organization connecting the network. The “collective impact” model emphasized the importance of this central structure, while other network experts talked about the value of having highly decentralized nodal structures that distributes control and coordinative energy. Most network literature and experts over the past few years now talk about the importance of a blend of both. The value of having some degree of decentralized structure to enhance the resilience and the strength of the network and to allow the network to be nimble and adapt to emerging needs. The value of having some shared, centralized coordinative infrastructure and some small group or entity tasked with stewarding the network as a whole.

External Posturing

Branded Focus ← → **Unbranded Focus**

Networks make different choices about whether their work together is branded and visible to external audiences, or behind the scenes and less publicly visible. One benefit of a branded approach is that the voice and power of the network can be used to advocate in public settings for certain outcomes, although this can take substantial effort to ensure that all network participants support network branded activities or advocacy positions. A drawback of the branded model is that some organizations cannot easily be seen collaborating with certain other organizations without alienating their constituencies. A benefit of the unbranded approach is that organizations who may have difficulty collaborating publicly can work together in effective ways. The unbranded model can take some of the pressure off the need to reach consensus on numerous issues. One strategy that unbranded networks often deploy is to launch focused, branded “campaigns” in areas where partners agree to projecting a publicly visible, coordinated effort and voice.

Around 2011, the idea of “collective impact” through networks received substantial attention among NGOs, funders, and others. Key ingredients of this collective impact model are summarized below. Since then, there has been substantial debate and experimentation with collective impact models. A major critique of the collective impact network model is that **a network can become overly focused on process, structure, governance, and measurement and lose sight of the actual work in the field and desired outcomes**. If not careful, the network model becomes too rigid to adapt to emergent needs, opportunities, and evolving contexts. However, some degree of attention (even if somewhat loose) to the spirit of each of the five collective impact model conditions is commonly viewed as important in network design.

FIVE CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT AND SUCCESS

1. **Common Agenda:** Collective impact requires all participants to have a shared vision for change, one that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.
2. **Shared Measurement Systems:** Agreement on a common agenda is illusory without agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported. Collecting data and measuring results consistently on a short list of indicators at the community level and across all participating organizations not only ensures that efforts remain aligned, it also enables participants to hold each other accountable and learn from successes and failures.
3. **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Collective impact initiatives depend on a diverse group of stakeholders working together, not by requiring that all participants do the same thing, but by encouraging each participant to undertake the specific set of activities at which it excels in a way that supports and is coordinated with the actions of others. The power of collective action comes not from the sheer number of participants or the uniformity of their efforts, but from the coordination of their differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
4. **Continuous Communication:** Developing trust among diverse organizations is a big challenge. Participants need several years of regular meetings to build up experience with each other to recognize and appreciate the common motivation behind their different efforts. They need time to see that their own interests will be treated fairly, and that decisions will be made on the basis of objective evidence and the best possible solution to the problem, not to favor the priorities of one organization over another. Even the process of creating a common vocabulary takes time, and it is an essential prerequisite to developing shared measurement systems.
5. **Backbone Support Organizations:** Creating and managing collective impact requires an organization and staff with a very specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative. Coordination takes time, and none of the participating organizations has any to spare. The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails. The backbone organization requires a dedicated staff time to plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly.

Source: John Kania and Mark Kramer. “Collective Impact.” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Winter 2011. (see https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact)

2. **Despite the variations across networks, there are some common themes that are important to ensure network health and effectiveness regardless of design.** A seminal report by the Monitor Institute and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO) in 2011 captured the key characteristics of healthy networks that were validated in the 2017 interviews. These are summarized in the box below.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY NETWORK

1. **Value:** Effective networks offer multiple doors of entry—a range of value propositions that will resonate with diverse motives for participation. They also outline clearly for participants what can be expected from the network and what will be expected of participants in return.
2. **Participation:** Participants in healthy networks connect with others and engage in network activities. An environment of trust and reciprocity is nurtured through distributed leadership and established code of conduct.
3. **Form:** A network’s form should reflect its purpose. For example, if its purpose is innovation, there should be a large periphery—individuals loosely connected around the edges of the network, who bring in fresh ideas. Form can—and often should—evolve over time.
4. **Leadership:** Leadership in healthy networks is shared and distributed widely. Ideally many participants are exercising leadership by weaving connections, bridging differences, and inspiring others to recognize and work towards shared goals.
5. **Connection:** Connectivity throughout the network should be dense enough that the network will remain strong even if highly connected participants leave. Ample, well-designed space (for online and in-person contact) and effective use of social media can facilitate these connections.
6. **Capacity to tap network assets:** Healthy networks operate on the premise that the assets they need are resident within the network or, if they are not, someone finds what’s missing and brings it in. They have systems and habits in place for revealing capacity—such as talent, resources and time—and tapping that capacity.
7. **Feedback loops and adaptation:** Networks are dynamic; what is needed and works today may not be relevant tomorrow. Healthy networks have feedback loops in place that enable continuous learning about what works and what’s needed, with input from across the network. Then they adapt and act based on their new knowledge.

Source: Monitor Institute and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations. *Catalyzing Networks for Social Change: A Funder’s Guide*. 2011. pp. 20-21.

3. **Build on and tell the stories of existing pathways of communication, coordination, and collaboration—and be prepared to adapt.** Most experts indicated that successful networks start by telling powerful stories of where connections are already occurring. They build “paths” and network infrastructure to support real (not anticipated) demand as it emerges. One expert referenced urban planner Jane Jacob’s admonition to build sidewalks where the worn footprints in the grass already run, not where some architect believes they would be nice to have. As network participants begin to interact more, they will undoubtedly want to walk together in new directions and the network should be prepared to adapt nimbly to support these shared journeys.

Resources

The following books, publications, and websites are useful resources on networks relevant to conservation. The network case examples also include links to resources at the end of each profile.

Lynn Scarlett (The Nature Conservancy) and Matthew McKinney (University of Montana). "Connecting people and places: the emerging role of network governance in large landscape conservation," *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. 2016; 14(3), pp. 116. (see <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/fee.1247/full>)

Matthew McKinney, Lynn Scarlett, and Daniel Kemmis. *Large Landscape Conservation: A Strategic Framework for Policy and Action*. May 2010. Lincoln Institute for Land Policy. (see <http://www.lincolninst.edu/publications/policy-focus-reports/large-landscape-conservation>)

Network for Landscape Conservation Learning Platform. (see <http://www.largelandscapenetwork.org/resources/learning-platform/>)

Monitor Institute and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations. *Catalyzing Networks for Social Change: A Funder's Guide*. 2011. pp. 20-21. (see http://www.monitorinstitute.com/downloads/what-we-think/catalyzing-networks/Catalyzing_Networks_for_Social_Change.pdf)

Paul Brest. "Strategic philanthropy and its discontents," *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. April 27, 2015. (see https://ssir.org/up_for_debate/article/strategic_philanthropy_and_its_discontents)

John Kania and Mark Kramer. "Collective Impact." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Winter 2011. (see https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact)

Collective Impact Forum (<https://collectiveimpactforum.org/>)

Enspiral Networks (<https://enspiral.com/network-overview/>)

June Holly. *Network Weaver's Handbook*. (see <https://www.networkweaver.com/product/network-weaving-handbook/>)

June Holly. *An Introduction to Network Weaving*. (see <https://www.networkweaver.com/product/introduction-to-network-weaving/>)

Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom. *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*. 2008. Portfolio Press.

Network Case Examples

Colorado River Collaborative

Houston Wilderness

Ogallala Commons

Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent

Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network

Colorado River Collaborative

Founded: 2008

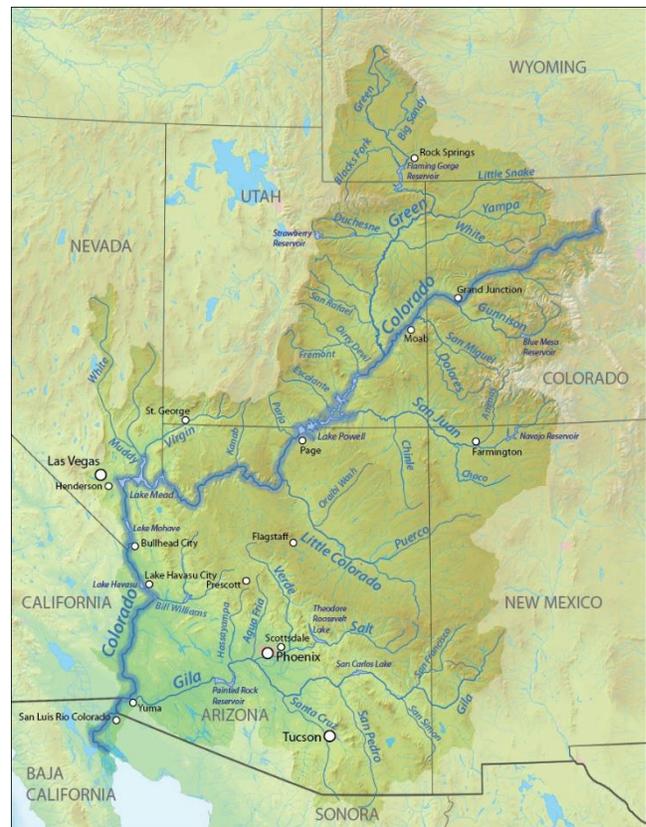
Location

Colorado River Basin

Purpose

The Colorado River Collaborative (CRC) is an informal, unbranded partnership of conservation NGOs that uses focused campaigns to move the Colorado River Basin towards balance and resilience for people and the environment in the face of climate change, extended drought and population growth.

The Colorado River Collaborative began to develop in 2008 as a result of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation's desire to coordinate the work of their grantees working on water issues on the Colorado Plateau. The collaborative effort was bolstered and expanded over the next several years with the addition of funding and strategic input from the Walton Family Foundation, as well as the addition of other conservation groups. With assistance from the Water Funder Initiative, the collaborative effort now includes seven conservation organizations and funding support from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr., Rockefeller and Gates Family Foundations.



Structure

Evolving from a loose information network of NGOs and funders, the CRC now focuses work on a series of time-limited campaigns designed to build toward specific longer-term policy goals. The collaborative has a steering committee of one representative of each of the NGOs that decides on near-term (two to three year) campaigns. The Colorado River Sustainability Campaign (CRSC), a separate project with three staff, works with the steering committee and funders to provide support and leadership to the CRC, including management, strategy development and oversight, and coordinated communications work. Funding is provided both through the CRSC and directly to the collaborating organizations.

Major Activities

Since its inception in 2008, the CRC has been involved in the following activities:

- Contributed significantly to the negotiation of a 2012 agreement between the U.S. and Mexico that establishes flexible water management mechanisms between the two countries and provides for water and habitat restoration in the Colorado River Delta.
- Helped shape a progressive 2015 Colorado State Water Plan that emphasizes water conservation, flexible water management and healthy rivers and discourages new reservoirs for diverting Colorado River water to the Front Range.
- Ensured that the federal 2012 Colorado River Basin Study recognized the reality of climate change and promoted conservation, re-use and flexible water management instead of costly projects such as importing water from the Missouri River.
- Shaped the public and decision-maker discourse about the Colorado River to focus on a solutions-based “we are all in this together” approach, versus emphasizing conflict between human and environmental needs.
- Facilitated the 2012 denial of a costly and environmentally damaging proposal to build the Flaming Gorge pipeline from Wyoming’s Green River to the growing cities in Colorado’s Front Range.
- Secured millions of dollars for proof of concept and larger-scale projects to demonstrate how water conservation can work for both agriculture and the environment.

Lessons Learned

Advocacy Best Practices

- Focused, near-term campaign approach to definable wins is the key to moving the ball on complex, basin-wide issues.
- Both the “inside” and “outside” games are critical to success; close coordination between the two is vital.
- Recognizing the values and politics of the West in communications and strategy has been key.

Advocacy Challenges

- Some CRC participants are more comfortable than others in cultivating non-traditional allies (e.g., irrigated agriculture, cities).
- The Basin’s tradition of multi-stakeholder decision-making, sometimes with no deadlines, can make building advocacy campaigns difficult.
- An informal, unbranded collaborative approach requires close attention to communication strategies.

Collaboration Best Practices

- Sustained, frequent and substantive communications with and among NGOs and funders is essential, and has been facilitated by the CRSC management entity.
- Being an unbranded collaborative provides maximum flexibility for a set of conservation organizations with different approaches.

Collaboration Challenges

- It is sometimes difficult to match the “outside” game with the “inside” game approach within the context of CRC campaigns.
- It is a learning process for NGOs to collaborate productively with funders that have their own strategic goals and approaches.

Network Members

- Seven conservation organizations, including Trout Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Environmental Defense Fund, and Western Resource Advocates

References

- “Freshwater Case Studies: Exploring Effective Advocacy and Collaboration Approaches.” Funders Network.

Houston Wilderness

Founded: 2002

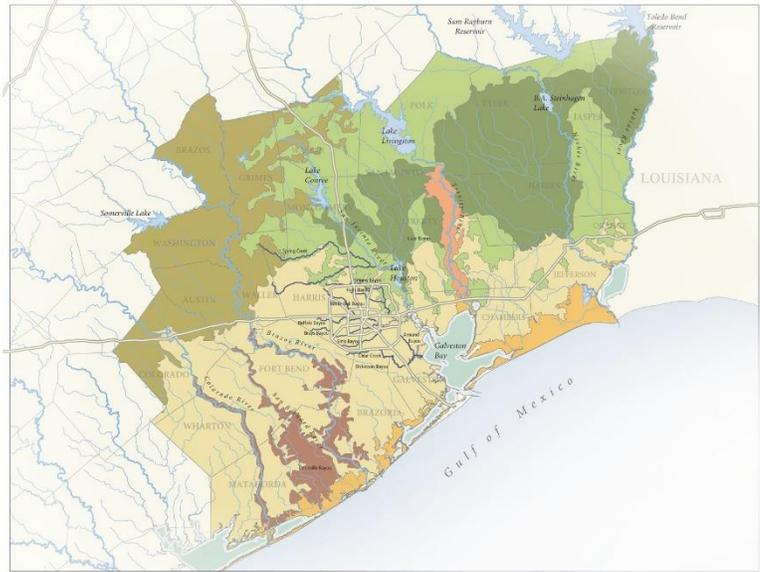
Location

Greater Houston Region (13+ counties)

Mission

Houston Wilderness is a broad-based alliance of 100+ business, environmental and government interests that work together to protect, preserve and promote the unique biodiversity of the 13+ county Greater Houston Region's remaining ecological capital - from bottomland hardwoods and prairie grasslands to pine forests and coastal wetlands.

This mission is accomplished through convening various groups to promote protect and preserve the biodiversity in our 10 ecoregions; providing collaborative problem-solving opportunities on critical environmental issues; and educating the public on the many exciting outdoor opportunities in the Greater Houston Region and the health benefits associated with nature.



Structure and Governance

Houston Wilderness has a full-time staff as well as a Board of Directors and Advisory Council. It convenes partners in a variety of groups and forums.

Major Activities

Houston Wilderness is focused on convening, problem-solving and educating, and within those three areas concentrates on the following initiatives:

PROBLEM SOLVING

Network Partner Access & Advocacy Program (NPAA) – Providing problem-solving assistance and facilitation of various environmental policy issues that benefit various parts of the seven land-based and three water-based eco-regions. Houston Wilderness facilitates access to people, places and environmental-based information and technology that assist the greater Houston region, often creating multi-disciplinary connections with health care, community hazards, local/state/federal legislation and infrastructure planning.

Gulf-Houston Regional Conservation Plan – A long-term collaborative of environmental, business and governmental entities working together to implement an ecosystem continuity and connectivity plan for the Gulf-Houston Region. This 8-county RCP is comprised of a Working List of every environmental-based project in the region and collectively identifies the region’s most pressing environmental needs organized into 4 key initiatives: the Gulf-Houston Monarch Flyway Strategy, Houston Urban Wildlife Initiative, Gulf-Houston Land-Use Coordination (GHLUC) Program, and the Houston Area Urban Forests Project.

CONVENING

Collaborative Grant-Organizing (CGO) Program – Convening Network Partners and related stakeholders to provide assistance in packaging funding requests that 1) help protect and preserve areas of the Gulf-Houston RCP and beyond, and 2) bring additional collaborative funds to the region. Over 20 CGO proposals are submitted to various state/federal agencies each year, with HW facilitating many of these awarded proposals.

Facilitation-in-Action Program (FAP)

- Houston Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership – Working with U.S. Fish & Wildlife (USFWS) to facilitate an alliance of business, environmental and government partners to 1) create opportunities for people to Find Nature, Value Nature and Care for Nature in communities throughout the Gulf-Houston region through land and water restoration projects and environmental education efforts and 2) work with Texas Gulf Coast regional USFWS staff and stakeholders on coastal resiliency and *Port-to-Port Connectivity Projects* in the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and related bays and barrier islands.
- Tri-Regional Monarch Flyway Strategy – The Tri-Regional Monarch Flyway Strategy Program is an effort to restore, increase and enhance Monarch habitat across three habitat restoration regions that serve as critical links in the monarch butterfly flyway, while also serving to protect habitat for other pollinators that are crucial to local ecosystems and agriculture.
- GetOutHereHouston.org – Facilitating a collaborative effort by many outdoor-related nonprofits and for profits to bring the most comprehensive outdoors website and app for the Houston Gulf Coast region.

EDUCATING

Ecosystem Services (ES) within all Eco-regions – Targets the ecosystem services within all 10 eco-regions for assessment and development of “protection/restoration strategies” to allow for continued flood abatement, air and water quality, carbon sequestration, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, eco-tourism and health care.

Great Green Quest (GGQ) – Annual program that challenges participants to get outside over the summer months and explore the Greater Houston region. “Questers” are eligible for fun prizes with sponsorships available to support schools, libraries, city park community centers, YMCA summer classes and other environmental education

programs. In 2017/2018, the GGQ was expanded to include a bi-lingual “Green Jobs” component - providing information on the educational pathways that lead to careers in an environmental field and a “Careers in Conservation” graduate-level scholarship program open to interns and staff of Network Partner organizations.

Wilderness Passport – Outdoor nature resource guides that detail the 10 ecoregions that make up the Houston Wilderness coverage area. The Passport has information on a variety of parks, preserves, nature centers, and refuges that boast amazing wildlife viewing opportunities, outdoor recreation, and truly beautiful landscapes.

Network Partners

More than 100 NGOs, government organizations, businesses, civil organizations, and other partners (See <http://houstonwilderness.org/network-partners/> for a full list.)

References

- <http://houstonwilderness.org/>

Ogallala Commons

Founded: 1999

Location

High Plains-Ogallala Aquifer Region

Mission

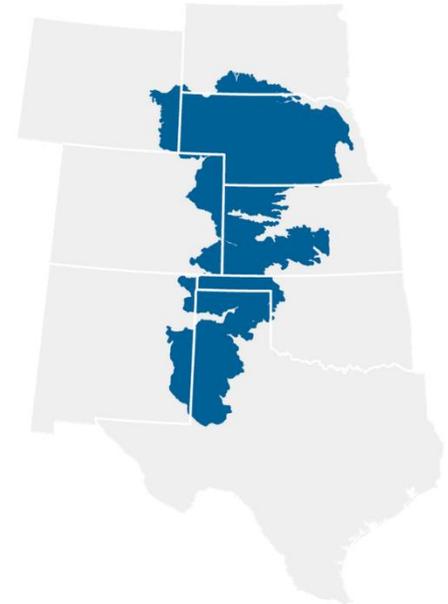
Ogallala Commons' (OC) mission is to reinvigorate the commonwealth that is the foundation for economic, ecological, and social sustainability. OC's mission is based on a concept called the "commons," an idea originating in late-medieval European societies, as well as practices that are utilized in communal resource management around the world. The commons is the *topos* or place that defined a node within a network where many levels and types of interactions take place and are integrated. The commons exists for the common good, providing common goods for the benefit of the world. The mission of the Ogallala Commons is carried out through a four-part approach:

1. weaving a collaborative network of diverse partners
2. building an education outreach through our major programs, workshops, and digital tools
3. fostering a sense of place to instill meaning and inspire stewardship for our landscapes and hometowns, and
4. rebuilding commonwealth communities to sustain people and the land

A basic tenet held by Ogallala Commons is that there cannot be significant improvement in the overall economic, environmental, and social conditions of the High Plains area that overlies the Ogallala Aquifer without a unified, holistic structure of interlocking production, financing, and educational institutions. Ogallala Commons, from its inception, is imbued with the cooperative spirit, an approach that is inherently holistic, and is essential for addressing three key components of our resource network: educational outreach, institutional infrastructure building, and developing enterprise opportunities that truly enrich the commonwealth of the Ogallala Aquifer region.

Structure

Ogallala Commons was initiated in 1999 as a resource development network for reinvigorating the depleted commonwealth in the High Plains region of the Great Plains, and continues to function according to that original vision. OC focuses on commonwealth because it is the foundation for building new careers and enterprises. Commonwealth consists of local and regional assets that can be enhanced, preserved, and invested in to generate



more resources over a long-term horizon. No matter how financially poor or rich a town may be, there are 12 key assets already present in any community, and these assets are interconnected.

Governance

- Board of Directors
- Advisory Council
- OC Staff

Major Activities

OC programs are focused on the following areas, all connected to 12 Key Assets of Commonwealth:

- **Community Internships and Apprentices:** Partnerships between Ogallala Commons and communities that create opportunities for high school students, college students, or adults in a continuing education program or career change. OC Community Internships provide experiences that illustrate both the key assets and the serious challenges present in rural areas. These internships enable rural communities to constructively utilize the skills of their youth and adults, and to inspire home-grown talent to return in the future—to live, work, play and raise their families.
- **Rebuilding local food systems:** Ogallala Commons has worked to support local food systems by hosting conferences on the topic, working to create Community Internships based on local food production, and providing education workshops and tools for gardeners.
- **Stewarding Natural Resources:** Includes the Stewarding Our Aquifer Initiative, a response to the extensive problems associated with the diminishing water resources of the Great Plains intended to engage, include, and motivate a majority of people living in the Ogallala Aquifer region.
- **Youth Engagement Day:** Provides an opportunity for students in grades 7–12 to explore and connect to their “E-Dream” and to learn about the potential of entrepreneurship, the impact of businesses in the local community, and the passion of successful hometown leaders.
- **Youth Entrepreneur Fairs:** Reach 3,000 high school and college students each year and with the help of partners offers cash prizes to aspiring youth entrepreneurs who submit a business plan for a “conceptual” or a “ready-to-go” enterprise.

Lessons

- The concept of “the commons” has galvanized support in some communities and among some constituencies. Focused practical work to show how on-the-ground activities and programs can address shared resources, needs, and opportunities demonstrate that you can build focused support in rural communities and even among some staunch private property constituencies to address “the commons”.



- However, the concept of “the commons” has been a barrier in other communities and among some constituencies. One challenge is when a network is perceived as requiring participants (or those it works to influence) to “buy-in to a worldview or high-level principles that run counter to their closely held beliefs, they can be readily inclined to reject practical work on issues that they might otherwise agree with.”

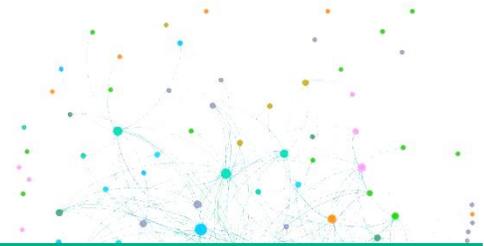
References

- <https://ogallalacommons.org/>
- Darryl Birkenfeld, “A Region Reforming...The Philosophy, Definition, and Brief History of Ogallala Commons.” <http://ogallalacommons.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/ARegionReforming-2.pdf>

Partners

- Amarillo Area Foundation (TX)
- Amarillo National Bank (TX)
- Cargill Cattle Feeders (TX)
- Center for Rural Entrepreneurship (NE)
- City of Matador (TX)
- Community Foundation of West Texas (TX)
- Covenant Hospital-Plainview (TX)
- Dane G. Hansen Foundation (KS)
- Daniels Fund (CO)
- Downtown Women’s Center (TX)
- First United Bank (TX)
- Gonzales County Hospital (TX)
- Guadalupe Co. LULAC (TX)
- Guadalupe County Soil and Water Conservation District (NM)
- Happy State Bank (TX)
- Hemphill Co. Underground Water Conservation District (TX)
- Hereford Regional Medical Center (TX)
- High Plains Underground Water Conservation District (TX)
- Holy Family Church Knights of Columbus (TX)
- Mescalero Apache Tribe (NM)
- MS Doss Foundation (TX)
- Myskoke Tribe of Oklahoma
- NB3 Native Strong Program (NM)
- Network Kansas
- Northwest Kansas Healthy Communities Initiative
- Pampa Regional Medical Center (TX)
- Parmer County Medical Center (TX)
- Pawnee County EDC (KS)
- Peoples Bank (TX)
- Plains Memorial Hospital (TX)
- Rawlins County HTC (KS)
- Rocky Mountain Farmers Union-Coop. Dev. Center (CO)
- Soil Mender Products, LP (TX)
- Southeast Colorado SBDC (CO)
- Stafford County Hospital (KS)
- Swisher County Partners (TX)
- Tecovas Foundation (TX)
- Teller Co. Farmers Market Assoc. (CO)
- Texas Farmers Union
- Todd Ag Agency (TX)
- Tule Creek Soil & Water Conservation District (TX)
- West Texas A&M University (WTAMU) SBDC (TX)
- Wichita County EDC (KS)
- WT Enterprise Center (TX)
- Xcel Energy (TX & NM)

Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent



Founded: 2006

Location

Northwest Montana, Southeast British Columbia, and Southwest Alberta, Approximately 18 million acres

Mission

The Crown Roundtable was created to bring all stakeholders in the ecosystem together—the tribes, the working lands owners, business leaders, local officials, conservationists, universities and colleges, and the region’s young people. The Roundtable serves as an ongoing forum to promote and sustain culture, community, and conservation across the landscape.

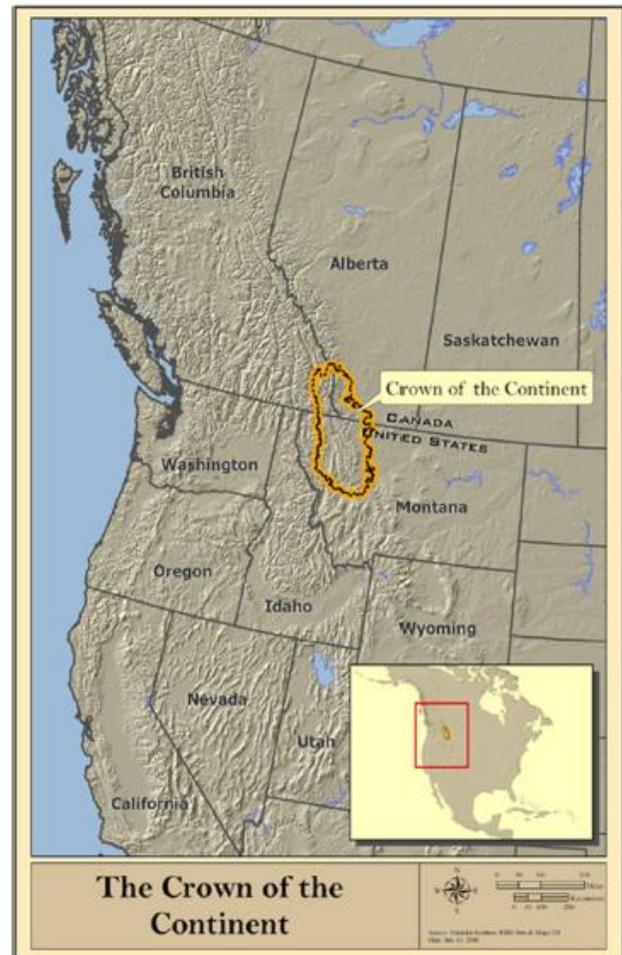
Structure

The Roundtable functions as a “network of networks” by linking the many groups, agencies, and entities working around the Crown. Representatives of these local, sub-regional, and regional networks provide leadership and direction to the Roundtable as members of a Leadership Team.

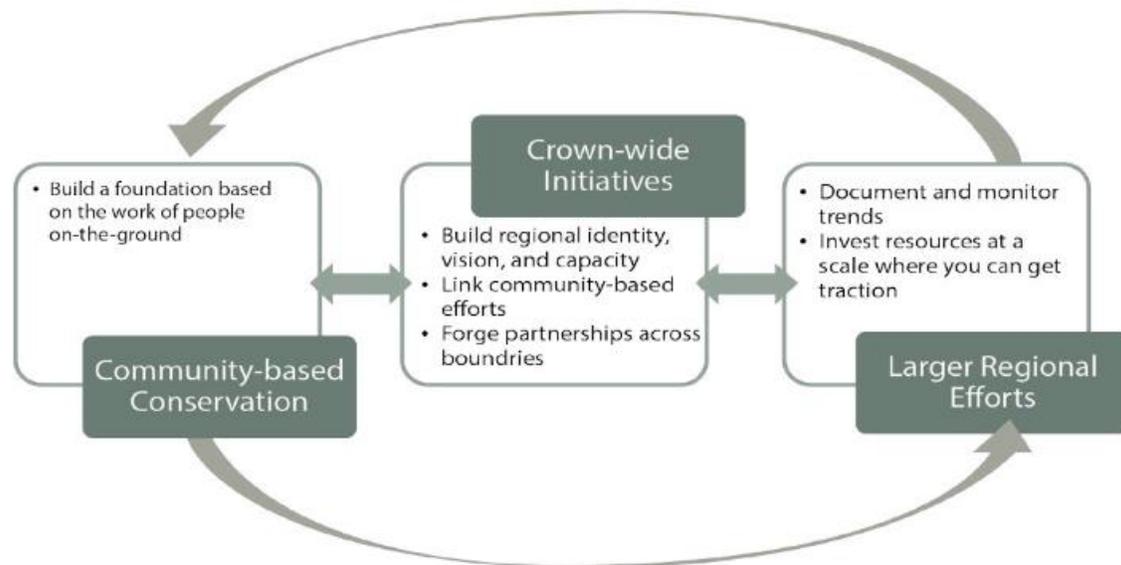
Major Activities

The Leadership Team—with program, facilitation, and administrative support from the Center for Large Landscape Conservation and the University of Montana’s Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Policy—manages the following activities:

- Coordinates the Adaptive Management Initiative
- Organizes an annual conference
- Invites people to become “Friends of the Crown” by endorsing a statement of shared values and principles
- Provides communications support focused on connecting people and facilitating learning, including an active website and a monthly e-newsletter.



Philosophy of the Roundtable



Lessons Learned

The Roundtable is focused on good communication with all involved stakeholders, largely through the website and e-newsletter. Through these and other communications-related activities, three central lessons have emerged:

- **Building trust among participants is key to the collaboration as a whole.** The years of deep engagement through the Roundtable are the result of a trust that has been built, shared, and engendered since its inception. There has been attention to embracing differing styles (traditions, pace, timing, and comfort levels), and this has made a big difference.
- **Supporting and developing leadership is key.** There is great wisdom across the landscape and it is key to engage both the established leaders and elders, but also to support the development of new leaders.
- **Delivery of information across this landscape requires going deeper, following-through, reevaluating our methods, diversifying content, and focusing on story.** The Crown story can be told through science, technology, art, oral history, literature, and more. The opportunities to apply these lessons moving forward are boundless.

The Adaptive Management Initiative

The AMI was created with the support of the Kresge Foundation. The goal of the AMI is to promote a culture of stewardship by finding common values, supporting community leadership, promoting shared learning, and seeking place-based solutions. This is accomplished by:

- Building a connected ecosystem-wide program that connects land managers from federal, state, nonprofit, and private entities
- Supporting on-the-ground projects that identify threats to the landscape and build resilience into natural and social processes
- Respecting and building culture, community, and conservation into the conversation

Each of the projects supported by the AMI is joined by a single, unifying thread: building resilience into the Crown's natural and human communities. Resilience is essential to the long-term health of the Crown, as climatic, economic, and demographic changes play out across the landscape. Over three years, the AMI funded 45 projects throughout the Crown's landscape, allocating \$800,000. These projects have leveraged up to five times the actual amount invested by attracting new donors and combining efforts where possible and appropriate.

Many important lessons emerged during the course of the AMI, including:

- Identifying and supporting leadership at all scales
- Building trust and identifying common goals
- Supporting existing work rather than replacing current initiatives.
- Meeting people "where they are" and encouraging them to work together toward common goals
- Creating a strong backbone organization that can keep communication open and friendly, and promote the sharing of ideas that include new players
- Never underestimating the value of meeting face-to-face, welcoming partners, and establishing relationships

Sample of Crown-Wide Initiatives

- Crown Managers Partnership
- Crown of the Continent Conservation Initiative
- Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Education Consortium
- Crown of the Continent Geotourism Council
- Crown of the Continent Resource Learning Center
- Heart of the Rockies
- The University of Montana/University of Calgary Transboundary Program
- The University of Montana Crown of the Continent Initiative

References

- <http://largelandscapes.org/media/publications/Adapting-to-Change-in-the-Crown-of-the-Continent.pdf>
- http://www.hillcountryalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/HCCN_Final-Report.5.11.16.pdf
- <http://largelandscapes.org/media/publications/Remarkable-Beyond-Borders.pdf>

Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network



Founded: 2014

Location

San Francisco Bay area, south to the Pajaro River, bounded to the east by the Santa Clara Valley and the Pacific Ocean to the west. (500,000 acres)

Mission

The mission of the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network is to help cultivate a resilient, vibrant region where human and natural systems thrive for generations to come.



Structure

The Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network is a region-wide and cross-sector collaboration of 19 organizations including local, state, and federal agencies, nonprofits, academia, business, community, and tribal groups, all committed to practicing effective stewardship on their own lands and coordinating their efforts with other land stewards to enhance stewardship on a regional level.

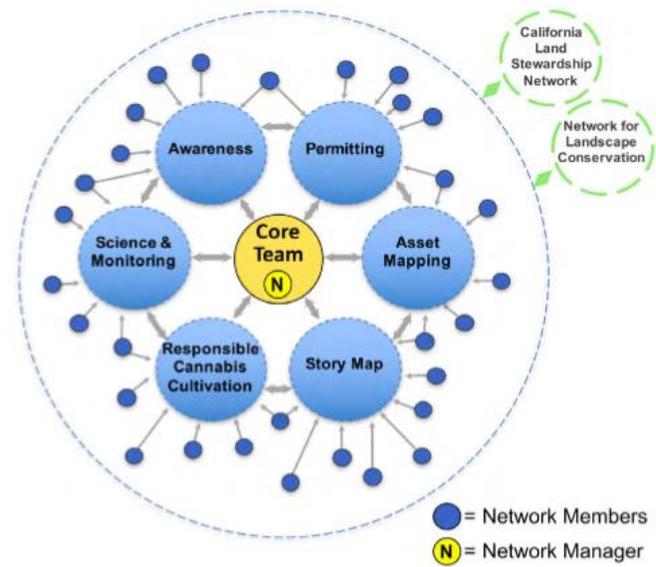
The 5 C's Framework was used during the formation of the Network to design the network itself as well as for each of the six convenings that took place in the first two years and the tasks accomplished between convenings. The 5 C's framework is based on the notion that a network's effectiveness depends on managing the following activities:

- **Clarify Purpose:** An initial statement of the problem to be addressed and why a collaborative effort is needed
- **Convene the Right People:** Bring together whoever is needed to tackle the problem and ensure they represent a broad cross-section of the system that needs change
- **Cultivate Trust:** Deliberately build trust among partners for greater impact and productive working relationships
- **Coordinate Existing Actions:** Trust enables coordination of work that is already happening and encourages partners to share best practices, pool resources and avoid duplication of efforts
- **Collaborate for Systems Impact:** Identify "leverage points" – places in a system where a small shift in one thing can produce big change in everything – and work with partners to influence the system

These 5 activities are interconnected and reviewed regularly to consider how the network is evolving and to evaluate how partners can continue to work together most effectively.

The Network meets three times a year to discuss relevant issues and potential projects. The Network structure includes:

- Network Manager - cultivates collaboration between network members and acts as the network's organizational coordinator.
- Core Team – 5 network members elected to serve on a leadership council that meets monthly with a consulting team to review issues and make decisions between convenings.
- Project Team - works on specific initiatives; a team leader makes sure that a goal is set and accomplished; project team is disbanded after goal is met.
- Network Members



Governance

All members of the Network ratified a Memorandum of Understanding that defined good stewardship practices and outlined the primary objectives for forming and joining the network. Network members agreed that priority areas of interest are: enhancing water quality and watershed health, managing invasive plant and animal species, maintaining biodiversity and endangered species, climate change adaptation, monitoring, research and education, access to public lands, and strong human communities and citizen engagement.

Participants that signed the MOU agreed that, though not legally bound, they all shared the intention of supporting the primary objectives for forming and joining the Stewardship Network, including to:

- Build trust and strengthen relationships within and across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries
- Value diverse perspectives and approaches to stewardship, exploring together what constitutes best current and future stewardship practices
- Sense and respond to emergent challenges
- Identify critical obstacles that hamper stewardship efforts and develop strategies for improving effectiveness
- Collaborate where individual and regional stewardship goals converge
- Leverage existing activities and resources and avoid duplication of stewardship efforts
- Share information in order to enhance knowledge and promote best practices that support long term sustainability
- Inform other landowners, the public at large, potential project funders, regulators, and legislators about the importance and value of effective stewardship for enhancing the health of the Santa Cruz Mountain region
- Recognize and support landowners and private businesses who are advancing stewardship goals and are using best practices
- Ensure adequate resourcing for long term stewardship efforts
- Educate and recruit future stewards of the land

Major Activities

Spotlight Stewardship, an educational program that gets community leaders out onto the land to become familiar with important stewardship issues facing the Santa Cruz Mountains. The program is a four-session intensive. Each session is half-field trip and half-classroom seminar with expert presenters that walk participants through stewardship issues like water quality, working lands, invasive species, fire management, Native stewardship, selective sustainable timber harvesting, impacts of cannabis cultivation and many others.

Lessons

During the formation of the network, fault lines emerged that threatened to undermine the network's potential. Deep-seated tensions were surfaced as various groups expressed concern about levels of trust among organizations, perceived power imbalances, previous conflicts among some organizations, and apprehension that the network would be hijacked by private interests. These issues were confronted with open dialogue and some difficult initial conversations, which served to assuage many of the concerns outlined above. This early conflict showed all network members that no topic was too difficult to address and helped to further cement trust among the group.

Network Members

- Amah Mutsun Tribal Band
- Big Creek Lumber and Building Materials
- CAL FIRE San Mateo – Santa Cruz Unit
- California Department of Parks and Recreation
- Girl Scouts of Northern California
- Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, Stanford University
- Land Trust of Santa Cruz County
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- Peninsula Open Space Trust
- San Lorenzo Valley Water District
- San Mateo County Parks Department
- San Mateo County Resource Conservation District
- Santa Cruz County Parks Department
- Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District
- Save the Redwoods League
- Sempervirens Fund
- Swanton Pacific Ranch, Cal Poly
- UC Berkeley Department of Anthropology
- UC Santa Cruz Natural Reserves
- US Bureau of Land Management

References

- <http://scmsn.net/>
- [Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network MOU](#)
- <http://www.sanmateorcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/SCMSN-Case-Study-A-Regionwide2c-Cross-Sector-Approach-to-Conservation.pdf>