

International transboundary cooperation: some best practice guidelines

LAWRENCE S. HAMILTON, Mountains Theme, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, 342 Bittersweet Lane, Charlotte, Vermont 05445; hamiltonx2@mindspring.com

The rationale for transboundary protected areas

Special consideration should be given by governments (national or sub-national) to establishing border-contiguous protected areas, and to engaging in management of abutting protected areas in the following situations:

- Where boundaries are located in shared water bodies such as rivers or lakes, and perhaps even for shared underground aquifers, e.g., Rio Grande at Big Bend/Cañon Santa Elena (USA–Mexico).
- Where an important earth feature such as a mountain or a glacier or a coral reef contains national or sub-national boundaries, e.g., Mount Kanchenjunga (India, Nepal, China), Israel-Jordan Coral reef in Red Sea; needed for Mont Blanc, which has no protection, between Italy, France, and Switzerland.
- Where a natural ecological system straddles one or more boundaries and needs to be managed as a single ecological unit in order to preserve essential species, communities, and ecological processes, e.g., ibex in La Vanoise and Gran Paradiso, which move across the Alps in winter–summer ranges from Italy to France.
- Where local communities and indigenous peoples in natural areas are linked across boundaries by shared ethnic or sociocultural characteristics, traditions, and practices, e.g., indigenous native hunting in Kluane (Canada)/Wrangell-St. Elias (USA).
- Where the use or management of shared natural resources is or may become a locus of contention, e.g., oil at the Ecuador/Perú border where, after armed conflict, a truce and a Peace Ecological Reserve was established in the Sierra del Condor.
- Where a boundary dispute involves unresolved claims to land or water, e.g., needed in Kashmir between India and Pakistan where there is fighting over ice and snow.
- Where, after a period of armed conflict, there is a need to rebuild confidence and security for local communities and provide a stable foundation for conservation and sustainable development. Needed in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea, which has become a *de facto* protected area providing valuable crane protection (Anh and McGahey 1992).
- Where there is a need to cooperate against common threats to ecosystems and their integrity, e.g., fire or invasive alien species, with agreements such as that between Quetico Wilderness Park (Canada) and Boundary Waters Wilderness Canoe Area (USA) for fire response.

Such needs should, and sometimes do, impel governments or the agencies themselves to take action and initiate formal agreements of various kinds and stature, or memoranda of understanding. There are now more than 169 abutting pairs or complexes of protected areas worldwide in the World Conservation Monitoring Centre / United Nations Environment Program data files; the potential exists for another 69 (Zbicz, this volume). Zbicz (1999) has characterized the degree of cooperation

among them and is further elaborating this topic in this present George Wright Society conference session. In some cases sub-national boundaries, as between states, provinces, cantons, or whatever, can also be serious impediments to rational land or water conservation, for each may zealously guard their resource ownership rights. Here too, abutting protected areas and transboundary cooperation (TBC) management are devoutly to be wished. Good examples of such effective TBC are in Hohe Tauern National Park (the states of Salzburg, Tyrol, and Carinthia within Austria) or in Australian Alps National Parks (New South Wales, Victoria, and Australia Capital Territory), involving nine separate units.

The concept and approach can, of course, also be extended to cooperation between different management agencies or authorities even in one state or nation when the boundaries of their jurisdictions abut, and some of the previously mentioned needs exist. Many innovative interagency arrangements have been implemented here in the USA, for example as part of the Northwest Forest Plan (U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Department of Defense) described in a paper given at the 1997 GWS Conference (Milestone 1997). A good example from overseas is in the Queensland/Commonwealth collaboration in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Benefits of TBC

The benefits of TBC have been previously described by me (Hamilton et al. 1995; Hamilton 1998) and are presented in shortened form as Box 34.1. They seem compelling if there are abutting protected areas. An IUCN-The World Conservation Union (IUCN) publication (due out at end of May 2001) emphasizes international tension reduction and peace promotion values, having the title *Parks for Peace: Transboundary Protected Areas for Peace and Cooperation* (Sandwith et al. 2001).

Impediments to TBC

Yet, the path of cooperation in TBC is not always a smooth one. There are impediments to effectiveness, and some of these are presented in Box 34.2.

Guidelines and best practices for TBC

1. There should be made eminently manifest some *unifying theme* or *icon* that promotes common values and a mutual vision. A common logo, such as is used for all three state units (divisions) of Hohe Tauern National Park (a stylized bird) or the representational mountain logo of the Australian Alps, even though each of the park agencies has its own logo for their total state park system. A common name across the border as in the case of Royal Manas National Park (Bhutan) and Manas Sanctuary (India) is effective, or a joint name that appears coupled repeatedly under some larger umbrella, such as Waterton/Glacier International Peace Park or Vosges du Nord/Pfälzerwald Transfrontier Biosphere Reserve (France/Germany). This not only binds the protected area staff but local people on both sides of the border.
2. Good TBC will result in capturing the economic benefits and unifying effects of joint development and production of *common materials for education and information*. These present and interpret the natural and cultural values of the whole area, across the boundary. A common map, brochures, exhibits, and audio-visual material not only present this holistic view, but give economies of joint production. The two-language booklets (French and Italian) produced by Mercantour and Alpi Marittime, such as "Mountains Without Frontiers," are good examples.
3. A *joint approach* to visitation and tourism can yield beneficial dividends. Costs are reduced for any joint marketing or work with the tourism and travel industry. A shared visitor information center on or close to the boundary has great appeal to visitors and may replace two separate facilities. This has been done

for Bavarian Forest National Park (Germany) and Sumava National park (Czech Republic). Botswana and South Africa are working together for appropriate tourism and revenue sharing in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. The nine units of the Australian Alps in three jurisdictions have agreed on, and published, common visitor codes for: car-based camping, bushwalking, horse riding, snow camping, river use, and mountain biking.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A larger contiguous area will better safeguard biodiversity since very large areas are needed to maintain minimum viable populations of many fauna species, particularly large carnivores.• Where populations of flora or fauna cross a political or administrative boundary, TBC promotes ecosystem or bioregional management.• Reintroduction or natural recolonization of large-range species is facilitated by TBC.• Pest species (pathogens, insects) or alien invasives that adversely affect native biodiversity are more easily controlled if joint control is exercised rather than having a source of infection across the boundary.• For rare plant species needing <i>ex situ</i> bank and nursery facilities, one facility for both parks will be cheaper to set up.• Joint research programs can eliminate duplication, enlarge perspectives and the skills pool, standardize methodologies, and share expensive equipment.• Wildfires cross boundaries, and better surveillance and management is possible through joint management.• Poaching and illegal trade across boundaries are better controlled by TBC. Cooperation is needed for effective law enforcement. Joint patrols in border areas become possible.• Nature-based tourism is enhanced because of a greater attraction for visitors, the possibilities of joint approaches to marketing and tour operator training, and the possibility of agreements on fees, visitor management, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More cost-effective and compelling education materials can be produced, and joint interpretation is stronger concerning shared natural or cultural resources.• Joint training of park staff is more cost effective and usually benefits from greater diversity of staff with different experiences.• TBC improves staff morale and reduces feeling of isolation. Contact with cultural differences enriches both partners.• TBC makes staff exchanges easier, and staff exchange programs have shown their worth.• A cross-boundary pool of different expertise is available for problem solving.• Expenses for infrequently used heavy equipment, aircraft rental for patrols, etc., may be shared.• TBC in priority actions can carry more weight with authorities in each country.• The ministry level may feel greater obligation to honor commitments of support when another jurisdiction or another country is involved.• International donors and assistance agencies are more attracted to an international joint proposal.• Outside threats (e.g., air pollution, inappropriate development) may be more easily met when there is an international or interstate response.• Customs and immigration officials are more easily encouraged to cooperate if parks are cooperating.• Search and rescue is often more efficient and economical. |
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Box 34.1. Benefits of transboundary protected area cooperation (based on Hamilton et al. 1996).

4. Common nature and culture *interpretation* themes and joint interpretation activities that cross the border are hallmarks of a high degree of cooperation. This is demonstrated well by Waterton/Glacier International Peace Park where there are regular interpreter exchanges either for the season or on specific days of the week. Also, interpreters from both parks lead day-long international hikes, with

- a lunch stop on the border in which Americans sit in Canada, Canadians sit in the USA, and foreign visitors can sit either side or on the boundary if they wish.
5. A highly visible, high-level **joint activity** promotes staff goodwill and morale, and goes well with the public. A joint annual field day for the public, or even a joint annual staff picnic, seems like a good practice. Alpi Maritime Nature Park (Italy) has an annual event (a rye festival), celebrating the cultural traditions of an ethnic group that is now located mainly across the border in France, and is joined in this by Mercantour National Park in France.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult terrain, inaccessibility, lack of roads or rail across national frontiers impedes interchange. • Different (sometimes conflicting) laws may reduce the effectiveness of TBC. • The need for cooperation may slow the response to emergency situations calling for rapid decisions. • Religious or cultural differences can cause misunderstanding and language barriers may have to be overcome. • Differential commitment and resources on each side of the border can lead to a dominant-vs.-weak situation. • The different levels of professional standards for corresponding staff may impede real equal-partner twinning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in the authority given to the two park superintendents or directors may produce difficulties in TBC. • A lack of parity with regard to the ratification of international protocols or conventions may prevent their being used for TBC. • Two or more countries may be at different stages of economic development and have incompatible policies related to resource utilization vs. resource protection. • Armed conflict, hostility, or political tension make TBC difficult or impossible. • Technical incompatibilities in communication, fire suppression equipment, GIS systems, etc., may impede TBC.
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Box 34.2. Difficulties impeding transboundary protected area cooperation (based on Hamilton et al. 1996).

6. Regular **joint technical meetings**, seminars, or training programs encourage information exchange, development of a transborder spirit, increased staff morale, professional upgrading, and cooperative development of strategies and materials. A good example is the Northern Borderlands Managers' Workshops involving professional staff from the U.S. National Park Service, Parks Canada, U.S. Forest Service, Alaska State Parks, British Columbia Parks, Yukon Parks, and First Nation co-managers, who focus on the large World Heritage Area that crosses all these jurisdictions (Wrangell-St. Elias/Kluane/Glacier Bay/Tatshenshini-Aleck World Heritage Complex).
7. **Joint research and monitoring** is a positive and non-threatening activity and can be a good base on which to build other collaboration. Even when the research is done by outside organizations or individuals, it is usually more effective when done without regard to an artificial (political) boundary. Shared research results for park management are significant and needed benefits. Good examples are in Tatransky/Tatrzanski National Parks in Slovakia and Poland, and in Krkonose/Karkonosze in Czech Republic and Poland. The biosphere reserve designation in these parks fosters research cooperation both in the core zone and buffer zone, since this UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) program encourages collaborative scientific activity.

8. **Compatible** or, preferably, **joint management plans**. While joint management plans may not be feasible due to the different timing of establishment of the respective areas (or other factors), they need to be compatible on major issues such as fire management, pest species control, and management of fauna that cross borders (e.g., France's La Vanoise/Italy's Gran Paradiso for ibex recovery and management).
9. **Collaborative professional development** of staff through staff exchange and joint training programs are very desirable, and develop "ties that bind." Hohe Tauern in Austria has joint training activities that realize economies by using qualified trainers once instead of three times, in each of the three state jurisdictions, Carinthia, Salzburg and Tyrol. It has developed a "training academy." Staff exchanges are in place in Mercantour/Alpi Marittime (France/Italy), including language instruction.
10. It is desirable to have a **written agreement on mutual assistance** in dealing with illegal transborder activities such as poaching, drug movements, and timber trespass, and with emergency situations such as fire suppression and search-and-rescue operations. Waterton/Glacier International Peace Park has a written agreement on the latter two areas of concern, and it is a major item on the USA/Mexican border, where a joint Borders 21 Project is working out binational collaboration on all of the abutting border protected areas in the Big Bend region of Texas, or at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in Arizona.
11. Each protected area agency needs to **sanction time allocation** of staff for the necessary coordination work, which inevitably has a substantial amount of discussion and pre-activity meetings. In view of the benefits, this must not be regarded by higher agency officials as unproductive wheel-spinning.
12. **International conventions and protocols** should be used where possible to support and foster effective TBC. These include World Heritage designation, Convention on Migratory Species, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar), Biodiversity Convention, and Man and the Biosphere Program (especially biosphere reserves). These designations not only give a higher profile and status but another layer of possible protection, as is the case in the Eastern Carpathian International Biosphere Reserve, Ukraine, Slovakia, and Poland (Fall 1998).
13. **Support of an nongovernmental organization (NGO)**, preferably one that can work both sides of the border, can help to develop and maintain a constituency for the joint park. This is well illustrated by the Rotary Club International in the case of Waterton/Glacier. Rotary conceived the peace park idea and pushed each government to action. It continues to be active and is currently attempting to eliminate the swath of cut vegetation that marks the international border. The Mountain Institute plays a nurturing and training role in Makalu-Barun (Nepal)/Qomolangma (China), and carries out projects with the traditional people living within and around the protected areas. It assists in securing donor support for park-related activities involving local self-help projects. The International Tropical Timber Organization was instrumental in securing donor funds to help make operational the Lanjak-Entimau/Bentuang-Karimun protected areas in Sarawak, Malaysia, and Kalimantan, Indonesia. NGOs developed a Danube Charter that was instrumental in the establishment of the tri-lateral Morava-Dyje wetlands (Czech Republic/Slovakia/Austria). IUCN and the World Wide Fund for Nature have both played effective roles in assisting border parks, particularly in developing countries. In these cases there is often technical and financial assistance in the formulation of management plans. It is an IUCN program activity to promote transborder protected area establishment and cooperative management. For instance, it is promulgated in the IUCN European Action Plan (Synge 1994), and is the focus of a new publication in

the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) guidelines series (Sandwith et al. 2001).

- 14.** While an outside group can do much to keep agency administrators and others higher on the bureaucratic or political ladder supportive of the transborder park idea and TBC, the park units themselves must direct attention to this matter. Timely and regular *communication upward* to higher decision-makers and other agencies that may adversely affect the park (e.g., tourism, transportation, energy and mines, forestry, agriculture) is extremely important. International field days, publicizing successful cooperative projects, hosting global meetings, and appropriate use of newsletters have been used toward this end. Many of these are well illustrated in the Australian Alps Liaison Committee activity.
- 15.** The same communication effort must be carried out when dealing with *community support*, which needs to be fostered at every opportunity. Benefits of the protected areas need to be continually explained. Consultation with the community in planning for new management activities is becoming increasingly the standard park policy. Local NGOs often play a significant role here, as shown in Makalu-Barun/Qomolangma, and indigenous community co-management which is gradually taking place in Kluane/Wrangell-St. Elias.
- 16.** A *formal agreement* between the political entities that gives a mandate to cooperate is needed in addition to a cooperating relationship between cross-border staff, for personnel change all too often. Poland and Slovakia have such an agreement for the Tatra Parks. The Australian Alps National Parks has a comprehensive memorandum of understanding, recently renewed after ten successful years in place. La Amistad International Park (Costa Rica/Panamá) has presidential ratified agreements and a binational technical commission.
- 17.** Some kind of *advisory, coordinating, or oversight group* has a significant role to play and can be supportive to the directors or superintendents of the respective units. (The Australian Alps Liaison Committee performs this function, and does it extremely well; in the case of Mercantour/Alpi Marittime, the Italian park director is a voting member of the management and policy board of the park across the border, and the French director is an *ex officio* invitee to the Italian policy committee.)
- 18.** Having *funds that support and therefore promote joint research or joint management projects* is extremely desirable. These may come from outside, as is the case in Krkonose and Karkonosze where Global Environment Facility funds support cooperative projects conserving biodiversity; or be provided by the respective agencies or ministries but earmarked for cooperative activities to be awarded and supervised by the coordinating body, as is the case for the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (currently around US\$250,000 annually).
- 19.** At the highest level of TBC there needs to be a *full or part-time coordinator*, perhaps on a rotating basis as is done by the four agencies in the Australian Alps, for their full-time coordinator.
- 20.** For the highest degree of collaboration a formal agreement is necessary, but it alone is not sufficient. *Enthusiastic, friendly relationships* between the respective superintendents or park directors, and staff at all levels must exist, or TBC will founder, in spite of agreements. This “intangible” is imperative.

I must say that in my travels for WCPA, and dealings with protected area personnel, I have encountered only friendliness and enthusiasm among staff within the protected area and across to neighboring protected areas. Park professionals by nature seem well equipped to promote effective cooperation across all boundaries, whether they be international, interstate, interagency, or across into the neighboring communities.

[Note: This paper is based largely on *Parks for Peace: Transboundary Protected Areas for Peace and Cooperation* (Sandwith et al. 2001).]

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