

Critical Issues & Initial Planning Document

The Challenge Dialogue System™

**To launch a collaborative dialogue
on a potential vision and action plan for
The Center for Collaborative Conservation**

29 April 2008



**WARNER COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES
CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION**

<< Conservation for livelihoods and livelihoods for conservation >>

1. Purpose of this document

The purpose of this paper is to provoke a dialogue and comments on a draft collaborative vision and action plan (described below) for the Center for Collaborative Conservation (CCC) in the Warner College of Natural Resources (WCNR) at Colorado State University (CSU) that reflects the thinking of a diverse group of stakeholders interested and involved in people-centered, collaborative conservation¹ in Colorado, across the North American West and around the world. This group of stakeholders includes people who own, use and manage land and water resources² (private landowners, communal land users, first nations (tribes), natural resource management agencies, NGOs, businesses), researchers (in agencies and universities), and students. This document is not intended to be comprehensive or academically authoritative. Rather it is a working document; *no assumption is set in stone and every assertion is open to discussion*. The document has the following sections: 1) purpose, 2) key challenge of this dialogue, 3) expected outcomes of this dialogue, 4) background events that led to the establishment of the CCC, 5) assumptions about the CCC and collaborative conservation, 6) critical questions to consider and react to about the CCC, 7) potential short and long-term actions by the CCC, and 8) next steps in this planning process.

2. Key challenge for this dialogue

To engage a diverse set of stakeholders, with an interest in establishing and participating in the Center for Collaborative Conservation (CCC), in a purposeful, collaborative conversation aimed at designing and developing a CCC for its formative phase.

¹ Here, ‘people-centered’ implies that conservation and livelihoods are inseparable. Our initial definition of collaboration is ‘a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible’ (p. 5, Gray, B. (1989). *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers). In the context of the CCC, collaboration explicitly implies joint development of knowledge and action to address critical conservation issues. Our initial definition of conservation is the wise stewardship of species and ecosystems, and the processes that support them, so that they are sustained for future generations.

² Our definition of land and water resources includes a wide variety of ecosystems like forests, rangelands, watersheds; more specifically, they include soils, vegetation, biodiversity, etc.

3. Expected outcomes of this planning process

- 3.1. **To develop a long-term vision and mission** for the Center for Collaborative Conservation that builds on the progress made in broad efforts to transform society to achieve a more sustainable future, of which people-centered conservation is one part. This vision will promote joint learning and action by this diverse group of stakeholders (referred to above) on issues where conservation benefits livelihoods and livelihoods benefit conservation in ways that are sustainable socially, economically, and environmentally.
- 3.2. **To identify critical, emerging issues** that require concerted collaborative action; these issues will then serve as the conservation and collaboration foci for the CCC.
- 3.3. To articulate and develop innovative and highly effective ways — **strategies and initial actions** — to implement this vision and mission, focusing on these priority issues, that leverage the strengths of a land grant university in concert with the strengths of its partners.
- 3.4. **To examine how the CCC is best to organize itself and operate** including the creation of a core design and development team who want to join together to provide some leadership to help guide the implementation strategies and actions that will allow us to unfold this vision.

INPUT REQUEST #1: KEY CHALLENGE & EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Please review the Key Challenge statement and Expected Outcomes and provide your responses in writing on the accompanying Feedback Form.

Are you in alignment with the Key Challenge we have advanced or do you think it needs to be adjusted? What Expected Outcomes do you expect from this planning process (as in..."I would consider this initial planning process a success if...")

4. Background events leading to the establishment of the CCC

- 4.1. **Broad challenges of the 21st century.** The 21st century dawned with a worldwide recognition of the unprecedented, large-scale and complex impacts of human beings on the global environment. At the same time, billions of people

around the world are still resource poor, and need access to more resources just to satisfy their basic needs.

- 4.2. **The sustainability transition.** This is leading to calls to transform society and economies to emphasize equity and the tri-partite objectives of environmental, economic and social sustainability, a transformation that has been called the ‘sustainability transition’. This call clearly recognizes that while people are the source of many environmental problems, they are also the actors who will solve those problems to reach this sustainability transition, to a new, greener and more equitable economy and world. *People-centered, collaborative conservation* is one of the core means to achieve this transition, and although challenging, it continues to be one promising approach.
- 4.3. **Need for collaboration.** The large scale nature and complexity of many of these environmental issues requires larger and more integrated efforts among people from all walks of society to join together in a collaborative and inclusive manner to discuss, debate and then pursue action. This is particularly true where critical ecosystems, natural resources or species span or flow across political, administrative or ownership boundaries (i.e. national borders, agency boundaries, public-private boundaries, communal-private boundaries) and thus where concerted and united action across those boundaries is a prerequisite for sustaining natural resources to support the lives and livelihoods of future generations.
- 4.4. **Need for linkages across organizations, scales, disciplines.** Action on complex problems requires strong and enduring linkages among private resource owners and users, indigenous groups and local communities, NGOs, government agencies, and schools and universities; it also requires linkages from local to regional³ to national to international scales. Within a university setting, this requires strong and trans-disciplinary linkages among faculty, staff and students from the social sciences, engineering, law, business, the humanities, and the natural sciences. *Collaboration* is thus another core means to achieve this sustainability transition.
- 4.5. **Establishment of the CCC.** The Center for Collaborative Conservation was endowed by Ed Warner and initiated by a collaborative team to provide a

³ Regional here refers to a sub-national entity that varies from states, districts, or provinces, depending on the country involved.

permanent platform in the Warner College of Natural Resources (WCNR) at Colorado State University to address some of these large and complex conservation (and sustainability) problems, with people and collaboration at the center of the solution to these problems.

- 4.6. **Endowment provides a long-term platform.** Endowment of a center or institute at CSU is an unusual event and provides the faculty, staff and students, with their non-CSU partners, a unique and major opportunity to create an institution that helps ensure that CSU research, faculty and students are as connected, focused and productive as possible to CSU's partners, who together can address critical conservation-for-people problems on the ground.
- 4.7. **New model of engagement.** The establishment of the CCC is also an opportunity to develop a new model of engagement that spans the boundaries among academic disciplines, between the university and the public, and among similar efforts in different parts of the world. It is also an opportunity to highlight CSU as a major destination for domestic and international students who want to devote their careers to promoting a sustainability transition in our society in the 21st century.
- 4.8. **Core foci: learning, discovery, engagement.** More broadly, this center is one way that CSU can achieve its vision to be a global leader in operations, research, education and engagement concerning people, natural resources and sustainability. The CCC can help CSU become a major force in: 1) creating the next generation of transformative leaders in conservation and sustainability, 2) discovering knowledge that allows new ways to reach this sustainability transition, and 3) engaging with individuals, communities and organizations to provide vibrant and effective service to real people outside the university who make hard choices every day about how to meet the needs of society and sustain natural resources.

INPUT REQUEST #2: BACKGROUND STATEMENTS

Please review the Background Statements and provide your responses in writing on the accompanying Feedback Form.

In your view are there any Background Statements that need clarification?

Are there any that should be added?

Are there any that are not relevant?

5. Assumptions about the CCC and collaborative conservation

- 5.1. **Collaborative conservation is an important and worthy challenge.** There is a core of faculty, staff, students and non-CSU partners who think the core challenges that the CCC will address are interesting, engaging and important – and thus these challenges will engage them and capture their imaginations and cause them to commit to work together.
- 5.2. **Better links are needed.** A major gap exists between what people teach and learn, and the knowledge that is created at universities and real action on people-centered conservation issues on the ground. Bringing these worlds closer together will 1) create scholars who are more fully engaged with and cognizant of the real world, and 2) support practitioners who can make better decisions about how they use and manage natural resources. Blending the best of local knowledge with that provided by scholars from the land grant universities will be one key to filling in these gaps between knowledge and practice.
- 5.3. **Collaboration in conservation helps solve complex problems.** Large and complex conservation problems will be more effectively solved through collaborative processes, because these problems often involve ecosystems or flows of natural resources and social processes that span multiple management, administrative or ownership boundaries.
- 5.4. **Conservation and livelihoods need to be strongly linked.** Conservation is only successful when it fully engages people on the ground and is strongly linked with development of their livelihoods, and that livelihood development only succeeds over the long term if it includes understanding of all dimensions of sustainability, including linked conservation-livelihood goals.
- 5.5. **Focusing on collaboration across diverse critical issues will bring new lessons.** The CCC could choose to focus on forest issues or wildlife or water, but there is strong value to integrating lessons learned across multiple resource sectors to accelerate our learning and improve our stewardship abilities. Ultimately, we have to manage and conserve all sectors and resources together to achieve sustainability.

- 5.6. **Comparing lessons from around the world will bring new insights.** The CCC could choose to focus on issues only in Larimer County, only in Latin America or only in Colorado. With the CCC, however, there is strong value to comparing experiences and lessons from around the world to leverage opportunities for learning and action, which draws on the rich experience and connections of the faculty and students at CSU and those of their partners outside CSU.
- 5.7. **Adding value to existing initiatives is as important as starting new initiatives.** It is important to recognize the many excellent initiatives in collaboration are underway and that faculty, staff, students and non-CSU stakeholders have limited time to engage in new initiatives, and thus one role for the CCC is to add value to current initiatives in a significant way, as well as develop new initiatives as needed.
- 5.8. **Training new leaders is as important as studying or acting on current problems.** Education and capacity building of students of all ages and practitioners needs to be a central focus of the CCC.
- 5.9. **Participation in the CCC should be inclusive and diverse.** Participation in the CCC (through fellows, affiliates) will be open to people and organizations working on important issues in collaborative conservation, including private resource owners and users, indigenous groups and local communities, NGOs, governmental agencies, and schools and universities.

INPUT REQUEST #3: ASSUMPTIONS

Please review the Assumption Statements and provide your responses in writing on the accompanying Feedback Form.

Which assumptions require more clarification for you to understand?

Do you strongly disagree with any of these assumptions?

Are there any assumptions that you would add to the list?

6. Some critical questions to help stimulate this dialogue

- 6.1. **What is the special niche that CCC can occupy** that fills a major gap in our way of tackling conservation-for-people and sustainability issues in the present?

What elements would differentiate its vision and mission from other similar initiatives at other universities or lead by NGOs?

- 6.2. **What kind of roles can the Center take** on that best leverage the power of a university setting to address core collaboration issues?
- 6.3. Does the **draft vision and mission** for the CCC (as below) capture the essence of what the CCC needs to pursue?
 - 6.3.1. **Draft vision for the CCC.** A future where conservation and human prosperity are inseparable and where collaborative action from diverse viewpoints provides vibrant and durable solutions to critical conservation issues.
 - 6.3.2. **Draft mission of the CCC.** Our mission is to promote collaborative action on critical conservation issues by integrating the best of academic science with real conservation action on the ground, by training the next generation of transformative leaders in collaborative conservation and sustainability, and by linking and learning from practical experience in collaboration conservation from around the world.
- 6.4. **What critical issues should the CCC first tackle** in which places and what process should be used to iteratively build on these initial choices?
- 6.5. Within these first critical issues, **what activities should the center implement** over the short and medium term?
- 6.6. What **first actions** can the CCC take to start fulfilling its vision and mission, and provide visible and useful products for stakeholders?
- 6.7. **What would success look like** for the CCC in 1 year (its formative phase)? In 5 years (its growth phase)? In 10 years (its sustaining phase)? How would you measure its progress and success?

INPUT REQUEST #4: CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Please review the Critical Questions and provide your responses in writing on the accompanying Feedback Form.

Are there other critical questions that need to be answered about the CCC at this initial stage?

7. Potential short and long-term actions for the CCC (for comment)

7.1. Refine the above draft vision and mission statements.

7.2. Identify critical emerging issues for CCC focus. Issues that require collaboration in conservation are complex and often involve 1) natural resources that span or flow across human-defined boundaries in large areas of land or water or 2) resources and processes that need large areas to be sustained, or 3) resources that need major public participation for conservation to succeed. For example, in Colorado, these flows include bark beetles and fire (forest health issues), water, wildlife populations and disease. Some species (like elephants, grizzly bears) need large land areas to sustain viable populations; energy conservation requires broad public participation to be effective. The CCC will focus its efforts on issues in collaborative conservation that exhibit some or all of the characteristics above.

7.3. Solidify the roles of the CCC. Principal roles of the center will include a convening role, an education role and a research role. Engagement of CSU with non-CSU stakeholders is not included here, because each of these three roles has engagement as a centerpiece. Under the *convening and linking role*, the center will organize and sponsor think-tanks, dialogues, conferences, workshops and other events to bring together diverse interests around emerging issues in collaborative conservation and sustainability. This could include facilitating conflict resolution, but only when organizations request that the CCC do so and CCC fellows and affiliates either have skills or knowledge useful to the negotiations. The center will also initiate, support and link *flagship projects* that link science with action in projects addressing collaborative conservation and sustainability issues of critical importance around the world, and create a community of practice and learning among these projects. Under the *education role*, the center will support and sponsor efforts to create and inspire a new generation of domestic and international leaders in conservation and sustainability, who will lead the world to a sustainable future⁴. This will be done through short or semester-long courses, face-to-face and online interactions, for university students, collaborative conservation practitioners and others. Under a *research role*, the center will sponsor and support trans-disciplinary research that

⁴ This area was developed with the ‘Leadership Through Learning Program’ team in the WCNR.

brings the best of science on coupled human-environment systems, sustainability and collaborative conservation, into the service of individuals and groups taking action to solve conservation and sustainability issues on the ground. The center will also support efforts to bring together innovative groups of scientists from different disciplines to work on trans-disciplinary synthesis writing projects.

7.4. Initiate innovation fora on emerging issues in collaborative conservation and sustainability.

The CCC will initiate and co-initiate national and international dialogues or fora on emerging issues in collaborative conservation and sustainability. An initial forum could focus on the nexus between food security, biofuels production and land conservation. Many such fora could be joint intra- or inter-institutional efforts with key organizations focusing on particular issues.

7.5. Develop a community of practice in collaborative conservation.

The CCC will facilitate a face-to-face and online community of practice for practitioners, faculty and students to learn together about process and outcomes of collaborative conservation. This will take the form of regular meetings, seminars, and other events to enliven this network linking local and scientific knowledge with local, regional and international action in collaborative conservation.

7.6. Create a CCC Fellows Program.

The CCC will initiate and support a Fellows Program in Collaborative Conservation and Sustainability for faculty, students and practitioners in Colorado, the North American West and around the world. The CCC Fellows Program will be linked with other fellows programs in North America, to provide fellows with a range of opportunities within institutions that focus on collaborative conservation and sustainability. The purpose of this program would be to provide resources and a place for co-learning within the center for faculty, students and practitioners to start new, or strengthen existing efforts at collaboration on big conservation problems. The work of the Fellows would also contribute to the building of an online collaborative conservation meta-database, which would bring together examples of successes, failures, and state of the art knowledge on collaborative conservation in a variety of local and international contexts. Fellows would have special access to distinguished guests of the CCC, and other CCC programs and events. Each Fellow would contribute to the working paper series and seminar series within the CCC as part of their fellowship.

- 7.7. Virtually link collaborative conservation efforts.** The CCC will serve as a virtual platform to link efforts around the globe that focus on people-centered conservation, particularly specific place-based efforts. This would allow specific groups to exchange lessons about the processes of collaboration and linking science with action, but also provide a platform for practitioners and researchers to benefit from diverse sets of experiences outside their own locations and across different natural resources.
- 7.8. Identify and support research on collaborative conservation.** Research conducted or supported by the CCC will include a focus on the process of collaboration (what works where and why), ways to measure and monitor the social and environmental outcomes of these efforts, and better ways to link science with action in people-centered conservation. It will also include support for adding a collaborative focus to basic research on coupled human-environment systems, so that these basic research efforts have the best chance to help the communities within which they take place.
- 7.9. Think about potential organizational members of the CCC.** Internal to the CCC will be this group of fellows (and former fellows), including *faculty fellows*, *student fellows* and *practitioner fellows*. Also within the center will be individuals who are *center affiliates*, a much broader group of members either studying or practicing collaborative conservation globally. More broadly, the CCC will work with a range of organizations who will be *center partners*. Membership in the center will be open to all who wish to engage in the center.
- 7.10. Identify initial Center partners and flagship projects.** The level of interest expressed by potential CCC partners and projects during this planning process will determine who the CCC works with initially.
- 7.11. Create a communication and engagement plan.** To communicate the actions of the center, the CCC will develop a communication and engagement plan that includes a world-class website, documentaries, working papers, handbooks, synthesis papers, and curricula.

INPUT REQUEST #5: POTENTIAL CCC ACTIONS

Please review the Potential CCC Actions and provide your responses in writing on the accompanying Feedback Form.

Which actions need to be clearer?

Do you strongly disagree with any of these actions?

Are there any actions that you would add to the list?

8. Next steps in this planning process

1. This document has been circulated widely for comment among the faculty, staff and students of the Warner College of Natural Resources and also among other colleges and centers/institutes at CSU. Key stakeholders outside CSU in Colorado, the North American West and around the world have also been invited to participate in this Dialogue.
2. Please return your reactions and comments on this document using the accompanying *Feedback Form* to officelink@shaw.ca by **13 May 2008**.
3. All of the comments received will be compiled “as-is” and un-attributed by the Innovation Expedition Inc., the firm that is providing the Centre support for this initial planning process, this pre-Dialogue and workshop. This consolidated feedback will be provided electronically to all of the Dialogue participants on or before 20 May 2008.
4. Your feedback will then be synthesized and be used to both guide the design of the Workshop and to inform the preparation of a *Workshop Workbook*, which will be used to support the workshop process.
5. We hope to be able to distribute a draft of the Workbook electronically to you a couple of days prior to the workshop. Those attending the workshop will be provided with a printed copy of the Workbook.
6. The feedback from this pre-Dialogue and the Workshop will form the basis for the development of an initial draft Plan for the CCC for its formative phase including the general design for some of its inaugural initiatives. The CCC will launch these initial activities in September 2008.