

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
On
Cooperation for Wilderness Conservation**

**between the
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE and
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT of the U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR and the U.S. FOREST SERVICE and
OFFICE OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND MARKETS
of the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
of the
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**and the
SECRETARIAT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
through the
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR NATURAL PROTECTED AREAS
of the UNITED MEXICAN STATES**

**and the
PARKS CANADA AGENCY
of the
GOVERNMENT OF CANADA**

The National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management of the U.S. Department of the Interior of the United States of America, the U.S. Forest Service and the Office of Ecosystem Services and Markets of the U.S. Department of Agriculture of the United States of America, the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources through the National Commission for Natural Protected Areas of the United Mexican States, and the Parks Canada Agency of the Government of Canada; hereinafter referred to as the Participants:

RECOGNIZING the advanced cooperation that exists between the Participants in the management, planning, preservation and research for the conservation of wilderness areas of the United States, Mexico and Canada;

WHEREAS conservation is generally defined by the Participants as the formulation and implementation of strategies and practices related to the research, monitoring, protection, and restoration of natural resources, ecosystems and their components, while facilitating

opportunities for public outreach, education, visitor experience and enjoyment.

RECOGNIZING that while the concept of wilderness varies among the Participants, it is generally considered to be land, marine and coastal areas that exist in a natural state or are capable of being returned to a natural state, are treasured for their intrinsic value, and offer opportunities to experience natural heritage places through activities that require few, if any, rudimentary facilities or services.

WHEREAS Canada, the United States and Mexico share a continent with vast, interconnected wilderness resources – including forests, mountain ranges, wildlife species, freshwater systems, and oceans and marine life – and whereas this shared resource is best protected through communication, consultation and cooperation;

RECOGNIZING that developing a shared vision of the North American continent's terrestrial and marine wilderness resources will enhance conservation efforts in each country, as well as cooperation between Participants;

WHEREAS natural and cultural heritage properties and sites on the national territory of each Participant are of significance nationally and, in many cases, internationally through inclusion on the United Nation's World Heritage List;

WHEREAS wilderness areas in all three countries, Mexico, the United States and Canada, represent irreplaceable elements of the heritage and identity of the people of all three nations;

WHEREAS wilderness areas may assist in the adaptation of flora, fauna and human populations to climate change and other factors that have effects on habitat;

NOTING the Participants' mutual interest in continuing and strengthening the conservation and management of national parks and wilderness for the purpose of conserving shared ecosystems, in particular in those areas close to or contiguous with national borders;

RECOGNIZING the importance and relevance of ecological and commemorative integrity in the establishment, management and operations of wilderness areas for the purpose of preserving and conserving these areas for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations;

RECOGNIZING the importance of creating a sense of "connection to place" to ensure the continued relevance of wilderness to residents of North America and to enhance public engagement in the protection and conservation of wilderness;

Have reached the following understanding:

This Memorandum has as its objective the creation of a voluntary framework for cooperation and coordination among the Participants concerning the commemoration,

conservation and preservation of wilderness areas. In pursuing such cooperation and coordination, the Participants are fully aware that the modalities available to further the concept of wilderness are different for each Participant, according to their corresponding Laws and authority.

1. (a) The Participants intend to establish an Intergovernmental Committee, to be initially comprised of the Directors of the National Park Service, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management, the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, the Director of the Office of Ecosystem Services and Markets, the National Commissioner of the National Commission for Natural Protected Areas, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Parks Canada Agency or their designated representative, to review, discuss and disseminate information about progress on projects, possible areas for future cooperation, and other related issues.

(b) The Committee should meet periodically, in locations alternating among the three countries. The Committee should make every possible effort to meet in association with the Canada/Mexico/U.S. Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management in order to avoid replication and ensure integration into on-going initiatives. Other government agencies may be invited to participate in the future, as appropriate.

(c) The members of the Committee may designate appropriate representatives to coordinate and monitor the progress of cooperative activities developed to accomplish the objectives outlined in this Memorandum of Understanding.

(d) The Committee should ensure integration of wilderness activities with other on-going bilateral and trilateral initiatives and avoid duplication of other initiatives.

2. (a) The forms of cooperative activities under this Memorandum of Understanding may include but are not limited to exchanges of technical and professional information; participation in joint seminars, conferences, training courses, and workshops in areas of professional and technical interest; joint planning and research teams; and exchanges of specialists. The type of activities carried out under this voluntary cooperative framework is subject to the availability of funds and personnel of each Participant and subject to the laws and regulations of their respective countries.

(b) Topics of mutual interest and benefit for ongoing or future cooperative activities may include but are not limited to:

- (i) Commitment to promoting and enhancing wilderness on land and in marine and coastal areas;
- (ii) Examination of issues in wilderness conservation and management, with a special concern for the impacts of climate change, fire, and alien invasive species on wilderness areas and their inhabitant species;

- (iii) Research, inventory, documentation, and monitoring of wilderness areas;
- (iv) Valuing human livelihoods dependent on wilderness;
- (v) Consideration of mechanisms of payment for ecosystem services related to wilderness conservation;
- (vi) Public information to increase community support for conservation of wilderness;
- (vii) Joint identification and conservation of transboundary resources as they relate to wilderness areas;
- (viii) Consideration of wilderness areas in the context of a broader landscape approach to conservation management;
- (ix) Establishment of sustained relationships between wilderness managers across the continent for the purpose of mentoring, sharing research and technology, exploring common challenges and solutions, and potentially developing transcontinental goals and plans of action;
- (x) Exploring potential to work with those biosphere reserves with core wilderness areas to advance wilderness conservation;
- (xi) Facilitating visitor experience as a means to enhance relevance of wilderness and foster engagement in wilderness conservation; and
- (xii) Exchange of information and best practices on innovative approaches to governance of wilderness areas.

3. Each Participant should ensure that the information transmitted by one Participant to another Participant under this Memorandum of Understanding is accurate to its best knowledge and belief. The transmitting Participant should not warrant the suitability of the information transmitted for any particular use of or application by the receiving Participant.

4. (a) This Memorandum becomes operative upon its signature by the Participants and its terms apply until discontinued by the Participants.

(b) The Participants may modify this Memorandum of Understanding upon their written mutual consent.

(c) Each Participant may discontinue this Memorandum of Understanding at any time upon written notification through diplomatic channels to other Participants. The discontinuation of this Memorandum of Understanding should not affect the validity or duration

of projects under this Memorandum of Understanding, which are initiated prior to such discontinuation, subject to availability of funds.

Signed in triplicate at WILD9, the 9th World Wilderness Congress, Mérida, United Mexican States, on this 7th day of November 2009, in the English, French and Spanish languages.

**FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE
INTERIOR OF THE GOVERNMENT OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:**

**FOR THE PARKS CANADA AGENCY
OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA:**

**FOR THE U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE
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