

PARKS, PEACE, AND PARTNERSHIP: GLOBAL INITIATIVES IN TRANSBOUNDARY CONSERVATION

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ISBN 978-1-55238-643-9

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Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park: Observations and Retrospection on Cooperation Issues

David A. Mihalic

INTRODUCTION

Waterton Lakes and Glacier National Parks were both established by their respective governments within fifteen years of each other more than a century ago. The people living in Canada and the United States came to these decisions – to set aside this particular place along their nation’s national frontier – independently. Upon reflection, it is obvious this particular landscape possessed attributes recognized at that time by people as somehow being “special.” Certainly the scenery was spectacular. Moreover, those special attributes were recognized during a period of natural resource exploitation in both countries as having greater value to the nation’s citizenry than the use and exploitation that occurred on other public lands.



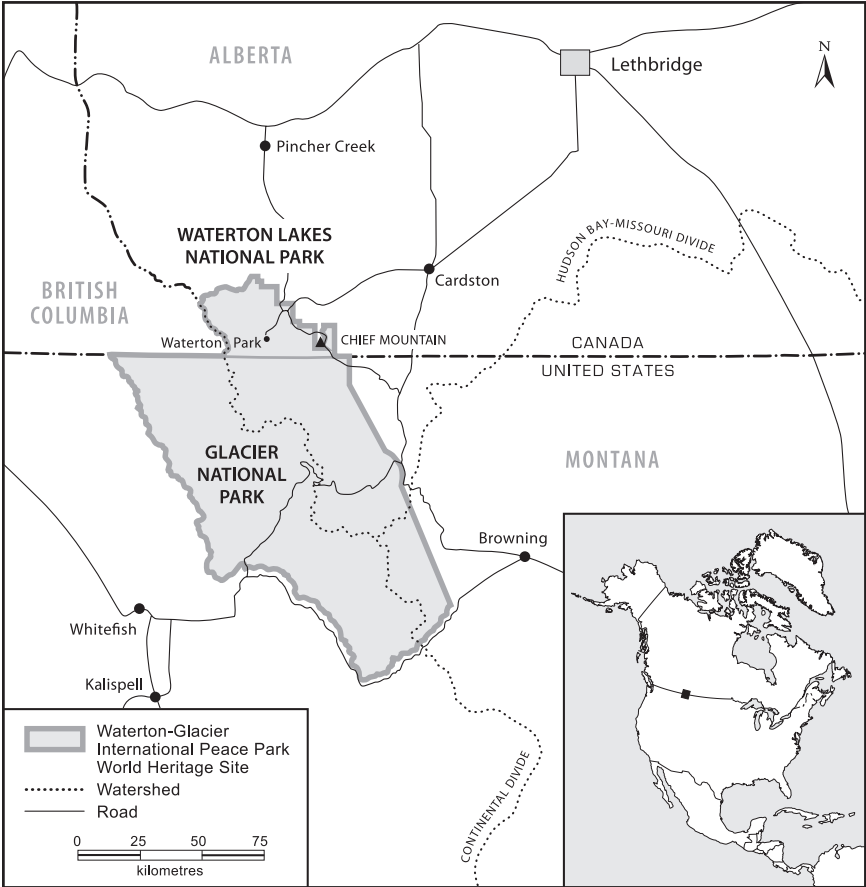
WHERE THE MOUNTAINS MEET THE PRAIRIES ALONG THE WATERTON-GLACIER INTERNATIONAL PEACE PARK (M. QUINN).

This was not the first expression of the national park idea. But it may have been the first to have occurred in almost the same place, about the same time, by two different nations, separated only by a national boundary.

HOW IT STARTED

It is hard to speculate just what people in Canada and the United States at that time thought about Waterton Lakes and Glacier National Parks, and the two parks' relationship to each other. Within a couple of decades, however, people on both sides of the national frontier came together for other reasons because they were drawn to this place.

Rotary clubs had their beginning around this same time (1905) in Chicago, Illinois, when businessman Paul Harris envisioned a professional club that captured the same friendly spirit found in the small towns of his youth (Rotary International 2011). He invited a group of people who



MAP 1. WATERTON-GLACIER INTERNATIONAL PEACE PARK (M. CROOT).

represented each profession to gather together once a week. This first “service club” rotated their meetings among one another’s offices, to better understand what each member’s profession contributed to community welfare. From the beginning, the idea was to give back to the local community through service, hold each other to high ethical standards, and thus build goodwill and peace in the world.

By 1921 Rotary Clubs had spread throughout the United States and abroad and adopted the name Rotary International a year later. Clubs met

within their own regions, or districts, once a year to coordinate activities and service projects. In 1931, Rotarians from the clubs in Montana and Alberta came together at a joint meeting in Waterton Lakes for what became their first annual international goodwill meeting. In the early 1930s, the scars of World War I were still fresh, much of the world was gripped in economic crisis and the first hints of World War II were beginning to emerge. While no exact transcript exists, the idea of creating a “peace park” along the international boundary where both nations had already established national parks is widely attributed to leaders in the Cardston (Alberta) Rotary Club (Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park Association 2011). Such a designation was seen as a way to cement harmonious relations between allies while providing a model of peace for nations around the world. Within a year, these citizen Rotarians sought political support and laid the groundwork that led to both the Canadian Parliament and the U.S. Congress passing laws establishing Waterton Lakes and Glacier National Parks *together* as an international peace park. This was the first joint national expression of its kind in the world (Map 1).

WHAT IS AN “INTERNATIONAL PEACE PARK” SUPPOSED TO BE?

A key thought at the time was that the two parks, while a model, should become more than just a symbolic idea. For example, most do not realize that the U.S. legislation “upon the enactment by the proper authority of the Canadian Government” of *similar* legislation, formally made Glacier National Park “*a part of an international park* known as the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park” (emphasis added) (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration 2009). It can be argued that from the beginning, it was the intent of Congress that this be *one* park, the management of which is shared between the two countries.

So what has transpired since? Since its inception, the idea of a place along a transnational boundary where two countries could celebrate their own unique cultures as well as their commonality has been inspiring. Certainly it inspired members of Rotary in Canada and the United States

of America to politically connect two national parks in a formal way as an inspiration to other countries. But the genesis of the idea likely had germinated in the minds of the park staffs that had learned first hand that the values of the two parks were more than just scenery.

COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT EXAMPLES

Interpretive media at Waterton Lakes attributes the idea of working together for common values to John George “Kootenai” Brown, Waterton’s first superintendent and legendary U.S. park ranger Henry “Death-on-the-Trail” Reynolds (WatertonPark.com 2011). Kootenai Brown stated: “It seems advisable to greatly enlarge this park ... it might be well to have a preserve and breeding grounds in conjunction with the United States Glacier Park” (ibid.) Ranger Reynolds, who surely had one of the grandest nicknames in history, observed that: “The Geology recognizes no boundaries, and as the lake lay ... no man-made boundary could cleve [*sic*] the waters apart” (ibid.).

These early park leaders pioneered the idea of joint patrols for park protection. Such cooperation between park staffs, especially in the early years between park wardens and rangers, led to close working relationships and solid personal friendships. It seems natural. After all, the staffs shared the same park values, and the differences between the various national or regional policies as applied in the two parks were “worked out.” Some administrative examples are recognition of employee passes by both parks and recognition of Parks Canada’s concession and contracting policies for the motor vessel “International” that specifies compliance with U.S. Coast Guard regulations for passenger vessels. The ability to honour park *visitors’* entrance passes is more difficult, likely because of each country’s policies for accountability of public funds. However, with some considered thought and perhaps even legislation, but most importantly support by the two park agencies at the federal level, this has great potential as a revenue source to fund joint management opportunities that pertain to peace park ideals.

Park rangers and wardens have a long history of cooperation in many ways. These include joint operations, mutual aid, visitor management and search and rescue, facilitation of border crossings for rangers and wardens with differing levels of law enforcement authority and equipment, and resource protection responsibilities including fire management. There are even occasional staff exchanges when supported by park management.

When, in September 1997, the author accompanied then-vice-president Al Gore to Grinnell Glacier, the park's staff was heavily committed to the dignitary protection detail. The vice-president was in Glacier National Park to broach publicly for the first time his great interest in global climate change. Various officials, including senior Parks Canada staff and First Nations representatives, were in attendance. Park rangers, laden with backpacks carrying trauma kits and more, cleared the trail and provided security to support the secret service detail (who feared bears more than terrorists).

Almost all the rangers from across Glacier Park were involved with the vice-president's visit in some manner. During this high-profile special event, a park visitor, climbing one of Glacier's tallest peaks, took a fall. Almost seamlessly, because the possibility had been pre-planned, wardens from Waterton Lakes swung into action utilizing Parks Canada's helicopter and successfully conducted the rescue – ten miles across the border in the United States. The vice-president never even knew.

These examples grew from annual staff meetings between management teams from both parks. These meetings are informal in that no national policy or directive mandates them. But the results have led to better and more effective protected area management with a focus at the ecosystem level along the principles espoused by conservation biology. More recently, fire management within the two parks is more closely coordinated as it has become more of a natural resource management action rather than simply focussing on suppression. And management of grizzly bears, which, along with other animals that know no boundaries, has moved from early coordinated management action to scientific breakthroughs in population dynamics using DNA research pioneered by Canadian scientists and replicated by scientists from Glacier.

MANAGEMENT EVOLUTION: MEMORANDA OF AGREEMENT

In a sense, these kinds of visitor protection, resource management and emergency services examples are similar to what takes place in any protected area working with neighbours to achieve common goals. It is important to note they are not directly the result of the “peace park” designation.

Other park staffs elsewhere, whether from the Canadian mountain parks or Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons, coordinate in a similar manner. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks share a joint staff. Memoranda of understanding have been established between North Cascades National Park in Washington and Manning Provincial Park in British Columbia. But, except for national park units that share common boundaries (such as the Canadian mountain parks or Sequoia-Kings Canyon), these are usually the result of local initiative rather than some broad national policy or purpose.

Local commitment seems to be the key, and formalizing relationships seems to be the next iteration of a management strategy. In the 1990s, management at the U.S. National Park Service’s Redwoods National Park believed the best way to manage the remaining coastal redwoods ecosystem was to absorb the three California State Parks on their boundaries. This set up a strained local conflict between the parks agencies, despite their almost identical missions (U.S. National Park Service 2003). An independent review by experts concluded that a shared park operation, using the collective resources of both agencies, offered greater advantages than a transfer. Management is now conducted through a negotiated five-year memorandum of agreement. Time has shown a successfully integrated management operation that benefits natural values while park visitors notice little difference across park boundaries.

MANAGEMENT EVOLUTION: STAFF COMMITMENT

In the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, local initiative has also led to the next level of cooperation, but in a different manner. Out of an

annual management meeting between the two parks in Waterton and with the support of both park superintendents, key staff worked with others to develop what is known as the Crown of the Continent Managers Partnership (CMP) (Crown Managers Partnership 2011a). This partnership's purpose is to improve the management of a large, complex ecoregion that crosses the international boundary and has multiple jurisdictions. These jurisdictions include the two parks agencies, two provinces, the state of Montana, native peoples, and various federal, provincial, and state agencies from both countries. The model is similar to the Flathead Basin Commission, which was established by the State of Montana to help facilitate resource and water quality issues in the transboundary watershed that lies to the west of Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. Membership on the Flathead Basin Commission includes a representative appointed by British Columbia's Premier.

The CMP, however, is broader than most comparable examples in both the scope of its purpose and the number of jurisdictions involved. It is a complex organization in the sense that it addresses principles of conservation biology at the ecosystem level, including connectivity corridors, ecosystem threats, and various partners' management and research operations. But it is managed simply by a steering committee of members and utilizes a secretariat by contract; initially through the Miistakis Institute of the Rockies in Calgary, Alberta (Crown Managers Partnership 2011b).

The CMP has been extraordinarily successful, since it was founded in 2001. It has developed a regional noxious weed identifier, initiated a metadata portal project for the Crown region that is resulting in the CMP managers working to break down data access problems, and has sponsored several well-attended forums that have focussed on wider issues such as fire and water management. Some projects, such as populating a cumulative effects model, have not been as successful, but despite growing pains the partnership seems to enjoy the confidence of the agency administrators who sponsor it. CMP managers have developed a memorandum of agreement between the State of Montana and the Province of Alberta pledging long-term funding support and a signing ceremony is pending. Insiders hope this will act as a catalyst for British Columbia to also sign the agreement.



A CLEAR FALL DAY IN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK (M. QUINN).

While such partnerships cannot exist without support of the agencies which form them, the important point to note is that this example is driven by *the personal commitment of individual staff members* in both parks who care about the ideals expressed in Waterton and Glacier's various designations and international recognition. In the author's opinion, the success of this partnership is due to the support from the bottom up. Would it be the same if driven from the top down?

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR ANY COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The kinds of day-to-day operational and management actions described above are important indicators of the success of any joint management paradigm. Support from staff is not only important, but critical. Like the

Redwoods example, which was born in conflict, the staff has seen positive results and supports the concept.

This is true too of the Crown Managers Partnership. But while the broader CMP is working well, the direct relationships between the two national parks that comprise Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park have remained little changed over the last several years.

This is not to say they have necessarily deteriorated. Positive examples of cooperation abound. Waterton's conservation biologist is involved in Glacier's development of its "Vital Signs" monitoring program. Similarly, Glacier's biologists are involved with ecological integrity monitoring in Canada. Glacier's native plant specialists have helped in the development of Waterton Lakes' Peace Park Garden. Waterton and Glacier have established a common fishing season and creel limits on Waterton Lake, which crosses the international boundary. A bull trout study on the Belly River (a transboundary stream) required cooperation between Glacier and Alberta Fish and Wildlife with the concurrence of Waterton Lakes National Park. When Glacier was developing its general management plan that proposed to ban Jet Skis, planners drew heavily from the research on Jet Ski impacts that Waterton and Parks Canada had already completed. And there are countless other examples from wolf management to common descriptors for vegetation maps and fire histories. These cooperative efforts open windows and build bridges between agencies, but are they due to the imprimatur of "international peace park" or any of the other international designations the two parks enjoy?

It is important to note that, in the author's opinion, these success stories are the direct result of the tremendous dedication and long-term commitment by park staff (of both parks) to the ideals represented by the parks' nomenclature. Time and again, the Waterton Lakes and Glacier park region has been recognized by humans as something extraordinary. This includes the Piegan Nation of native peoples for whom the region is the "miistakis" or "backbone" of their world and for whom Chief Mountain is a sacred place. Then came the national park designations: the international peace park in 1932, and the biosphere reserve and world heritage inscriptions in the last twenty years. Each of these recognitions is the embodiment of an *idea* conceived in the minds of humans and laid

upon the landscape. As staff come on board, they become invested in these ideals and their work is thus driven by them. This alludes to the power of the ideas represented in words such as “national park,” “peace,” and “international.”

But it is important to also note that each park operates independently, following their respective management policies and directives as set by higher authority. During the author’s tenure there were no specific policies or directives at the national level of either Parks Canada or the U.S. National Park Service that pertained specifically to the management of either international peace parks or even transboundary parks (such as Kluane-Wrangells in Alaska-Yukon, North Cascades in Washington and Manning in B.C., or Big Bend National Park in Texas and the Maderas del Carmen protected area in Mexico). Where cooperation existed, it was usually because of the efforts of the park staffs involved. While U.S. parks superintendents along the national borders had delegated authority to approve transboundary travel in conjunction with joint management activities, it was not because of the international designations but to facilitate travel. Similar authority was not granted to Waterton Lakes superintendents by regional officials in Calgary, and, in fact, staff had to secure approval for joint annual management meetings when they were held in the United States.

This disparity in management policy was noted by park superintendents of U.S. world heritage sites during a meeting in 1992 (World Heritage Committee 1992) at which superintendents noted little common direction from headquarters that pertained to world heritage site management. The same is true of the “international peace park” designation. Other than the original legislation, there is little to guide Glacier’s superintendent in managing the park any differently than any other national park area. So, while both parks’ interpretive programs explain the ideals of the international peace park, do the visitors really understand? One park’s entrance sign touts the designation while the other does not. Even the approval to wear a Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park logo pin above the breast pocket on the uniform is at the regional level for the U.S. National Park Service. The practice actually conflicts at the national level with the Director’s Orders for uniform wear.

CURRENT PERCEPTIONS

Though many visitors still perceive Waterton Lakes and Glacier as two separate parks in spite of the national legislation that says each is a component of a larger whole – a *peace park* – they are intrigued by the “international peace park” moniker. Yet a once-open border along Waterton Lake, celebrated as the peace park’s most potent symbol, has hardened due to security concerns. Once, all visitors crossed the international boundary freely in this “peace park,” hiking from one unit to the other, “reporting” to the customs office, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or park wardens at the Waterton townsite or at the Goat Haunt Ranger Station. But new security precautions initiated after the September 11, 2001 incident effectively prevent visitors from countries other than the United States or Canada from entering the United States at the U.S. end of Waterton Lake. Non-U.S. or Canadian citizens are allowed to disembark from tour boats but are then restricted to a limited area around the Ranger Station before returning to the tour boat. The nearest entrance to Glacier, for non-U.S. or Canadian visitors, is at the Customs Station at the Chief Mountain Highway Crossing, which is quite a distance away.

Visitors once could dock at the border from tour boats and gain firsthand the idea of “hands across the border” as Canadian and United States citizens stood side-by-side, separated only by an imaginary line. No more. The Rotary Clubs had a new mission: to “grow up” the border in the spirit of the peace park, by allowing the clear-cut swath to revegetate and connect wildlife populations rather than separate them. But security concerns nixed that. Question: do terrorists really want to chance an encounter with *Ursus arctos* at this point on the border? Even a major event that developed support and fostered broader understanding – the Superintendents’ Hike – has not been as successful as it once was. Started some twenty years ago, the park superintendents of Waterton Lakes and Glacier each invited ten local, regional and national dignitaries to hike for three days across the two parks, including the international border, which culminated in a discussion on the last day of how the peace park idea could become more meaningful. Federal officials, ministry officials,

elected officials, locals, NGO executives, and park employees gained first-hand knowledge of park values and each other's ideas for future emphasis.

And why is this event less successful today than in previous years? All due to terrorism and border security concerns. Wait, what was the idea of a peace park all about anyway?

WHO BENEFITS?

The peace park idea is not dead. It has resurfaced in other places with new energy and new champions. While Nelson Mandela's name may be one of the most notable, others have championed the potential of peace parks for many years, beyond the benefits they may bring to the protected areas which comprise them. Dr. Anton Rupert, who along with Mandela is a founder of the Peace Parks Foundation, reinvented the idea to use eco-tourism to help confront poverty in Africa, professionalize park management, and make it easier for others to see the magnificence of Africa's wild places (Peace Parks Foundation 2011) And, there have been numerous people who have suggested that the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea could become a "peace park" (Healy this volume).

As the idea spreads to other nations, what can seventy-five years of management at Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park by both Parks Canada and the U.S. National Park Service model to the rest of the world? Have world events negated the values that led to the designation?

In the Waterton-Glacier example, the author suggests that the benefits are directed inward. The parks themselves and the values they embody benefit most directly, due to the dedication and commitment of park staff. Even though cooperation through park neighbours extends these benefits, they accrue primarily to the natural and conservation values for which the two parks were established.

Even the challenge of the Crown Managers Partnership now is to use their success to engage in similar efforts to manage cooperatively with other agencies in the Crown of the Continent region. The "peace park" provides the example of what can be accomplished cooperatively and the CMP can expand and develop more inter-agency and Canada-U.S.

cooperative projects. There are certainly other cooperative efforts across borders besides those directly related to Waterton Lakes and Glacier National Parks. And, if the broad concept of international corridors (such as Yellowstone-to-Yukon) is to ever succeed, it must do so first at the international border. Certainly Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park can serve as a model for such conservation strategies.

The author proposes that, as important as the conservation values are in this model and its direct benefit to nature, it is the potential for world peace that may be more important. While there are those who would argue that if an expanded Crown of the Continent conservation regime that led to a successful Yellowstone-to-Yukon initiative is a mark of broader “societal benefits,” the base values are the same. However, the Waterton-Glacier model is almost totally dependent on staff dedication and commitment; it lacks a similar commitment and dedication at the agency level. The broader the management regime (the CMP area), the greater the potential that even the strong dedication of park professionals will not be enough for long-term success. Besides, the benefits – great as they are – are limited to the conservation and natural values of the core units and to that landscape which is similar. As greater scale is reached, and especially when private land and interests are introduced, the shared values of the participants changes. Thus, these values translate to the general population only to those who share those values specifically, or see an example to be used elsewhere in similar situations.

If the values are limited to only those that directly benefit the protected area, then a peace park is no different from any other transboundary system of protected areas. In fact, the Waterton-Glacier model is frequently cited in the conservation plans of transboundary protected areas elsewhere in the world. This is not altogether bad, but it is not dependent on the designation of “peace park.” The evolution of the Waterton-Glacier idea to the broader, and equally successful, Crown Managers Partnership is an example that can form a regional strategy to extend conservation values beyond park boundaries through partners. By starting with the transboundary area and extending it through partnerships, a greater impact can be realized. This is perhaps a model that lends itself to the grand idea of a Yellowstone-to-Yukon initiative.

DO BETTER MODELS EXIST?

But can there be more? The broader question must be, are there better examples elsewhere? Are there transboundary protected areas and peace parks elsewhere in the world that can serve as better models, even to Waterton-Glacier? And, when the designation “peace park” is added, should there be more than just the values inherent in transboundary parks? Perhaps the peace parks in Africa, envisioned to both benefit the parks and benefit the citizens and nations in which they exist will become a better example. And, leaders have long cited the potential for peace parks as solutions to conflict. These, too, are “ideas” that go beyond conservation biology principles. That conflict can adversely affect conservation and cultural values – the world’s heritage especially – has been seen too readily in the last decade.

It may be that transboundary protected areas, especially those that may have once used the Waterton-Glacier model, have evolved to a different level because of circumstances. The recently inscribed *Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians* World Heritage Site is a transboundary serial property in the Slovak Republic and the Ukraine. Ten individual properties stretch along a 185-kilometre axis across the national frontier to make up the heritage site. All the nominated properties are in management regimes that conform to International Union for Conservation of Nature Management Categories 1a or II. Buffer zones are a mixture of Category I, II, and VI. The nomination identifies ecological “connecting corridors” that are all within protected forests or existing national park, biosphere reserve or nature protected area boundaries. It is not a peace park but it has generated discussion and agreement on a joint management regime between the two countries.

What impressed the author most was the “joint management plan” (Ministry of Environmental Protection of Ukraine and State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic 2006), which was already in place prior to inscription. The existing management framework comprises a series of various protected landscapes, national parks and biosphere reserves that, due to the conjunction of national boundaries, has already led to a certain level of cooperation in management activities, including

the nominated sites. Because of the previous government structure, the joint management plan is very much a “top-down” plan. But managers have built in a “bottom-up” process that includes stakeholders, local governments, and citizens. This management plan could become a model for joint cooperative management and certainly equals or exceeds many of the existing management schemes for transboundary world heritage properties. Could a similar plan, based on bottom-up success but with top-down support, implemented at Waterton-Glacier take the first international peace park from “good” to “great?”

The author closes with a story. In late September, 1998, when the author was superintendent at Glacier National Park, he was contacted by high government officials who wanted to set up a field visit “to the peace park.” Little information was given – it was all so “hush-hush” – only that the visitors were foreign diplomats who wanted to meet with those “responsible” for the *idea* of how land could be managed as a park for peace. While there was a reluctance on the part of the callers to give information, we complied as best we could with the request, in spite of customs stations about to close for the winter and many visitor facilities already closed for the season. But, a few days later, it was all called off due to “problems securing visas for some of the participants.” We connected the dots, one of which was the agreement earlier that year by Yassar Arafat to exchange land for peace, and the agreement in late August by Benjamin Netanyahu to that proposal as long as “three percent was set aside as a nature reserve.” While we were exchanging phone calls, Netanyahu and Arafat were negotiating at the Aspen Institute’s Wye River Conference Center on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. A few days after the visit was called off, news reports said they reached agreement on what was called “land for peace.” Setting aside three percent of the land for nature was *not* part of the final agreement.

CONCLUSION: WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN?

While the dedicated staffs of Waterton and Glacier National Parks have tried for seventy-five years to bring the idea of an “international peace park” to life as a meaningful example in southwestern Alberta and north-central Montana, those staffs have focussed on what they know best: professional natural and cultural resource management and visitor service. It was left to others, who are dedicated similarly to ideals, only those of world peace not conservation biology, who were almost the catalyst to take the idea of Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park to the next level.

But do we need a catalyst? It will always be people with ideals who envision what can be, if only we seek to achieve it. Those people are already involved directly. They are the staffs of the two parks. Now we need to engage the senior executives at the national level, gain their support, and then that of the politicians. They only need to give the park staffs the authority and resources to move forward to make the idea of an international peace park relevant in today’s world. For Waterton Lakes and Glacier National Parks are not just special places to their respective nations. Their world heritage inscription has already recognized their larger value. But what awaits if the idea that sprang to life in Waterton back in 1931 to commemorate peace among two countries, were to lead to peace among many?

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