

# **ROTARY/National Park Service COSTA RICA INITIATIVE**

## **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

**4/9/12 draft**

### **BACKGROUND**

In 1931 Canadian and American Rotarians developed the idea that the neighboring Glacier National Park in the United States and Waterton Lakes Park in Canada could be blended into an "International Peace Park." Within one year, this concept became a reality, and a landmark precedent was established.

Now, the US National Park Service ("NPS") is in discussions with corresponding entities in the country of Costa Rica to enter into a "Sister Parks" relationship, with the goal of furthering the protection of habitat for migrant avian populations that spend parts of the year in each nation.

A group of National Parks in the U.S. upper midwest has developed an agreement template with their counterparts in Central America to form a structure to define precise goals to implement this concept, and to explore how the ultimate plan(s) could best be addressed. The implementation of this plan currently awaits final approval from the diplomatic, legal and political elements of the Costa Rican government, but implementation in essential form is anticipated soon.

It is likely that when adopted, the structure will be intentionally open-ended, in order to accommodate the development and evolution of concrete plans and structures to advance the broad general goals, at which point additional formal structure will likely be developed and put in place.

Involvement by interested entities, such as various Rotary instrumentalities, can be key at this point because of the possibility of being able to participate in the formulation of the goals and plans, as well as in their implementation down the line. If one hopes to play an important role in a meaningful project, it is always good to be "Present at the Creation".

### **ROTARY INVOLVEMENT**

Several Rotary District 5960 Governors and other interested Rotarians have met with the NPS officials from the Office of International Affairs and the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway who have envisioned and are championing the Costa Rica plan. We have determined that there are a number of potential avenues for partnership and other involvement. These meetings have in turn led to Rotary discussions with the NPS Office

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Of international Affairs in Washington D.C., in which opportunities for cooperation were discussed and directions for the future were considered.

This document is an outline of some but by no means all of the relevant considerations and possibilities. It is intended to be altered, amended, supplemented, or otherwise developed and grow as the discussion matures.

It is currently envisioned that Rotary is well-positioned and eager to assist in the goals of the proposed international park arrangement, and of fostering greater RI involvement in issues relating to Parks and protected areas in a number of ways, including:

Awareness-raising activities for Rotarians and other community leaders concentrating on the issues being addressed by the proposed international relationship and the opportunities for service presented thereby;

Doing what Rotary does best, assisting in intercultural exchanges. Exchanges will be developed in collaboration with the NPS that highlight and explore national park and related issues. This is understood to include encouraging Rotary entities' visits to key areas in both the US and Central America, the hosting and sending of GSE teams, VTT teams (see discussion below), and other forms of interchange;

Organizing educational opportunities in collaboration with NPS, involving volunteer efforts concentrated on Rotary areas of focus (see discussion below), including but not limited to Peace, Clean water, and sustainable economic community development;

Providing financial support for efforts of interest, as may be initiated by local Rotary Clubs in collaboration with NPS, ranging from Rotary Foundation projects such as scholarships, creation and exchange of Vocational Training Teams, Group Study Exchanges, Friendship Exchanges and other projects that relate to any of the six areas of focus as established by the Rotary Foundation (see discussion below).

## THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE NPS AND COSTA RICA

The agreement document between the United States and Costa Rica has been executed by US entities, and completion at the Costa Rican end is expected by Summer 2012. That document will represent a formal nation-to nation agreement between the two countries that promotes "Sister Parks". When the agreement goes into effect, several national park areas in the US upper midwest (including the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway, the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, and Voyageurs National Park, among others) will enter into a Sister Park arrangement with Parque Nacional Corcovado, located on the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica. As funds are available, it is likely that park staff from all parks will travel between countries. For additional discussion, see "Sister Parks", *infra*, and see "Sister Park Arrangement", Appendix A.

## THE PARTIES TO THIS DOCUMENT

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The mission of the United States National Park Service ("NPS") is to preserve the nationally significant places that help to tell our nation's story. There are 397 national parks, located in all 50 states and all territories. These areas range from natural places renowned for their spectacular landforms and scenic beauty to small historic sites tucked into densely populated urban environments.

The NPS preserves the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. In so doing, the NPS frequently cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural conservation and outdoor recreation throughout the country and the world.

## ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 5960

Rotary International is a worldwide organization of more than 1.2 million business, professional and community leaders. Members of Rotary Clubs ("Rotarians") provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and endeavor to

Build goodwill and peace in the world. There are 33,000 Rotary Clubs in over 200 countries worldwide. Rotary is nonpolitical, nonreligious, and open to all cultures, races and creeds. As signified by the motto "Service Above Self", Rotary's main objective indeed is service, whether in the community, in the workplace, or around the world.

Rotary is organized into 535 Districts, of which District 5960 is one. District 5960 consists of 70 clubs and over (X) thousand members, and embraces the entire watershed of the St. Croix River, the National Riverway, and much of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

The object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise. This should encourage and foster the development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service, and the application of the ideal of service in each member's life, and also to advance international understanding and good will through a world fellowship united in that ideal of service. Among the avenues of service is International Service, aimed at extending a humanitarian reach around the globe and promoting world understanding and peace.

## SISTER PARKS

Glacier-Waterton International Peace Park was the first "transfrontier" park. It is generally considered to be the model for transboundary park cooperation worldwide. The "Peace Park" was formed as a direct result of meetings between US and Canadian Rotarians, culminating in a July 4, 1931 Resolution providing that "the proper authorities be petitioned to commence negotiations to establish the two parks indicated as a

Permanent International Peace Park which shall be . . . set aside for this purpose". Legislative initiatives were formulated and aggressively pressed forward by Rotarians in both Canada and the United States, resulting in the speedy establishment of the Peace Park the very next year amid large celebrations (especially large for that part of North America 80 years ago), and accompanying proclamations from the United States President and the Canadian Prime Minister. This

process and achievement has served as the template for other similar undertakings in subsequent years, and established without a doubt the importance and relevance of Rotarian involvement in such actions. Indeed, without the cooperative and energetic efforts of Canadian and Montanan Rotarians, the Waterton/Glacier project would never have come into existence.

As of 2012, many US national parks have established "Sister Park" relationships with national parks in other countries (nearly 40 so far), involving at least 16 other nations.

This has been done as part of an overall process in which park managers address the need to work with areas and circumstances that go beyond the borders of their specific dominions, such as migratory issues, pollution threats, invasive plant and animal species and disease issues, as well as overlapping impacts of various human civilizations and cultures. The "Sister Park" approach is intended to enhance information sharing and "park-to-park" contacts in pursuit of this goal.

Additionally, a number of Sister Park relationships include support and involvement in

Public-private relationships, such as Western Kentucky University's involvement in

- Mammoth Cave, the Maddox-Jolie Pitt Foundation's involvement with Sequoia-King's Canyon, and the Grand Canyon National Park Association's relationship to the partnership of its namesake with Yuntaishan Park in China.

For an excellent discussion of the sister park concept in general and the proposed agreement between NPS and Costa Rica in particular, see "Sister Parks as a Tool to Protect Shared Resources: An Example from the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway" by Christopher E. Stein, Superintendent of the SCNSR, in "The George Wright Forum" Volume 28, Number 3 (2011), and in Appendix B.