THE NORTHERN SAGEBRUSH STEPPE INITIATIVE – A CURRENT EXAMPLE OF TRANSBOUNDARY COLLABORATION

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• Collaboration across boundaries has historically been piecemeal with agency staff and NGO’s.

• Beginning in 2006, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Montana Wildlife agencies have met annually to discuss issues of common concern.

• Agencies sought and received endorsement from WAFWA when an MOU was developed and signed in 2007 and renewed in 2012.

• Provides for cooperative partnerships between AB, SK, and MT wildlife agencies focusing on pronghorn, mule deer, and sage-grouse conservation.

• Build awareness of common interests and issues in the Northern Sage Brush Steppe trans-boundary region.

• Develop collaborative work and research opportunities supporting conservation of sagebrush dependent species across geographic scales.
Formalized MOU has specific actions and has allowed staff to attend regular meetings.

Focal species of Pronghorn, Mule Deer, and Sage-grouse have allowed focused projects (e.g. pronghorn research in all jurisdictions, sage-grouse translocation).

Great effort has been undertaken to develop common thematic layers for GIS giving managers tools to consider broader landscape context (Data sharing agreements).

Professional relationships have developed over time that help sustain the initiative and provide resources.
WHAT HASN’T WORKED SO WELL AND WHY?

- No program coordinator in place thus agency staff are solely responsible for coordination (added workload).

- Can be difficult to initiate and fund projects across borders.

- Must frequently remind management of importance of this work as regimes change.

- Very agency focused – advantages and disadvantages to this approach.

- Intermittent engagement of other agencies and NGO’s.
LESSONS: “MUST HAVES” & “MUST AVOID”

**Must haves:**
- Buy in from agencies and staff.
- Meaningful results = perceived value.
- Reasonably frequent communication.
- Resources.

**Must avoid:**
- Lack of tangible results and action will cause a slow painful death.
- Cannot only be information exchange, must be structured as something to achieve conservation from the beginning.