I welcome the opportunity to present the Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Policy. Formerly known as the Public Policy Research Institute, the Center represents one of the University’s most important vehicles to help citizens and officials shape public policy.

The University of Montana is the perfect location for a Center dedicated to natural resources and environmental policy. Montana contains the headwaters for the Columbia and Missouri Rivers. It is rich with federal lands, wildlife, and unparalleled recreational opportunities. Because of this abundance, many of our communities face tough decisions on land use and growth.

The Center is a useful resource for the American West and beyond, blending expertise in law, policy, and conflict resolution. It also offers a unique graduate program in Natural Resources Conflict Resolution.

We have great expectations that the Center will raise the visibility of the University as a world-class institution for research, education, and problem solving. I encourage you to learn more about the Center and to explore opportunities to work together.

President George M. Dennison
For nearly ten years, we have enjoyed a productive partnership with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy – the premier operating foundation in the USA dedicated exclusively to land policy.

Today we are promoting and supporting large-scale landscape conservation – including land and water systems – through research, education, and policy dialogues.

**National Initiative for Landscape Conservation**

On April 16-17, 2009, the Lincoln Institute and CNREP convened a national policy dialogue with leaders from the public, private, and nongovernmental sectors. The purpose of the gathering was to synthesize what we know about large-scale landscape conservation, highlight promising models, and develop a national framework to promote and support regional landscape conservation. The participants agreed to two recommendations:

1. Create a national framework to restore, protect, and sustain the most valuable lands and waters in the United States; and

2. Create a national alliance to promote and support landscape conservation.

The overarching goal of the proposed national framework for landscape conservation is to encourage management of our water, land, and biological diversity on a regional basis while addressing critical issues such as economic vitality and community resilience. The long-term vision is to create an interconnected network of urban, rural, working, and natural landscapes.

The proposed framework encourages “homegrown” regional initiatives to address issues such as climate change, energy independence, water security, community resilience, and land protection. Regional initiatives will compete in a national competition for federal matching funds and other support and must be consistent with national laws and policies. The large-scale landscape conservation strategies will be implemented through coordinated action among local, state, tribal, and federal governments; the private sector; and the non-governmental community.

To support landscape conservation initiatives – and to help build the capacity of regions to work across boundaries -- participants in the national policy dialogue recommend that the Lincoln Institute and CNREP convene a working group to create a national alliance (something like the Land Trust Alliance).
Resources

To help inform and invigorate natural resources and environmental policy, future issues of this newsletter will examine a particular policy issue and offer practical strategies on how to address such issues.

For example, topics may include strategies to link land and water decisions; alternative approaches to trans-boundary water governance; and/or web-based tools to inform, educate, and engage citizens in shaping policy.

In addition to these newsletters, we also publish a series of policy reports and articles in various journals and news media.

Learn more about these resources and ongoing projects on our website at www.cnrep.org/projects.

We are working with officials in the Obama Administration and others to move both of these recommendations forward.

For more information on landscape conservation, including the proposed framework and background documents that examine alternative models, go to www.cnrep.org/projects.

Crown of the Continent

To complement our work on national policy, we are working with diverse stakeholders in the Crown of the Continent. The future of this remarkable landscape – and the people that live and work in the region – relies in large measure on how well the roughly 100 government agencies, non-government organizations, and place-based partnerships work together as stewards of the region.

Each effort - whether regional (i.e., Crown-wide) or sub-regional - came into existence because of a government mandate or because a conservation or stewardship need/opportunity was not being addressed. And, each initiative continues to operate because it has mobilized the right people around a compelling purpose and has found sufficient financial support to continue its work.

While the efforts of each agency or initiative are important to conservation and stewardship in the Crown, no initiative works in a vacuum - all interact with at least some of the other initiatives. Based on this observation, leaders from the public, private, and nongovernment sectors have formed a Roundtable to share information, build relationships, and explore opportunities to work together on issues of common concern. The Lincoln Institute and CNREP convene and coordinate the Roundtable.

During the November 2008 meeting of the Roundtable, the participants developed a preliminary work plan that includes, among other items, mobilizing and engaging tribes and the business community. For more information on the Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent, go to www.crownroundtable.org.

Open House

Join us September 3, 2009, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. for our annual Open House. We are meeting in the President’s Room, Brantley Hall, The University of Montana.

The primary purpose of the open house is to allow alumni and faculty associated with the Natural Resources Conflict Resolution Program to meet new students interested in the program.

This year, we are delighted to welcome Paul Larmer, publisher of High Country News, as our keynote speaker. President George Dennison is graciously co-hosting the Open House.