

FOR RELEASE

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## **THE PRODUCTIVENESS OF COLLABORATION**

***Guest column submitted by U.S. Senator Mike Crapo***

In Aesop's fable of *the North Wind and the Sun*, the wind and sun try to settle a dispute regarding who was more powerful through two different techniques to remove a passing traveler's cloak. The North Wind chose the unsuccessful approach of blowing as hard as it could at the traveler. This caused the traveler to wrap the cloak more tightly around him. The sun, on the other hand, shined warmly on the traveler, and the traveler quickly shed his cloak.

Aesop's lesson is one that applies today, particularly when we look at policies directed at our environment and public lands. Rather than forcing one's will on others, which often causes conflicting sides to entrench, collaboration achieving locally-driven solutions is a far more effective means of persuasion and problem-solving. Collaboration does not mean compromising principles. It does, however, require earnest negotiation with respect for ideas from all perspectives and openness in moving forward.

One of the greatest benefits of collaboration is that it enables the achievement of win-win solutions that are better than the status quo for all stakeholders. Such solutions are better for the environment and the economy. These improved solutions are achieved because collaboration provides a forum to utilize local creativity and abilities to identify and institute lasting and successful objectives that do not forfeit individual values, but build on them. Through collaboration, participants can actually better achieve their objectives and in ways that benefit the entire community.

Collaboration is neither easy nor quick. Successful resolutions often require crafting local solutions to problems by including the full diversity of sentiments on the issues in any community or region. Through bringing all interests to the table and facing the contentious issues head on, productive relationships develop, common ground can be found and solutions are discovered. I am committed to collaborative problem-solving, because even though it is difficult, it works.

The Owyhee Initiative, started by the Owyhee County Commissioners approximately ten years ago, utilized a collaborative model to address a variety of challenges in Owyhee County. Those challenges included access issues, land and species conservation, grazing and other matters. What resulted was a landmark legislative compromise, and work continues with the Owyhee Initiative Board of Directors to implement all facets of the agreement. This year, the Boise City Club honored the Owyhee Initiative and the considerable work that went into it with the 2011 Dottie and Ed Stimpson Award for exemplifying the spirit of civil discourse by bringing together people with diverse viewpoints to discuss complex issues in a civil manner, with the intent of finding mutually agreeable solutions. Work also continues to advance the efforts of the Clearwater Basin Collaborative (CBC), an advisory group I helped establish more than three years ago to find solutions to contentious land management and wildlife issues in Idaho's Clearwater Basin. The CBC has spawned new discussions of job creation through timber harvesting and landscape improvements, which could benefit habitat for elk, fish and other wildlife.

I am honored to be part of these collaborative processes, through which I have gained a broader understanding of successful collaboration. These lessons and examples are instrumental as we consider the natural resources challenges met and those yet to address. Collaboration can also be helpful in solving a variety of other challenges involving endangered species preservation, water conflicts, land usage and much more. Working together we can create long-lasting, workable solutions to environmental and public lands management challenges.

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