

The Prairie Conservation Forum Newsletter

Issue Number 7—Fall 2010

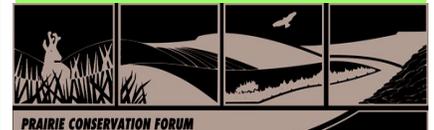


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PCF Summer and Fall Tours

Well, as most of you will have experienced, spring in Southern Alberta this year was very wet! Because of this, we had to reschedule the PCF spring tour for the end of July. Luckily, the day of the tour was sunny and hot and we had a fantastic day. Our first stop was at the Jefferson Conservation Pasture near Cardston, AB, where Morgan Stromsmoe, with Ducks Unlimited, showed us one of their conservation pastures and wetlands associated with it. In the afternoon, we travelled to Sandstone Ranch (on the Milk River Ridge), where Dana Blouin, with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, gave us an overview of the process they (and their partners) went through to acquire the ranch and some of their learning experiences forming a grazing co-op and starting a credit program. Francois Blouin and Brad Downey, both working on the MULTISAR program, let us know what species at risk are on the property and how MULTISAR plans to manage them. Unfortunately, the weather did not hold up for the fall tour, and it was a very wet day at Dinosaur Provincial Park. As a result, the tour only went in the morning. Despite the weather, however, we still got to see a bit of the preserve, and we think we will definitely have to come back soon to fully appreciate it. Thank-you to all of the tour leaders for making PCF tours a success!



Our Vision:

To conserve the biological diversity of Alberta's native prairie ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations.

Our Goals:

Research: Enhance the information base for Alberta's native prairie and parkland landscapes.

Stewardship: Conserve Alberta's native prairie and parkland landscapes.

Education: Increase awareness and importance of Alberta's native prairie and parkland ecosystems.

PCF Grasslands Appreciation Event, 2010

Katheryn Taylor, PCF Coordinator

The PCF Education Committee was granted some money by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development to develop a grasslands appreciation event for Albertans. The event is meant to be geared towards educating the general public about grasslands and giving them a sense of place. This year, 2010, was slated to be the pilot project for a grasslands appreciation event that we would like to see expanded over Southern Alberta in future years. As the education committee began to think about where this event should take place, what should be included in the event, and how we should go about preparing for it, an opportunity to partner with the Helen Schuler Nature Center on their community mapping project was brought to our attention. The purpose of this project was to give participants the opportunity to experience diverse land-use perspectives in Southern Alberta first-hand, form a better understanding of grassland ecosystems and their inherent biodiversity, explore the challenges of balancing economic, social and environmental needs within a community, and to discover how to portray and share their values in creative, collaborative maps. We thought that the fit between this program and our own goals for a grasslands appreciation event was excellent, and because the Nature Center has people trained to deliver nature programs to the public, it was an excellent opportunity for us to become involved.



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The Helen Schuler Nature Center hosted six different groups for the community mapping projects over the course of the spring and summer. Each group went on two-day field trips — one day was spent within City of Lethbridge parks (Indian Battle Park and Cottonwood Park), and one day was spent at the Waterton Park Front with a stop at the wetlands in Magrath. Two of the groups were grade 7 school groups, two were community groups, one group was for employees of the Weston grocery stores in Lethbridge and Cardston (a major sponsor of this project), and the last was a group of 10 junior foresters from the Blood Reserve that were specifically chosen by the PCF for our grasslands appreciation event. The PCF education committee was very keen on taking one group for the mapping

project so that we could focus primarily on the grasslands. In addition to the interactive activities that the Nature Center had developed for this project, we invited speakers from the Alberta Conservation Association (Mike Uchikura), MULTISAR (Francois Blouin), Cows and Fish (Nicole Bach), and Waterton Lakes National Park (Justin McKeown) to speak to our group and share their knowledge of the grasslands with them. Having two full days with the participants really gave us the opportunity to showcase the prairies and some of the different landscapes within it, as well as to give them the chance to really get immersed in it by looking more closely at their surroundings. One thing that the participants of our group were asked to do was take as many photographs as they could. These photos, as well as the other work they did (such as writing down quotes from speakers, drawing exercises, writing exercises, etc.) have been compiled into a multi-media program that the PCF can showcase on our website. To see the video, please go to: <http://www.lethbridge.ca/home/City+Hall/Departments/Helen+Schuler+Nature+Centre/Whats+New/Whats+New.htm>. The maps created by all of the participants of this project were displayed in community-wide exhibits throughout September and October in Lethbridge.



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Thank-you to the sponsors of this project — we think the project was a great success and we have plans to continue with it in the future!

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A New Prairie Conservation Action Plan, 2011-2015

The Alberta Prairie Conservation Action Plan (PCAP) is in the process of being updated. The current PCAP is a five year plan which will expire at the end of 2010. The new Plan will cover the next five year period from 2011 – 2015, on prairie and parkland landscapes in Alberta (Map 1).

Historically, the PCAP has had a focus on three broad goals (Research, Education and Stewardship) with a number of objectives that were often shared or led by member organizations. However, the Prairie Conservation Forum (PCF) is proposing a notable shift in how the PCAP is structured and implemented. More specifically, the PCAP will focus on achieving three long term outcomes:

1. **Maintain Large Native Prairie and Parkland Landscapes**
2. **Conserve Connecting Corridors for Biodiversity**
3. **Sustain Disconnected Native Habitats**

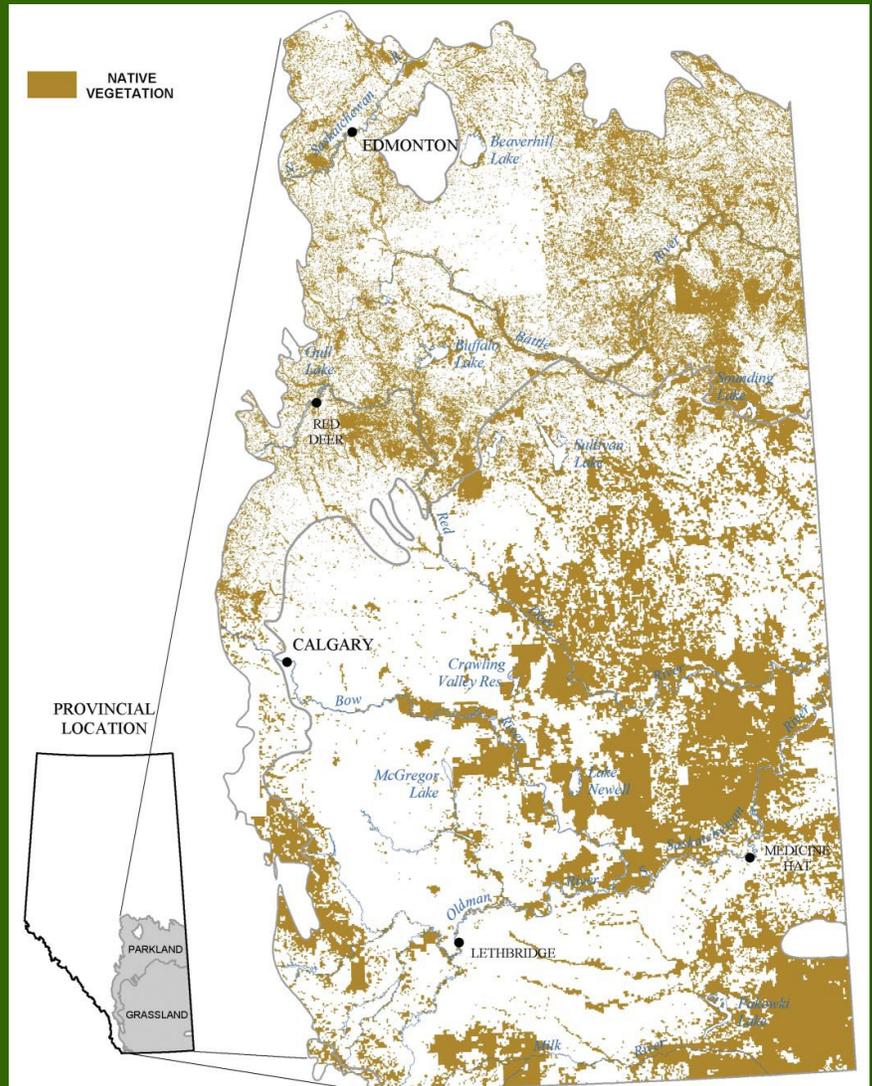
The PCAP will reflect activities that are not generally being delivered by others and, consequently, the PCF will need to play a more active role in implementing the Plan. As such, member organizations will be encouraged to contribute to the PCAP. Five Strategies and associated Activities have been identified to advance these Outcomes. The Strategies include:

1. **Partnerships, Engagement and Awareness**
2. **Connect People to Information**
3. **Map and Prioritize Target Areas**
4. **Conservation Incentives**
5. **Building Capacity of the PCF**

The new PCAP will maintain a similar Vision from past PCAPs and the traditional goals (Research, Education and Stewardship) will be reflected in the Mission of the PCF. Guiding Principles have been enhanced to provide greater clarity on how the PCF will operate in achieving the Outcomes.

A draft PCAP will be available for review and comment by member organizations in December. A final PCAP will be presented to the PCF meeting in January for approval by the membership. Contributions by member organizations to cover the cost of printing the new PCAP will also be required.

If you have any questions concerning the new PCAP, please contact Katheryn Taylor at info@albertapcf.org



Base Data provided by Spatial Data Warehouse Ltd.
Vegetation Data source: Native Prairie Vegetation Inventory (1991-1993) - Grassland Natural Region / Foothills Parkland Natural Subregion, Central Parkland Native Vegetation v. 1.2 (2002-2004) - Central Parkland Natural Subregion
Produced by Resource Information Unit, Resource Information Management Branch, Strategic Corporate Services, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Southeast Region, Lethbridge, January 2006.
The Minister and the Crown provides this information without warranty or representation as to any matter including but not limited to whether the data / information is correct, accurate or free from error, defect, danger, or hazard and whether it is otherwise useful or suitable for any use the user may make of it.
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In the News

New Parks Act balances conservation and recreation: The Alberta government is updating the legislation that guides the management of the Alberta Parks system. Aligned with Alberta's Plan for Parks and Land-use Framework, the proposed legislation will simplify the parks classification system into two categories, provincial parks and heritage rangelands. Subsequent zoning in provincial parks will specify how visitors use various areas of each park, whether for conservation, recreation or a combination of both. Zones in provincial parks would be established based on the conservation and recreation value of the land as well as current practices, and on input from additional consultation next year. For more information, please go to: <http://alberta.ca/acn/201011/2945018495AAD-CBEA-C768-02BADBEB3060F590.html>



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New recreational activities in National Parks, National Historic Sites and National Marine Conservation Areas: Over the past two years, five activities have been assessed at the national level that could soon become part of the national park experience. These activities include mountain biking, traction kiting (kite-surfing, kite-boarding), guided interpreted tours (including canopy walks, zip lines, via ferrata, and the elements of aerial parks), community gardens, and hang gliding and paragliding. Banff and Yoho National Parks are the first to be considering adding via ferrata, mountain paths with fixed cables, stemples, ladders, and bridges, to their trail systems. Although these activities are approved at the national level, it does not mean they will be offered at all national parks. Rather, it is up to the individual parks to conduct local assessments of these activities to determine whether the activity can be offered in a specific park or site. Please see http://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/cp-nr/release_e.asp?bgid=1425&andorl=bg for more information.

Province seeks input on proposed land exchange at Kananaskis area park

Albertans are invited to provide feedback on a proposed land exchange among Bow Valley Wildland Provincial Park, the Government of Alberta and the Municipal District of Bighorn. The proposal to exchange land adjacent to the Dead Man's Flats community, within the Municipal District of Bighorn, with public lands and a portion of the Bow Valley Wildland Provincial Park will allow the provincial park to preserve more ecologically significant land along the Bow River. This exchange would allow for better protection of an important wildlife corridor. The MD of Bighorn would receive lands that have been previously disturbed and are deemed to be of less ecological value. As part of the *Plan for Parks*, the Government of Alberta has committed to ensuring healthy ecosystems and environments, and providing quality park experiences for all Albertans. The proposed land exchange is considered to be mutually beneficial to Bow Valley Wildland Provincial Park and the MD of Bighorn. Albertans are invited to review the proposal and comment online at www.albertaparks.ca/consult. Comments will also be accepted by mail at: Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation, 2nd floor, Oxbridge Place



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Thank-you to our contributing partners:



Government of Alberta



If you have any comments, questions or ideas, please contact the PCF Coordinator at:

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www.albertapcf.org