

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



■ **Joel Nicholson**  
**AB Environment and Parks, Fish and Wildlife Management**

*Transboundary Grasslands Workshop, Elkwater, AB January 19-20, 2016*



# TRANS-BOUNDARY WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

- 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.



*Transboundary Grasslands Workshop,  
Elkwater, AB January 19-20, 2016*



# WHAT HAS WORKED WELL AND WHY?

- ***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.***



*Transboundary Grasslands Workshop,  
Elkwater, AB January 19-20, 2016*



# 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.



*Transboundary Grasslands Workshop,  
Elkwater, AB January 19-20, 2016*



# 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.



*Transboundary Grasslands Workshop,  
Elkwater, AB January 19-20, 2016*

