

4th Annual Transboundary Grasslands Partnership Workshop Summary Report

Connecting the Dots

Connect

Participants were given the opportunity to explore and learn about the cultural significance of Writing on Stone Provincial Park.

Create

Working sessions had participants mark their conservation efforts on maps to identify areas of overlap and opportunities for collaboration.

Enhance

Presenters shared information on sustaining strong partnerships, state of the prairie and drought resiliency.



Lethbridge, AB

December 3-5, 2018

Working collaboratively to conserve and enhance native grassland landscapes.

The Transboundary Grasslands Partnership workshops have made a full circle after the first initial workshop beginning in Elkwater, Alberta in 2016, Swift Current, Saskatchewan in 2017 and Glasgow, Montana in January of 2018; the 4th workshop was held in Lethbridge, Alberta on December 3-5th, 2018.

The 4th workshop kicked off a little differently, with an optional field tour out to Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. Writing-on-Stone Provincial/Áísínai'pi Park is located within the traditional territory of the Blackfoot People, Treaty 7 First Nations, 1.5 hours southeast of Lethbridge.

John Ross, a local rancher whose family settled the area in 1885; welcomed participants from Alberta, Montana and Saskatchewan. Laura Wills, a longstanding local producer walked participants through the history of the area and explained why the Milk River canyon has been significant culturally to First Nations and agriculturally to settlers and ranchers. Endurance and resilience was and continues to be key to survival in the area.



Aaron Domes with Alberta Environment and Parks gave participants the history of the Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. Field tour participants were split into two groups and were treated to a guided tour of the restricted area of the park. Under a beautiful wintery afternoon, participants observed and were told stories about the petroglyphs and pictographs depicting adventures from long ago.



Transboundary Grasslands Partnership (TGP): Who are we?

The TGP is a partnership comprised of agency and non-agency members from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Montana.

Terms of reference and a work plan, along with direction from the annual workshop help to drive the actions of the partnership.

Core members commit to monthly conference calls where discussion is focused around work plan objectives, updates, opportunities for collaboration and the annual workshop.



Bill Dolan, representing the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association highlighted that in a partnership; “outcomes need to be driven by planning and opportunities” and that “strong commitment to act is contagious”.

Travis Plaited Hair from the Blood Tribe and Sik-Ooh-Kotoki Friendship Society welcomed participants on December 4th to the traditional territory of the Blackfoot people and Treaty 7 lands. Travis shared a traditional prayer bringing learning, sharing and safe travels to participants.

Linda Cerney, Alberta Environment and Parks, current chairperson of the Transboundary Grasslands Partnership provided a welcome and background of the partnership and previous workshops.

[Bill Dolan from the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association](#), with his strong and longstanding background in transboundary partnership, the Crown Managers Partnership; shared his wisdom and the research of Jen Thompson on how to sustain a transboundary partnership. Key messages from Bill’s presentation include: make sure that your organizations’ mandate reflects the participants interests, leadership provided by many individuals is important and that trust takes time to put in place but seconds to lose.

Livio Fent, retired from Alberta Environment and Parks but still very active in prairie conservation, shared his group efforts and work on an Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum initiative [to evaluate native cover for grasslands and parkland regions in Alberta and quantify the change and remaining native cover](#). The Alberta State of the Prairie key findings show that there is 48% of native grassland cover in the grasslands natural region remaining, with the biggest losses occurring on the Blood Reserve. The Parkland region has seen the greatest loss in native

cover in counties around Calgary and Edmonton. The largest amounts of native cover can be found on private land.

[Anne Smith from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada](#) walked participants through the history of remote sensing. Anne relayed how remote sensing is currently being used in the environmental field and possible applications including: mapping grassland spatial extent and changes over time; estimating productivity and mapping invasive species.

On the afternoon of December 4th participants listened to updates given from each of the transboundary jurisdictions; [Alberta](#), [Saskatchewan](#) and [Montana](#). In addition, Tribes and First Nation participants provided an update on their grassland conservation efforts.

[MultiSAR, an Alberta program focused on taking a landscape approach to multi-species at risk](#) conservation in the grassland, was showcased at the end of the day. Katheryn Taylor and Kristen Rumbolt-Miller highlighted some of the work that has been completed on the OneFour property in the Milk River Watershed.

[Megan Van Emon travelled from Montana State University](#) to present her research on Rangeland Drought Resilience. The long-term goals of the project are to: measure resilience of the rangeland; assess grazing strategies on long-term sustainability and rangeland resilience and provide relevant information and tools for land managers.



Participants stuck around to socialize and to enjoy a delicious dinner. Dan Johnson, a very enthusiastic naturalist from the University of Lethbridge shared his passion of the insect world and took participants through a very photographic tour of the “Jungle in the Grass”.

The final day of the workshop required input from participants as they were asked to share their knowledge during three sessions including: an organizational and grasslands mapping session; storytelling, educational tools and social media and stewardship tools and voluntary project incentives.

During the organizational and grasslands mapping session participants filled out a worksheet and used markers to indicate on large maps posted on the walls of the venue where they are working on the landscape. The information collected at the workshop is being compiled and will be used to create a directory of members, key work, location and help identify gaps in partner membership.

Sharing information is an important piece of every organizations success so it was determined that a session on storytelling, education and social media tools was needed. The objective of the

session was to identify the different educational tools being used across organizations and jurisdictions. The goal of the session was to create an inventory of what educational tools people are using, how different tools target different audiences and determine if there is common messaging to focus on.

The final session asked partners to identify the various stewardship tools they are using for grasslands conservation. It gave a better understanding of the common and rare tools in use and may help connect partners to get information on these tools and possibly explore new ones.

Information collected during the workshop sessions is being compiled and will be shared with participants and across a wider audience via the Transboundary Grasslands Partnership webpage as the summaries and products are completed.

We would like to thank all participants for their support and willingness to continue to collaborate on transboundary grasslands conservation.

See you at our next workshop in Saskatchewan in 2020!

Thank you to all of the partners who helped in bringing the 4th Annual TGP workshop together:
 Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum, Nature Conservancy Canada, Milk River Watershed Council Canada, Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan and World Wildlife Fund.