



PRAIRIE CONSERVATION FORUM



Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum

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Annual Report

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For more information about the Prairie Conservation Forum, contact:

**Prairie Conservation Forum Coordinator
c/o Alberta Environment
Southern Region
2nd Floor, Provincial Building
200 – 5th Avenue South
LETHBRIDGE, Alberta T1J 4L1
E-mail: info@albertapcf.org**

Photography credits:

Front Cover — Milk River; Katheryn Taylor
This Page — Sweet Grass Hills; Katheryn Taylor
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<http://www.albertapcf.org>



Prairie Conservation Forum Vision

The biological diversity of native prairie and parkland ecosystems is secure under thoughtful and committed stewardship of all Albertans.

Guiding Principles

1. Management responsibilities for native prairie and parkland fall primarily on public agencies (i.e., Federal, Provincial and Local Governments), First Nations and private landowners. The PCF will only support and facilitate discussions concerning actions that contribute positively to the Vision and Mission of the PCF.
2. The PCF will facilitate networking, information exchange and discussion amongst member organizations and with other jurisdictions outside of Alberta.
3. Partnership activities are based on the belief that the social and economic benefits which are derived from prairie and parkland ecosystems are dependent on the ecological health of these systems. Therefore, management strategies will be promoted that ensure the ongoing health of these ecosystems.
4. The PCF Partnership draws together diverse opinions and approaches to ecosystem management. To best ensure the development of collaborative and effective solutions, the Partnership will interact in a manner that is respectful of that diversity.
5. PCF members will strive to implement PCF programs and activities in their respective organizations in support of the PCF Vision.
6. The Vision can only be achieved by the efforts of many, including the PCF itself and its member organizations, accompanied by effective working relationships with others who share the Vision.
7. The PCF supports the equitable sharing of social and economic costs and the benefits of maintaining native biodiversity and ecological services among all segments of society.

Outcomes

Maintain Large Native Prairie and Parkland Landscapes. The existence of intact and fully functioning native prairie and parkland landscapes in Alberta are the best guarantor of future regional biodiversity and environmental quality.

Conserve Connecting Corridors for Biodiversity. Habitat connectivity is essential to maintain native biodiversity and ecosystem function. The conservation and restoration of important corridors will help to maintain functional native prairie and parkland landscapes.

Protect Isolated Native Habitats. Within fragmented landscapes there exist small, isolated pockets of ecological refugia that may be as important for native biodiversity conservation as larger prairie and parkland landscapes. These need to be identified, studied, and possibly protected.

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*"Take care of the land and it will take care of you"*

*~A.E. Cross*

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Message from the Chair

I must apologize to all the members as I am writing this very late this year, and it will be brief. It was another year with the uncertainties surrounding covid: can we meet in-person or does it have to be virtual? Will anyone show if it is virtual? or will they show if we have it in-person? The great thing about the PCF membership is that we had attendees join events either way, so we did not have to sacrifice the meetings.

When the Board met in the spring to set the budget we were looking at mostly just keeping the lights on without doing much in the way of extra projects. That changed when we received a large funding grant from ECCC, which gave the committees the resources to work on their workplans for the year. The board also had to weigh the risks around hosting the PCESC in 2022 due to the chance that everything could be cancelled for covid reasons. Given the uncertainties at the time, the board eventually decided to push the conference back for one year to 2023.

I would like to thank all the Board of Directors (those stepping down, returning and new) for all the time and energy they put into the Prairie Conservation Forum. It would not exist without their dedication to the survival of the prairies. And last but not least, thank you to our coordinators Katheryn Taylor and Sasha Harriott for all their work keeping all the committees and the board moving forward on the PCAP.

Neal Wilson
PCF Chair 2021-2022



PCF Meetings and Tours

The PCF meetings in 2021 and 2022 were a mix of online and in-person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Spring meeting was held online on June 17, 2021 and included updates on PCF board and committee work as well as a member profile on the Kainai linnii Remediation project given by Kansie Fox, Justin Bruised Head and Alvin First Rider from the Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association, Blood Tribe Land Management Protection Division.

The fall meeting was held in-person, and outside, on September 15, 2021 at the Helen Schuler Nature Centre in Lethbridge. Coreen Putman (HSNC) gave us a welcome and showed us some of the projects they have been working on. After PCF committee updates, Marilyn Neville (Gramineae Services Inc) and Jackie Cardinal (City of Lethbridge) talked about the targeted grazing program in Lethbridge and took members for a tour of Indian Battle Park to show us improvements in leafy spurge numbers where goat grazing had occurred. The shepherd, along with his goats, were also on-site so that members could ask him questions as well. It was nice to see everyone in-person again!



The AGM was held in an online format once again on January 20, 2022. We went through the financial update, PCF committee updates, board elections and member updates. A presentation by Graham Dixon on Prairie Conservation at the Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo gave members the opportunity to hear about some of the programs the Calgary Zoo is working on to further prairie conservation in Alberta.

The online meetings were recorded and can be found on the PCF website: www.albertapcf.org.

Change Analysis: State of the Prairie

With the help of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) funding, the State of the Prairie committee was able to do a few things to promote the value of native prairie in Alberta in 2021-2022. The first project was to produce a short video featuring Alberta's grasslands and highlight two PCF members, Special Areas and the MD of Taber, to tell their story as to why they value native prairie and what it does for them. The second project was to hold a workshop for municipalities on how they can use the state of the prairie results and the interactive web map. The third was to finish up the Occasional Paper 'The State of Alberta's Prairie and Parkland: Implications and Opportunities' and print some hard copies for sharing. The video, occasional paper and interactive map can be found on the PCF website at: <https://www.albertapcf.org/state-of-the-prairie>.

Alberta Range Stewardship Course

The PCF collaboratively delivers an annual Range Stewardship Course for ranchers and land stewards that is provincial in focus and local in delivery. For the past two years this course has been delivered online in partnership with the Southern Alberta Grazing School for Women. The course contains key range management principles and information that includes presentations and discussion around regional and local issues. The field portion of the course is the most favored among participants and is where firsthand knowledge from experts is transferred to participants through range and riparian health assessments, plant identification and best management practices. The organizing committee is looking forward to bringing this course back to the field in 2022.

Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference

The core committee for the 2022 PCESC conference was struck in 2019, however, due to COVID, work did not really begin until the fall of 2021. At this time, the decision was made to host the conference in 2023 at the Calgary Zoo from February 21-24. Sub-committees were formed and include: sponsorship committee, program committee, communications committee, awards and social committee, and logistics and registration committee. A membership call was put out for these committees and all of these committees chose a chair and have been meeting throughout 2021-2022. A theme was also chosen for the conference: Prairie Collaboration, Connection, and Conservation (PC3).

Isolated Native Habitats Committee

The isolated native habitats committee is a new committee that started up in the spring of 2021. This committee was formed to address Outcome 3 in the 2021-2025 PCAP: Protect Isolated Native Habitats. The goals for this committee, as outlined in the PCAP, are:

Approach 1: Define 'isolated' habitats/fragments.

Action: conduct a literature review to define isolated native prairie habitat in Alberta for native prairie obligates or species at risk.

Status: a draft literature review has been completed and a definition for what isolated habitats are has been formulated. The PCAP prioritizes grassland obligate species or species that are considered under various provincial or national wildlife or species at risk legislation due to their population status. A prioritization matrix was developed to help refine the resulting large list of species to a number that the PCF can focus on. Those criteria included: endemism to grasslands, provincial rank and status, federal rank and status, unique needs or specialized relationships, and taxonomic family. This report, including the species lists, will be posted to the PCF website when completed.

Approach 2: Identify locations of isolated native prairie habitats.

Action: utilize existing GIS datasets held by PCF member organizations to confirm and determine locations and sizes of isolated habitat fragments.

Status: work has not yet begun on this action, however, the committee is developing an RFP to begin mapping locations and sizes of habitats.

Approach 3: identify the value or values of these isolated parcels.

Action: establish a valuation system based on input from the membership, partners and best available information.

Status: work has not yet started on this approach. This will likely begin in 2023.

Transboundary Grasslands Partnership

Collaboration and partnerships are the most important tools that the PCF has, and we have relied on these tools for all of our achievements over more than 30 years. These partnerships are now reaching across international borders through the work of our Transboundary Grasslands Partnership. Work of the Transboundary Grasslands Partnership started in 2016 and has been focused on working collaboratively to sustain healthy transboundary native biodiversity and supporting grasslands ecosystems and communities ever since. The partnership realizes its biggest strength through continued communication across jurisdictions and with all partners including all levels of government in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Montana, non-government organizations, landowners, Tribes and First Nations and academia.



The 2021 TGP Workshop was held online over the course of three mornings on October 19 – 21, 2021. The workshop theme was Global Vision: Local Action and included presentations from: Central Grasslands Roadmap, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, Canadian Wildlife Service, University of Nebraska, Ranchers' Stewardship Alliance, South of the Divide Conservation Action Program, Western Stock Growers' Association, World Wildlife Fund, Northern Great Plains Program, Jonny BearCub Stiffarm, Fort Peck Tribes, Nature Conservancy of Canada, and Blood Tribe Land Management.

Connecting Corridors Committee

A key outcome listed in the PCAP is to conserve connecting corridors for biodiversity. To help guide decisions, planning and management so that connectivity is maintained, work was started on a mapping tool and centralized location for geospatial information, and is set to be completed by April 2022. The envisioned tool will help guide users, including land use planners, to recognize high value connectivity areas that should be avoided or show where appropriate mitigative measures can be used in development considerations.

MULTISAR

MULTISAR (multiple species at risk) is a program focused on multi-species conservation at the landscape level that promotes stewardship through voluntary participation of landholders on both Crown and private lands. MULTISAR defines species at risk as those with a provincial general status of At Risk, May Be At Risk or Sensitive. The program is a collaborative effort among landholders, the Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Environment and Parks, the Prairie Conservation Forum, Cows and Fish, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Alberta Beef Producers, the Canadian Round Table for Sustainable Beef and Environment and Climate Change Canada.

The habitat conservation program includes the development of detailed habitat conservation strategies (HCSs) in the Milk River and South Saskatchewan watersheds of southern Alberta, as well as the more compact species at risk conservation plans (SARC plans) and habitat management plans (HMPs) delivered throughout the Grassland Natural Region.

In 2021–2022, a new HCS was developed for six ranches totalling approximately 11 532 acres. MULTISAR also completed two HMPs on 2480 acres of land within our priority areas. Fifty-one habitat enhancement projects were developed to improve the habitat of key wildlife species on HCS and HMP properties. These include the installation and implementation of artificial habitat structures, wildlife friendly fencing, portable electric fencing, portable and upland watering units, tree protection, riparian protection, shrub planting, weed control, native grassland restoration, and grazing management tools.

No SARC assessments were completed in 2021-2022, ergo no SARC plans were developed. No beneficial management plan (BMP) assessments were delivered this year as no landholders were contacted or referred to MULTISAR. MULTISAR will continue to provide SARC plans and BMP assessments and promote them as a tool for habitat improvements for species of interest.

Limitations imposed by COVID-19 on the education, outreach and awareness program continued throughout 2021-2022. In-person events continued to be limited and, in some instances, moved to online platforms. The Southern Alberta Grazing School for Women webinar series and other online presentations were attended by 246 people. Communication material produced included one issue of MULTISAR's *Grassland Gazette* newsletter, which was distributed to 159 contacts. Social media continues to be a means to share information related to MULTISAR. In 2021-2022 MULTISAR posted 79 tweets through Twitter and 57 posts on Facebook to engage the public. MULTISAR maintained direct contact with landowners, other organizations, and government agencies throughout the year with over 300 conversations (email, text, phone calls, or in-person) with landowners and over 142 conversations with government and non-government organizations.



Under the research and monitoring program, MULTISAR continued implementing its monitoring and evaluation protocol to assess the directionality of habitat improvements and management changes and the effectiveness of its HCSs. In 2021 five MULTISAR HCS ranches were reassessed. Roughly 50 habitat enhancement projects on participating HCS ranches were monitored in 2021 to determine whether enhancements were achieving their objectives. Enhancements monitored include restoration sites, artificial nesting platforms, weed control, watering sites, tree protection, wildlife friendly fencing, and grazing management tools.

MULTISAR continues to compile wildlife observation and vegetation assessment data that it has been accumulating since its first HCS. In 2022, MULTISAR will also continue to focus on determining inferences between species at risk occurrences and habitat metrics.

MULTISAR will strive to promote beneficial management practices recommendations to improve and maximize habitat quality for species at risk.

Financial Report

Statement of Operations and Net Assets (Deficiency)

March 31, 2022

Revenue	2022	2021
Environment and Climate Change Canada	\$ 67,358	\$ —
Alberta Environment and Parks	10,000	10,000
Casino	8,321	54,111
Administration—Multisar	7,692	7,692
Range Stewardship Workshop	4,539	1,281
Donations	442	2,865
Interest Income	158	88
Transboundary Grasslands Workshop	25	—
Special Areas Board	—	5,000
Alberta Conservation Association	—	2,500
Total	\$ 98,535	\$ 83,537
Expenses		
Special Projects	\$ 55,905	\$ 8,996
Coordinator contract and expenses	41,351	46,063
Meeting Expense	5,788	—
Honorariums	5,000	—
Professional Fees	3,150	3,050
Insurance	2,116	1,992
Office	1,591	3,565
Website	403	7,866
Total	115,304	71,532
Excess (deficiency) of Revenue over Expenses	\$(16,769)	\$ 12,005

Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2022

Assets	2022	2021
Cash	\$ 217,770	\$ 176,598
Grant receivable	19,288	—
Funds held in trust—2023 PCESC Conference	15,622	—
GST receivable	10,213	9,763
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Due to Multisar	\$ 11,663	\$ 8,190
Funds held in trust — 2023 PCESC Conference	15,622	—
Deferred Revenue	81,355	7,149
Net Assets		
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$ 4,253	\$ 21,022
Contingency Reserve	150,000	150,000
Total	\$ 262,893	\$ 186,361

Statement of Changes in Net Assets

March 31, 2022

	Unrestricted	Internally Restricted	Total 2022	Total 2021
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 21,022	\$ 150,000	\$ 171,022	\$159,017
(Deficiency) Excess of Revenue Over Expenditures	\$ (16,769)	—	\$ (16,769)	\$ 12,005
Balance, end of year	\$ 4,253	\$ 150,000	\$ 154,253	\$171,022

PCF Board of Directors

Neal Wilson — Chair. Neal Wilson grew up in southern Saskatchewan and attended the U of S receiving his degree in Agriculture in 1995. He worked for various ranches in Southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba. He then worked for the Prairie Conservation Action Plan, Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation and The Nature Conservancy of Canada working with landowners to develop grazing plans with the strategy of helping them conserve their native prairie. He has managed with Antelope Creek Ranch with his wife Shannon for the past 14 years.

Mark Kavanagh — Vice-Chair. Consultant.

Brian Peers — Treasurer. Brian Peers works for the M.D. of Taber in his role as the Director of Municipal Lands Planning and Development where he manages the municipalities' inventory of owned lands, primarily native prairie as well as oversees the planning, development, and economic development functions at the MD of Taber. Brian received his Bachelor of Science from the University of Montana in Wildlife Biology.

Brandy Downey — Board Member. Brandy is the Senior Species At Risk Biologist in Lethbridge for Alberta Environment and Parks, Fish and Wildlife Management. Brandy has been a member of the MULTISAR team since 2003 and currently assists AEP and the PCF in managing the program, which works collaboratively with several NGO's, government agencies, and individuals to conserve species at risk in the Grassland Natural Region of Alberta. Unrelated to her work roles, Brandy enjoys hiking and exploring the outdoors with her family.

Christyann Olson — Board Member. Christyann was the Executive Director for the Alberta Wilderness Association for 22 years and has recently retired. She is passionate about our society's responsibility to ensure the health and legacy of wilderness for generations to come. Christyann takes every possible opportunity to enjoy Alberta's wilderness and share her enthusiasm with others. Although her roots are in the Crowsnest Pass, Christyann has lived in and explored much of Alberta including many of its wild places by foot, canoe, and occasionally by horse.

Lindsye Murfin — Board Member. Lindsye is the general manager of the Western Stock Growers' Association, a beef industry producer advocacy group with a focus on policy, land use and property rights. She is driven by her passion for the success and sustainability of the agriculture industry with a particular interest in leveraging the environmental benefits of agricultural systems. Two of her favourite things are logic and common sense. Lindsye has strong roots in both crop and livestock agriculture and holds a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. Outside of working, she finds joy in spending time with her family in the outdoors and is an avid foodie who has yet to meet a caramel dessert she can refuse.

Chelsea Kraus — Board Member. Chelsea was raised on a mixed irrigation family farm near Taber, Alberta where she spent her formative years. When her family moved to farm in Saskatchewan, she attended the University of Saskatchewan and obtained her BSA in 2011. She is now working as an environmental scientist for Trace Associates Inc. in Lethbridge where her work primarily consists of reclaiming disturbances from oil & gas production across Alberta.

Robert Oakley — Board Member. Robert is a Rangeland Agrologist in Lethbridge for Alberta Environment and Parks. He grew up in the lake country of west central Alberta and SW Manitoba/NW Ontario, though he has built an appreciation for the prairies and grasslands through his work as a Rangeland Agrologist. He graduated from the University of Alberta in 2009 with a degree in Environmental and Conservation Sciences with a double major in Conservation Biology and Wildlife and Rangeland Resource Management. Though the grassland is now his home; Robert still enjoys the forests and lakes of the mountains and Canadian shield in his spare time.

Peg Strankman — Board Member. Raised on a mixed cattle and grain operation in Special Areas, Alberta, Peg Strankman has worked toward landscape resilience in a variety of roles. She enjoys the challenge of communicating rural and urban values between the solitudes. Supporting initiatives bringing the value of ecological services and biodiversity to rural livestock producers domestically and internationally occupy her time.

Len Wolstenholme — Board Member. Len is Senior Advisor, External Relations for the Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo. His role is to advise and assist the executive and leadership teams to develop and sustain positive and effective relationships with municipal, provincial and federal government decision-makers and decision-influencers, and with other conservation NGO's. He currently guides his organization's efforts to develop and nurture First Nations outreach and reconciliation. He and his organization are committed to the preservation and recovery of plant and animal species at risk and Len leads development and negotiation of major government grants for both species at risk and capital projects.

Rylee Hewitt — Board Member. Southern Alberta Land Trust Society. Rylee was born and raised on the Rafter T Ranch in southeast Alberta. She holds a diploma in Renewable Resource Management from Lethbridge College, and a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Environmental Studies from the University of Lethbridge. Rylee's main role with SALTS is to oversee the stewardship and monitoring of SALT's conservation easements. She has been involved with private land conservation for nearly 10 years. Rylee has a commercial black angus cow/calf operation near Buffalo, Alberta, where she ranches with her husband and two children.

Bryanne Aylward — Board Member.

Alvin First Rider — Board Member. Blood Tribe Land Management.

Tammy MacMillan — Board Member. Hanna Business Hub.



Recognition of PCF Supporters

Funding and support is critical for on the ground action towards prairie and parkland conservation, as well for maintaining the capacity of the PCF coordinators. Funding is also used for printing, meeting venues and meals, transportation and other operational expenses. We would like to thank our funding partners of 2020-2021 for their commitment to prairie and parkland conservation as without them, we wouldn't be the society we are today.

Alberta Environment and Parks (grants for PCF and MULTISAR)
Nature Conservancy of Canada

And a special thanks to individuals that make donations to the PCF out of their own pockets:
Alan Dodd

We would also like to thank:

Members who incur expenses, without reimbursement, while attending PCF meetings.

Those individuals who made themselves available to serve as tour guides on PCF field trips and those that gave presentations to PCF members at meetings.

Chairpersons of PCF committees who provide valued leadership and committee members who assume a heavier workload to fulfill action recommendations contained in the PCAP.

Members that volunteer at PCF casinos.

We will inevitably have failed to identify the generous contributions of some individuals and organizations in this section. We apologize for any oversight on our part.



PCF Coordinators

Katheryn Taylor — Coordinator. Katheryn obtained her MSc in biology from the University of Lethbridge in 2003 and has worked on many wildlife and vegetation research projects on the prairies, including work such as 'the effects of cattle grazing on riparian birds' and 'the effects of river damming on riparian birds and vegetation'. She also did some work with the Cows and Fish Program, conducting riparian inventories across Alberta. She has done some teaching and private consulting in the form of environmental impact assessments. She is currently one of the coordinators for the MULTISAR program. Katheryn has been with the PCF since 2007.

Sasha Harriott — Coordinator/Finance. Sasha started out her career in the environmental field as a forest fire fighter. From there she joined the Cows and Fish Program and traveled across Alberta conducting riparian inventories, engaging landowners and promoting healthy riparian areas. She also worked with AMEC Earth and Environmental as a Safety and Logistics Coordinator. She is the mother of 4 children and enjoys living in the beautiful Crowsnest Pass. Sasha has been working with the PCF since 2008.

PCF Member Organizations

Government (municipal, provincial, federal)

Alberta Culture, Multiculturalism and the Status of Women
Alberta Environment and Parks
Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada
City of Lethbridge, Helen Schuler Nature Centre
Municipal District of Taber
Municipal District of Willow Creek
Special Areas Board
Waterton Lakes National Park (Parks Canada)

Non-Government Organizations/Companies

AJM Environmental Inc.
Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute
Alberta Conservation Association
Alberta Environmental Farm Plan
Alberta Grazing Leaseholders Association
Alberta Native Plant Council
Alberta Wilderness Association
Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area
Antelope Creek Ranch
Barbwire Consulting
Battle River Watershed Alliance
Blood Tribe Land Management
Boundary Creek Landowners Association
Bow River Basin Council
Calgary Zoo/Wilder Institute
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (Calgary/Banff Chapter)
Cows and Fish — Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society
Ducks Unlimited Canada
Grasslands Restoration Forum
Glenbow Ranch Park Foundation
Great Plains Conservation Network
LandWise Inc.
Lentz Farms
Lethbridge College



Milk River Watershed Council
Miistakis Institute
Nature Alberta
Nature Conservancy of Canada
Nature Saskatchewan
Oldman Watershed Council
Operation Grasslands Community, Alberta Fish and Game Association
Rangeland Conservation Service Ltd.
Red Deer River Watershed Alliance
Round Rock Ranching
Safari Club International (Calgary)
Salmtec
Southern Alberta Land Trust Society
Sweetgrass Bison
Trace Associates Inc.
University of Alberta
University of Calgary
University of Lethbridge
Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association
Western Stockgrowers Association
Wildlife Society (Alberta Chapter)
WL Heritage Connections



Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum

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