TRANSBOUNDARY GRASSLANDS WORKSHOP

Prairie Conservation Forum, Swift Current - 2017

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Executive Summary

The second Transboundary Grasslands Workshop (TBGW), convened in Swift Current, Saskatchewan (SK) on January 11, 2017, in Treaty 4, the traditional territory of the Cree, Salteaux, Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota First Nations. The region is also the traditional territory of Métis communities of Lebret, Fort Qu'Appelle, Willow Bunch, and Lestock.

The TGBW was hosted by the Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan (SK PCAP) and South of the Divide Conservation Action Program (SODCAP Inc.) with attendance from Saskatchewan (27), Alberta (24) Montana (11), Manitoba (2), and Ontario (1), representing First Nations and tribes, landholders, governments, producers, watershed and conservation groups, and other stakeholders. The workshop sponsors included the Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum, Environment and Climate Change Canada (Habitat Stewardship Program), Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment, Milk River Watershed Alliance, Milk River Watershed Council Canada, Ranchers Stewardship Alliance, Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan, South of the Divide Conservation Action Program and World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

The 2017 TBGW was comprised of an Indigenous Forum on January 11, with presentations and panel discussions for approximately 35 participants. The January 12 and 13 program included presentations, panel discussions, two Breakout Sessions and an Action Planning Session. The TBGW was attended by 65 participants including the Blackfoot, Blood Tribe, Nakoda of the Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Nation, Chippewa Cree and Cree Nations, along with non-Indigenous participants from Canada and the United States.

The TBGW presentations mainly addressed five focal areas: 1) Plains Bison, 2) Environmental Education and Management for First Nations, 3) Conservation Efforts by Ranching Communities, 4) Sustainable Beef Roundtables and 5) Species at Risk and *Species At Risk Act* (SARA) Policy Changes. The workshop included two Breakout Sessions and an Action Planning exercise, which respectively divided participants into groups to discuss predominant themes, prioritized capacity building opportunities, and developed a plan for actions that would improve transboundary collaboration for community-based conservation. Predominant themes from presentations included collaboration, education and funding, as well as the importance of trust-building and identifying common values to amalgamate communities and strengthen capacity. Priorities for building capacity in community conservation included incorporating educational opportunities for students and community decision-makers, seeking diversity in collaborator backgrounds to increase options and potential for problem-solving. Locating and generating core funding was identified as a priority, with consensus that this was a topic for discussion in future workshops and online forums. Over the course of the three-day workshop, speakers from government agencies, established organizations and newly-formed grassroots groups in the United States and Canada presented perspectives, accomplishments and ongoing challenges to workshop participants. These topics fueled discussion and paths forward that contributed to the successful achievement of the workshop's goals to recognize current efforts to advance community-based conservation, identification of gaps in existing capacity where additional efforts are needed, and to determine opportunities for improving or enhancing existing transboundary capacity. There was widespread support for the next workshop to be located in Montana.

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

TRANSBOUNDARY GRASSLAND WORKSHOP 3

DAY 1 – INDIGENOUS FORUM 3

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION 3
MORNING PLENARY PRESENTATION 3
PANEL 1 – BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY LENS: SACRED SPECIES AND SACRED SITES 4
LUNCH SPEAKER 5
AFTERNOON PLENARY PRESENTATION 5
PANEL 2 – CAPACITY IN COMMUNITIES: CONSTRAINTS, SUCCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES 6

DAY 2 9

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION 9
PANEL 1 – COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION 9
PANEL 2 – DEVELOPING CAPACITY IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES 10
PANEL 3 – CROSS-CUTTING POLICIES AND INITIATIVES 11
BREAKOUT SESSION 1 12
EVENING PLENARY PRESENTATION 14

DAY 3 16

FINAL PRESENTATION 16
BREAKOUT SESSION 2 16
ACTION PLANNING SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS 19
WORKSHOP SURVEY RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS 21
NEXT STEPS AND CLOSING REMARKS 23

APPENDIX A: 2017 WORKSHOP EVALUATION SUMMARY 24

Transboundary Grassland Workshop

Day 1 – Indigenous Forum

Welcome and Introduction

The 2017 Transboundary Grassland Workshop opened on January 11th with an Indigenous Forum, facilitated by Paulette Fox, of the Kainai Nation/Blood Tribe. Paulette introduced herself and welcomed attendees to the Forum, thanking them for their interest in hearing the stories and perspectives on language, conservation and cultural connections to land that would be shared that day. Paulette related that many of the speakers presenting for the Forum were Blackfoot People who had traveled from Alberta the previous day. She noted that Blackfoot territory stretches across most of southern Alberta and extends into southwestern Saskatchewan, so her drive lasted six hours and never once left "home". Paulette introduced the speakers and the Forum was opened with a prayer by Duane Mistaken Chief of the Kainai Nation/Blood Tribe.

Presentations from the Day 1 - Indigenous Forum are available (PDF format) online at the Alberta Prairie Conservation Form webpage:

http://www.albertapcf.org/grassland-events/transboundary

Morning Plenary Presentation

Protecting Sacred Sites for the Next Generation

Chief Roy Fox (Blood Tribe/Kainai Nation) provided the morning's keynote presentation. Mr. Fox is the Chief of the Kainai First Nation (Blood Tribe). He first provided the attendees with a welcome speech and shared images of sacred sites from the Blood Tribe and Blackfoot territorial lands. Chief Fox followed these images with a description of a spiritual journey he and his wife, Genevieve had made in 2016. They made a visit to sites within and near an area where a multi-land use agreement was in place between the Blood Tribe and Tamarack Energy. The industry had expressed its desire to manage the land in a way that respected traditional land use values and had sought out Chief Fox to ensure this interaction. As part of the agreement between the Kainai and Tamarack, a video documentary is being created. Chief Fox shared clips from this documentary showing sacred sites and a visit the Blood Tribe had made to bring young people and children to connect with these sites. He explained that the connection between his people and their land, and the continued use of Blackfoot language by young and old members of the Blood Tribe are essential to maintaining the health of all parts of his culture and community. Chief Fox explained the meaning of the documentary's name, "Iitaapiskoo" is a spiritual word signifying the creator spirit within a place, that sites with this name mean that they have sprit and power of a living entity. By acknowledging the power of these places and by renewing the connection between his people – especially the Blood Tribe youth - then his people and their spirit in their land will remain strong. Chief Fox noted a teaching from his Elders that a journey with benefits in the future will always have challenges in the beginning, and he encourages all of us to meet these challenges with perseverance and belief in the importance of the journey.

Panel 1 – Biocultural Diversity Lens: Sacred Species and Sacred Sites

Learning the Land Project

The first Panel presentations included speakers involved in collaboration between the Nature Conservancy Canada (NCC) and Treaty 4 Learning Alliance.

Jennifer McKillop (Director of Conversation at Nature Conservancy Canada) started the Panel by introducing the collaborative program called "*Learning the Land*", which was developed to increase retention of students in First Nations communities in Treaty 4. This program focused on introducing students from Treaty 4, including Cree (Nēhiyawēwin), Saulteaux (Nakawē), and Assiniboine (Nakota) First Nations to programs designed to build their understanding of local ecology including the diminished condition of native grasslands and plants and animals living there. The *Learning the Land* program focuses on how First Nations and western science can work together to conserve native grasslands and species at risk living in Treaty 4.

Scott Fulton (Educator, Treaty 4 Education Alliance (T4EA)) described T4EA programs that he was involved in, which focused on language and cultural revitalization as well as success bringing Elders and Knowledge Holders in to contribute to the curriculum. Mr. Fulton also explained that NCC and T4EA had developed "Learning the Land Resource Kits", which are Teacher's Manuals providing lessons on ecological principles, which also include Indigenous understandings of healthy ecosystems.

Michael Lonechild (Artist, Educator) spoke about his collaboration with Treaty 4 Education and Alliance, and explained how he has used his experience as an artist to connect with the students in the *Learning the Land* program. Mr. Lonechild described his process of discovering what he and the students had to teach to each other, and shared images of artwork created by the students with whom he had collaborated.

Carol Crowe (Indigenous Visions Inc.) also spoke about her experience bringing graduates of the BEAHR Program (Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources) to speak to students of the *Learning the Land* program. Ms. Crowe described both successes and challenges with the program. She related success in seeing the beginnings of capacity building in the youth of these communities. She also noted a need to create and sustain a structure that will carry forward long-term capacity building with young adults, adults and older members of these communities. Relating to her work training certified Indigenous environmental monitors, the mechanics of data gathering, and payment of honoraria to Elder, Ms. Crowe asked important and difficult questions about maintaining sacredness in the process of capacity building.

Questions for Panel 1:

To All: How to maintain the knowledge passed to the students. Another question focused on how knowledge could be passed in the names and needs of species at risk, but how does this scientific knowledge apply to First Nation communities? How might it strengthen their communities?

Scott Fulton acknowledged that this was a great question. He said he thought the answer would lie with community initiative, and whether there are programs and initiatives in place to merge and support the lessons from *Learning the Land*.

In relation to ongoing capacity building programs, Linda Cerney (Transboundary Grassland partnership core team member) mentioned the "Deep Roots: Exploring Alberta's Grasslands" videoconferencing made available by the Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum as a remote resource with two-way communication between community participants and facilitators.

Mr. Lonechild spoke to the question about how knowledge could be retained and applied by relating back to the importance of including Elders' teachings. He said, "We really need our Elders; we have to listen to them…teachings from Elders are not new, they were always there." He added to this by relating a lesson he had learned from his bother: "In seeking knowledge we also have to live our lives… what you keep (from these teachings) – that is your choice…being thankful for all things given by the Creator also means being aware that all things come from the Creator, including gasoline and a new car".

Paulette Fox noted that some concepts, such as species at risk, are very scientific in terms of the knowledge and names applied to them, and sometimes these principles do not translate or have an equivalent meaning for Indigenous communities. But the *Learning the Land* program uses art as part of its teaching mechanism and this is one of the reasons for its success: art is an integral part of Indigenous culture and in this way, the ideas and lessons take on more meaning.

Lunch Speaker

BEAHR Training Program

Carol Crowe is the principal of Indigenous Visions Inc., and Lead Instructor for Indigenous Environmental Monitors through ECO Canada's Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources (BEAHR) Training Program. Ms. Crowe spoke about her journey toward this role beginning in her volunteer work with the Chamber of Commerce and her work in the oil and gas industry. In speaking about the BEAHR Program and environmental monitoring, Ms. Crowe challenged the attendees to consider the complexity of the knowledge structure of Indigenous communities including Indigenous law, spiritual law, and keeping in mind that Elders encapsulate unique sets of knowledge, such that losing one Elder is the same as losing an entire library of knowledge. Ms. Crowe related that she incorporates the necessity of connecting with Elders and Knowledge Holders into the training of Indigenous Environmental Monitors as part of the important process of integrating western science and Indigenous values and understanding into assessment, monitoring and mitigation practices. She stressed that the training is only part of the process; the ability of Certified Indigenous Environmental Monitors to be connected to the industry sector so they can be successful in finding work is a significant challenge. Ms. Crowe suggested that developing and maintaining personal, professional online presence, as well as a support framework for these Certified Monitors is very important.

Afternoon Plenary Presentation

Native Language Immersion through Legislation

Jonathan Windy Boy (Senator for Montana's Senate District 16 seat) discussed the bill he introduced, which was passed in the Senate in 2015, titled "Native American Language Preservation Act," which makes Montana the first state in the United States (U.S.), to implement such a law with a $2 million dollar appropriation for the 7 Montana Tribes to share. Mr. Windy Boy brought us back to the roots of this bill's

creation by stating "in order to address problems in Indian country, you have to identify the problems in the community". At that time, Mr. Windy Boy was made aware of the increasing number of children at risk of expulsion from school due, he suspected, to problems at home. Mr. Windy Boy felt that reconnecting students with their language would also reconnect them with their families and their culture. To this end, he proposed and passed a Bill that funded efforts to protect Native language among the seven Tribes in Montana. One such program was a native language immersion program instituted in Reservation schools. In order to begin 'knitting' the students back into life at home, Mr. Windy Boy also created an adult Tribal College in parallel with the school language immersion program. The evening classes and distance learning available at the Tribal College gave parents a program that they could participate in that, in part satisfied requirements to seek employment, but also supported family learning and community building.

Panel 2 – Capacity in Communities: Constraints, Success and Opportunities

The Path Back: Saving Wildlife Through Community Collaboration in the Northern Great Plains

Denis Jorgensen (World Wildlife Fund - WWF) and **Jonny Bearcub Stiffarm** (Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Nation) spoke to the workshop attendees via WebEx presentation about the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) collaboration to restore self-sustaining bison conservation herds in partnership with tribal communities including Fort Peck and Blackfoot Confederacy. It was revealed that Fort Peck has the only quarantine facility outside of Yellowstone in the U.S., and thus provides the potential to increase genetic sustainability to other growing bison herds throughout the U.S. and possibly Canada. The WWF and Fort Peck are in the process of developing a model for financial, cultural and ecological value that will be replicable for other sustainable bison programs that can contribute to First Nation community health and wellbeing.

Bison Conservation and Treaty Hunting

Gordon Vaadeland (Rancher at Sturgeon River Ranch, SK and member Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society) owns and operates a cattle ranch adjacent to the western border of Prince Albert National Park in Saskatchewan, where a government release of approximately 50 bison into Prince Albert National Park occurred in 1969. Despite immediate issues with bison ignoring land ownership boundaries and attempts to remove the herd, the Sturgeon River bison continue to make regular forays into Gord's and other nearby ranchers' land. Gord, other landowners and local stakeholders have formed the Sturgeon River Plains Bison Stewards. This is a group of concerned ranchers and farmers working with Prince Albert National Park and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment to create an environment where Canada's only free ranging herd of Plains bison still within their historic range can co-exist with local landowners in a mutually beneficial way. Challenges for Gord's group include negotiations with neighbouring First Nations on hunting practices, anthrax outbreaks and efforts to bring the bison population back to sustainable numbers.

Gord was asked if his Sturgeon River bison initiatives might collaborate conservation efforts with the Fort Peck bison herds and other movements to create sustainable bison herds in their historic range. Gord noted that they are currently looking into partnership with the Iinii Initiative with the Blackfoot Confederacy. Gord also had a comment regarding children and social media; he encouraged parents to allow their kids to be

active to a certain degree in social media because he sees it as part of their way of maintaining connections with each other, and he has seen it inform and build bridges between communities with common interests, such as bison survival.

Species at Risk and Community Participation

Marsha Heavy Head is an Environmental Technician in Land Management for the Kainai Environmental Protection Agency (KEPA). Ms. Heavy Head gave an overview of the Vision and Mission, as well as the historic and current administrative management of the Blood Tribe and KEPA. She outlined the KEPA surveying and monitoring programs including their breeding bird survey, rangeland health survey and weed management program.

Questions for Panel 2:

For All: *It was stated that "When we look at the issues, that's where our opportunities are!". Describe some successes that rose from challenges you experienced.*

Ms. Heavy Head noted that a lot of issues can come up during Tribal land management and community meetings, so it's always good to have the Environmental department in attendance so they can hear the recollections, the stories and the accounts of history; these can bring the community and the department together to be sure they are working with the same direction and motivation that these stories and histories provide.

Mr. Vaadeland noted that the greatest success was in multiple generations witnessing the way relationships with bison had changed over time. He said that by keeping the bison present on their land it meant that his children, and hopefully his grandchildren will grow up with that experience of stewardship. Mr. Vaadeland also acknowledged that Treaty Hunting was a point of contention, but also a learning experience. He likened it to a marriage, with a starting point and a lifetime of evolution and change. He said, "It's not an 'us' and 'them' relationship. It's more about how we work together as a group, sharing the land together."

For Ms. Heavy Head: How are families involved in the Environment Department's work for KEPA?

Ms. Heavy Head acknowledged that this was something that needed to happen more. She pointed out that families need to remember their history and their living connection to the land. She illustrated this by saying, "Historically animals kept us alive. Today, we operate under the mistaken impression that we are keeping the animals alive. This is not true. They are still keeping us alive."

For Mr. Jorgensen and Ms. Bearcub Stiffarm: Please discuss further their plans to make this model financially sustainable?

Mr. Jorgensen described Fort Peck's creation of two bison herds: a "business herd" for the sale of meat, hunting, live animal trade, and a "cultural herd" made up of the Yellowstone genetic stock bison that takes part in cultural ceremonies and community events.

Ms. Bearcub Stiffarm noted that Tribal members were asked – and confirmed - that they would pay for bison meat at a price equivalent to that which they pay for beef, indicating a potential for a sustainable market for the "business: bison herd".

Are there management agreements on neighbouring ranches that allow bison range expansion?

Mr. Jorgensen replied by describing a 'fractionated ownership' plan whereby any adjacent land that is due for a change in lessee is presented to the Tribes for first rights of refusal. He explained that Tribal Community members are overwhelmingly positive toward acquiring more land to be used 100% or close to 100% as bison pasture.

A question was asked about the type of fencing used by WWF/Fort Peck with their bison herd.

Mr. Jorgensen said the Tribe uses a combination of approaches including taller fencing than for standard beef cattle, with a smooth wire on the lowest rung. Quarantine fencing has a double fence structure, with an inner and outer ring of fencing to provide an additional buffer. He also noted that, as bison have spent time using pastures, the native plants recognized in other native grasslands have been seen with more frequency, and the presence of these plant species is followed by an increased native bird species presence.

A final question was asked about the prospect of and timing for transfer of live bison back and forth with Canada.

Mr. Jorgensen agreed that this genetic transfer would be valuable, but does not yet know if and how this transfer will occur.

Transboundary Grassland Workshop

Day 2

Welcome and Introduction

Ian Dyson (Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum, Alberta Environment and Parks) provided the opening address on the morning of the second day of the workshop. Mr. Dyson revisited the Transboundary Grassland Partnership (TGP) 2016 workshop in Elkwater, AB by recounting the development of a TGP concept and a list of goals for future activity. Mr. Dyson described the creation of the TGP core team, the process to define a boundary area, and indicated that progress toward the 2016 goal to increase First Nation engagement was in evidence at Day 1 of the 2017 meeting. He also noted that the core team operates on a volunteer basis and action items from the 2016 workshop are still in progress. Mr. Dyson listed the goals for the 2017 Workshop, including:

- recognition of current efforts to advance community-based conservation,
- identification of gaps in existing capacity where additional efforts are needed, and
- a need to determine opportunities for improving or enhancing existing transboundary capacity.

Mr. Dyson drew attendees' attention to the workshop's anticipated outcome of a set of action items to improve transboundary capacity for community based prairie conservation in the TGP's focal regions of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Montana.

Following the Welcome and Introduction, Day 2 of the workshop was opened with a prayer provided by Duane Mistaken Chief.

Presentations from Day 2 are available (PDF format) online at the Alberta Prairie Conservation Form webpage:

http://www.albertapcf.org/grassland-events/transboundary

Panel 1 – Community-Based Conservation

Rancher Stewardship Alliance Inc. – Saskatchewan

Orin Balas, representing the Saskatchewan Rancher's Stewardship Alliance Inc. (RSA) described the RSA's collaboration with multiple agencies to complete the draft Multiple Species at Risk Action Plan for the southwestern Saskatchewan, south of the divide region. Mr. Balas described the RSA's concern that many government agricultural programs are too production-based and prescriptive, of short duration, and require upfront cash outlay from producers. His recommendations for improvements to these programs included expanded monitoring and evaluation components, and more stable and less burdensome financial support. RSA recommends a program provision for ranchers who currently contribute to and adhere to Beneficial Management Practices.

Rancher Stewardship Alliance – Montana

Kelsey Molloy (Sage Grouse Initiative, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Montana) presented for Leo Barthelmess by describing the programs in place through Montana's Rancher Stewardship Alliance. This non-profit group of 30 ranches was started in 2003. Montana's RSA provides education including meetings, workshops, grazing seminars, and field schools for members, local producers and the ranching community.

Sustainable Canada

Randall Stokke (Rancher in southwestern Saskatchewan, and President of the Sustainable Canada Association (SCA)) provided a background for the creation of the SCA, with its creation in 2014 following rancher concern regarding the Greater Sage Grouse Emergency Protection Order. Mr. Stokke explained that the SCA promotes common sense conservation, and advocates that the Government of Canada needs to work with landowners and land managers and must provide reasonable compensation for the protection of private land.

Phillips Conservation District and Milk River Watershed Alliance

Jeff Pattison (Chairman, Valley County Conservation District, Chairman Milk River Watershed Alliance) and **Jenifer Anderson** (Administrator, Phillips Conservation District, Coordinator Milk River Watershed Alliance) provided a brief history of the creation of Conservation Districts (CDs) in the rural United States. With three quarters of the land in the U.S. owned by private citizens, and 59% of the land base owned privately in Montana; Conservation Districts provide a consolidated structure to promote conservation of natural resources and administer legislative Acts and address conservation issues to both youth and adult audiences. Montana now has 58 CDs. The Phillips Conservation District enter partnerships to address water quality issues through sub-organizations such as Local Watershed Councils, and the Milk River Watershed Alliance.

Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association

Jeff Bectell introduced the Waterton Biosphere Reserve as the second biosphere to be designated (1979 – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization – UNESCO) out of 18 biosphere reserves in Canada today. Mr. Bectell noted that biospheres are voluntary cooperative areas, with no change in authority over land and water use, no new regulations or protected areas, and no restrictions on rights of citizens. In 2008, the Waterton Biosphere Reserve partnered with government, the University of Alberta and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to take part in the southwestern Alberta grizzly bear monitoring project. This partnership led to the creation of the Carnivore Working Group designed to address large carnivore attractant management. This project is an example of conservation principles focused on providing for needs of both humans and wildlife species and the communities where they overlap.

Panel 2 – Developing Capacity in Indigenous Communities

Nature Conservancy Canada

In a partnership between the Saskatchewan (SK) area of Treaty 4 and the Nature Conservancy of Canada's (NCC) *Learning the Land* program was revisited (see presentation from Day 1) by **Jennifer McKillop**. This

program's reach encompasses much of southern SK area schools and has a curriculum focused on conservation and species at risk. The *Learning the Land* program combines traditional and scientific knowledge in presentations and activities designed to engage children and build land-community connection and capacity in First Nation communities. Future goals and challenges will extend Elder and Knowledge Holder involvement beyond the classroom to develop traditional and scientific conservation practices to community members of all ages.

Kainai Ecosystem Protection Agency (KEPA)

Marsha Heavy Head touched again on the role of the Kainai Environmental Protection Agency (KEPA), with a focus on activities to monitor and manage Species at Risk in traditional lands of the Blood Tribe, in southern Alberta (see presentation from Day 1). Ms. Heavy Head described numerous KEPA programs, including invasive weed management, breeding bird surveys, forest and range health assessments and educational programs with a focus on children. The focus of her presentation on Day 2 highlighted collaborations beyond Kainai borders with agencies such as Oldman Watershed Council and provincial and municipal governments.

Connecting Indigenous Language and Conservation

Duane Mistaken Chief of the Kainai Nation/Blood Tribe is a professor and language consultant in the Faculty of Kainai Studies at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta. Dr. Mistaken Chief spoke to workshop attendees on the role of language in maintaining Indigenous peoples' connection to their cultural legacy. He also articulated the sense of identity, history and future direction that a Tribe's language contributes to their community. Dr. Mistaken Chief shared personal stories of the evolution of his family name as a means of explaining the connection between language and identity. His story described the strength a name could imbue in a person and a lineage, as well as the vulnerability of language to translation errors, and the potential for family stories to be lost with the mistranslation of a name. These stories were shared in an effort to exemplify linkages between language, spirit, ceremony, stories, names, and multi-generational relationships the tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy have with each other and their land.

Panel 3 – Cross-Cutting Policies and Initiatives

Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef

Monica Hadaritis described the creation of the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef in 2014 and noted that it has 94 members with 17 retailers. The Canadian Roundtable is based on five key principles: 1) natural resources, 2) people and community, 3) animal welfare, 4) food, and 5) efficiency and innovation. A "Farm to Fork" assessment indicates that beef production occupies 33% of agricultural land and provides 68% of wildlife habitat. Ranchlands sequester 1.5 billion tonnes of carbon in Canada. The verification framework is volunteer-operated and will implement ten high-level goals evaluated through outcomes-based indicators (i.e., non-prescriptive methods, as long as results are achieved). Public consultations are expected to take place soon, with feedback expected from the Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum and Transboundary Grassland Partnerships. Ms. Hadaritis hopes to hear comments on issues including whether the initiative should support and develop separate management and use programs for native and tame grasslands; and are carbon emissions included in the scenarios of production.

United States Roundtable for Sustainable Beef

Nancy Labbe (World Wildlife Fund – WWF) introduced and described the United States Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRDB). The American counterpart to this Canadian organization was formed in 2015 with 100 members of which 50% are producers but only seven members are retailers. In comparison to the Canadian Roundtable, American key indicators of beef value emphasize the environment and include: 1) animal health, 2) efficiency and yield, 3) water resources, 4) land resources, 5) air and greenhouse gas emissions, and 6) worker safety and well-being. The USRSB will not be involved in verification and certification for marketing. The USRSB is using and following the lead, of the Canadian Roundtable for various components. The USRSB is currently developing matrices for producers, processors and retailers.

Canada's Species at Risk Act and Ongoing Policy Consultations

Mark Wayland (Environment and Climate Change Canada) spoke on a number of subjects, including the September 19 (2016) public presentation of seven new draft policies applicable to the *Species At Risk Act* (SARA). The purpose of these policies is to improve how SARA is implemented, including the establishment of criteria for the determination of when an Emergency Protection Order (EPO) is required. Two of the seven potential changes were highlighted for the TBGW audience: 1) critical habitat protection on non-federal lands, and 2) conservation agreements for species at risk, with a focus on mechanisms for protection. Concerns raised from TBGW participants emphasized the need for SARA to be more transparent and collaborative, such as for private landholders. Organizations and individuals are urged to provide feedback on the draft SARA changes before March 31, 2017.

Following Mr. Wayland's presentation, the group discussed whether the TBGW could provide policy changes to SARA as a "collective" response. Attendees also discussed whether the TBGW could also consider providing a model for a flexible and adaptive funding plan.

Breakout Session 1

Reflecting on What We've Heard

Breakout Session 1 was designed to give participants an opportunity to reflect on ideas introduced during Day 1 and Day 2 presentations. Individuals were asked to form diverse groups with other participants not from their own organizations or agencies. Six table groups were formed where participants were asked to compare speakers' stories and experiences with their own knowledge and expertise, consider answers to questions provided in the Breakout Guide, and discuss their answers as a group.

Questions provided in the Breakout Guide were 1) "What themes did you hear among the ideas presented?", and 2) "What did you learn that could be applied in your own conservation efforts?".

There were several common themes identified (see colour-coded linkages in Table 1), such as the importance of building trust and maintaining respect between stakeholders and communities, recognizing common ground, the power of partnerships and collaboration. Unique strategies that came from group discussions included:

- Intrinsic values of working in collaboration between communities before falling back on legislative or litigative approaches;
- When setting conservation strategies in motion, implementation should be a bottom-up process from within a community, informed by consultation with ranchers or Elders or schools, rather than forced upon them from outside entities, non-government organizations (NGOs) or government; and
- Compatible alternate strategies can enrich conservation solutions; diversity of perspectives can produce novel and exceptional solutions.

Table 1: Breakout Session 1 – Important Themes Heard in Presentations

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
Grassland Conservation	Collaboration and Partnerships	Implementation should be a Bottom-Up Process	Collaboration with a focus on Language, Trust and Inclusivity	Stakeholders Building Consensus and Trust	Trust and Building Common Ground
Finding Common Ground	Trust and Respect	Trust	Developing Common Goals in Measurable Term	Partnerships, Communication, Focus on the Positive and what we have in Common	Power of Partnerships - especially Diverse Partnerships
Need for Respect and Greater Public Awareness	Finding Long Term Secure Funding	Try Collaborative Approaches before Legislative Approaches	Identify Common Goals and Be Open to New Ways to Achieve Goals	Funding, Build Capacity with Flexible and Realistic Expectations	Developing Communication on Local, National and International Scales

When asked to consider how presentation themes could be applied to conservation activities, common themes discussed by table groups included:

- Networking:
    - Face-to-face meetings are key to overcoming perceived differences and barriers;
    - Create a centralized information hub (online) where diverse groups have a presence;
    - Perseverance in the face of stumbling blocks:
        - move forward with issue and topics where there is agreement,
        - put aside conflicts for later discussion in a dedicated meeting; and
    - Promote and spearhead cross-border collaboration to share data, management plans and funding opportunities.
- Partnering with transboundary communities and with academic institutions:
    - Collaborations with scientists and range agrologists to help inform conservation/management plans;
    - Active integration of scientific method, Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge and multi-generational rancher/range manager knowledge; and

    - Design community-led pilot projects to test and achieve management and conservation goals.
- Foster relationships with government to inform decisions and create legislation with input from communities:
    - Create reports from lessons learned and ideas produced in the "Networking" process (above), and distribute to all levels of government with agreements therein to integrate and apply community ideas; and
    - Continue to actively evolve Section 11 Agreements (see Breakout Session 2 discussion, p. 19) in ways that allow NGO, and grass roots organizations to administer and organize.

The diversity of backgrounds in each table group also led to unique applications of workshop themes, such as:

- Involve children from local schools in decision-making process, build high school-age youths' interest and investment in their communities;
- Extending the BEAHR Program into the U.S.; and
- Consider and plan for ecological disasters including climate change-related drought, disease affecting cattle, species at risk and other wildlife.

Evening Plenary Presentation

The Sage Grouse Initiative – The Canadian Lite Version

Miles Anderson (Anderson Ranch Inc., Environmental Stewardship Award Winner), **Robin Bloom** (Canadian Wildlife Society) and **Stefano Liccioli** (Parks Canada, Grasslands National Park – GNP) presentation and group discussion focused on a results-based conservation agreement formed in response to the Emergency Protection Order for Greater Sage Grouse. The Agreement is located on the Miles Anderson ranch, near Fir Mountain, between the two main blocks of the east portion of Grasslands National Park of southwestern Saskatchewan. The stakeholders sought common ground based on habitat targets determined from the scientific literature with specifications for silver sagebrush, grass and forb cover.

The team is an interesting partnership and friendship, with Robin providing the scientific background, Miles providing the on-the-ground knowledge, and Stefano providing professional expertise and resources. Miles used unique ways of moving cattle to create the required Greater Sage Grouse (GSGR) habitat conditions. Grazing management created a bi-modal, patchy landscape with high species diversity.

Questions from the audience centered around who should pay for the additional management costs associated with the creation of specific habitat conditions. Other discussions included habitat connectivity, fire on the landscape, coordination of habitat restoration and habitat enhancement with local and cross-border partners to help maintain the GSGR population. Lessons learned included:

1) Conservation measures need to be scientifically sound and locally relevant;

2) On-the-ground management is needed to create suitable habitat, which is structurally complex but can be maintained by grazing cattle at the right time and in areas that require patchy vegetation reduction; and
3) Appropriate management of native grasslands is not about a conserving a single species but rather, about the interaction of cultural and social relationships and ecological processes within the landscape.

Transboundary Grassland Workshop

Day 3

The third day of the workshop was opened by revisiting predominant themes identified during the Breakout Session at the end of Day 2. These themes included Collaboration, Partnership, Trust, Education and Information Sharing, Communications, Funding, Capacity, and Power of Partnerships in developing Common Understanding and Common Ground (see Table 1, p 14). Review of important presentation themes brought to light in Breakout Session 1 set the stage for an investigation of opportunities and identification of priorities for capacity building in Breakout Session 2.

Final Presentation

Lessons from UNDRIP: Language, Conservation and Time

Brian Lee is from the Ermineskin Cree Nation, a member of the Four Nations of Maskwacis (formerly Hobbema), in Alberta. Mr. Lee spoke to the workshop participants about his experience as a Cree Nation Representative in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Mr. Lee was elected into his band's Tribal Council in the early 1980s, and soon thereafter was ordered by his Chief to participate in the Working Group on the Rights of Indigenous People. This working group was tasked with developing human rights standards to protect indigenous peoples, a path that would take 30 years to complete, and which would culminate in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Over the next three decades, Mr. Lee left his home three times a year to travel to Geneva, Switzerland, where he learned to speak confidently to large groups of international legislators and politicians. Mr. Lee spoke of his sense of accomplishment in contributing to an Act that that support the rights Indigenous peoples to protect their cultural heritage and tradition, thus maintaining his people's identity and connection to their land today. However, Mr. Lee also bears regret for the time that these international and Tribal responsibilities took him away from his children and other family members.

Breakout Session 2

Opportunities and Priorities for Improved Transboundary Capacity for Community-Based Conservation

During the second Breakout Session, participants were asked to rejoin their table groups from the previous day to consider themes, lessons and areas of application from presentations on Day 1 and 2, to brainstorm opportunities to improve transboundary capacity for community-based conservation. Individuals were asked to reflect on and evaluate these opportunities, determine which had the greatest priority, and then consider the criteria or factors they used to select these priorities. As a group, each table was then asked to discuss the priorities they had come up with, and the criteria they used to select these priorities. Each table group selected a representative to share these results with the rest of the workshop participants (Table 2).

Table 2: Breakout Session 2 – High Priority Opportunities to Improve Capacity

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
Educational options, sharing information, transboundary tours	Policy for land use on large scale, with large gains	Importance of collaboration and dialogue to build trust	Develop new content for the Transboundary Grassland Program (i.e., website?) as a vehicle for telling a new more cohesive story; Explore funding availability and options	Develop ways to "springboard" each other by identifying commonalities, making contributions, and especially through commitments	Develop mechanisms to coordinate (i.e., co-mingle, merge?) initiatives/ organizations such as Northern Plains Conservation Network, PCAP, (others), and explore pros/cons of merging
Face-to-face meetings, video conferences	Contributing to existing initiatives	Develop structural mechanisms that will support/ initiate getting federal and provincial government agencies/ departments together to discuss availability of, or need for funding opportunities	On Prairie Conservation Action Plan (PCAP) website, include a 'cheat sheet' graphically representing the "prairie conservation landscape", and showing the physical location/proximity of Initiative Groups, with their Purpose Statements and links to their websites	Promoting inclusivity; Coordinating efforts; Expand knowledge	In the future, there may be fewer/smaller government contributions, so it will be important to maintain connections among organizations/ initiatives to keep options (i.e., fund-pooling?) open and available
Communicate via a monthly newsletter, Explore online WebEx options	Take note of who is *not* at the stakeholder table; Acknowledge who has not been invited to attend (rather than who chose not to, or who could not attend)	Importance of grassland education and broad public awareness	Support more community projects by providing a forum for these stories (such as Miles Anderson/ Robin Bloom (CWS)/ Stefano Liccioli (GNP)	We are islands of information, and collaborations, such as this conference, provide opportunity	2020 has been proposed as "The Year of the Grasslands", which could be a catalyst to bring NGOs and other organizations together to achieve common goals.
Conservation programs, joint ventures similar to Prairie Potholes Joint Venture (part of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan)			What Montana might do next year - for example, organize a bison project	Need a broad vision of a path forward, i.e., a future goal, path forward; while keeping in mind that a lot of efforts are "delivered in our backyard"	

The importance of **collaboration** was a strong theme throughout presentations from Day 1 and Day 2, and resurfaced during group discussions as a high priority goal for building capacity in Breakout Session 2. The diversity of backgrounds in workshop attendees provided a lesson to all participants that, despite visible or perceived differences, diversity strengthened collaborators' ability to envision options and propose solutions. The variety of participants' backgrounds provided breakout discussion groups with greater depth

of experience from which to draw ideas, and more options for paths forward. In general, there exists a stronger belief in the potential for diverse backgrounds to provide more capacity to overcome obstacles and make progress.

A trend in speakers' presentations around the topic of students, schools and building community involvement was reflected in the groups' recognition of **education** as an opportunity for capacity building in community conservation programs. Every discussion group expressed some element of education as a priority, from the need to educating school-aged children on grassland conservation, to online tools for grass-roots organizations to learn about partnering options in neighbouring communities. Discussions about education opportunities focused on connecting small action groups together with other like-minded groups, and thereby build momentum or funding opportunities for existing initiatives through increased awareness and membership. Several ideas were put forward for online tools designed to connect individuals and community groups with others. One of these ideas included the creation of an interactive map showing geographic proximity between community-led initiatives and organizations, with hyperlinks to each community's or organization's webpage, government grant programs or other funding opportunities (e.g., Northern Plains Conservation Network Interactive Web Map). Another idea for opportunity discussed during the Breakout Session 2 that followed the education theme included developing educational tours hosted by transborder communities/groups to share knowledge and lessons learned.

In general, the necessity of having core **funding** was a common priority identified in many discussions. This topic was a stumbling block, or created pauses in otherwise energetic conversation. There was consensus that locating and generating funding is a topic that needs more discussion in future workshops and online forums. In several table group discussions, funding questions were met with suggestions to keep project goals small enough to be manageable by a single community. However, there was agreement that small goals might be stitched together through collaboration and joint ventures that would eventually allow landscape-level or watershed-wide grassland conservation efforts to address the needs of ranchers, keystone megafauna (i.e., bison) and species at risk that required connectivity across large tracts of land.

The diversity of backgrounds of participants was helpful in brainstorming conservation opportunities with integrated elements of government policy, community action and individual participation. One example inspired by the previous evening's plenary presentation was built around the idea of merging policy with opportunities for ranch-based pilot projects that incorporate sustainable, multi-use, grassland management. By merging the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) practice of conducting research to inform its policies, with the requirement for public commentary on these policies, a landowner, or community, could submit policy comments addressed through the proposal of a pilot project under a Section 11 Agreement of the *Species At Risk Act*. A Section 11 Agreement is a contract between the Government of Canada's Minster of Environment and a landowner to manage his/her land to benefit a species at risk to enhance its survival. The pilot project would meet the conditions of the Agreement and test the NGO/land owner's proposed amendment of that policy, while moving the goals of the community initiative (or joint venture with an NGO) forward. The potential for an amalgamation of government, academic research and a rancher, community or tribe working toward a group initiative goal was a very attractive idea, which surfaced in different forms across several breakout table discussions.

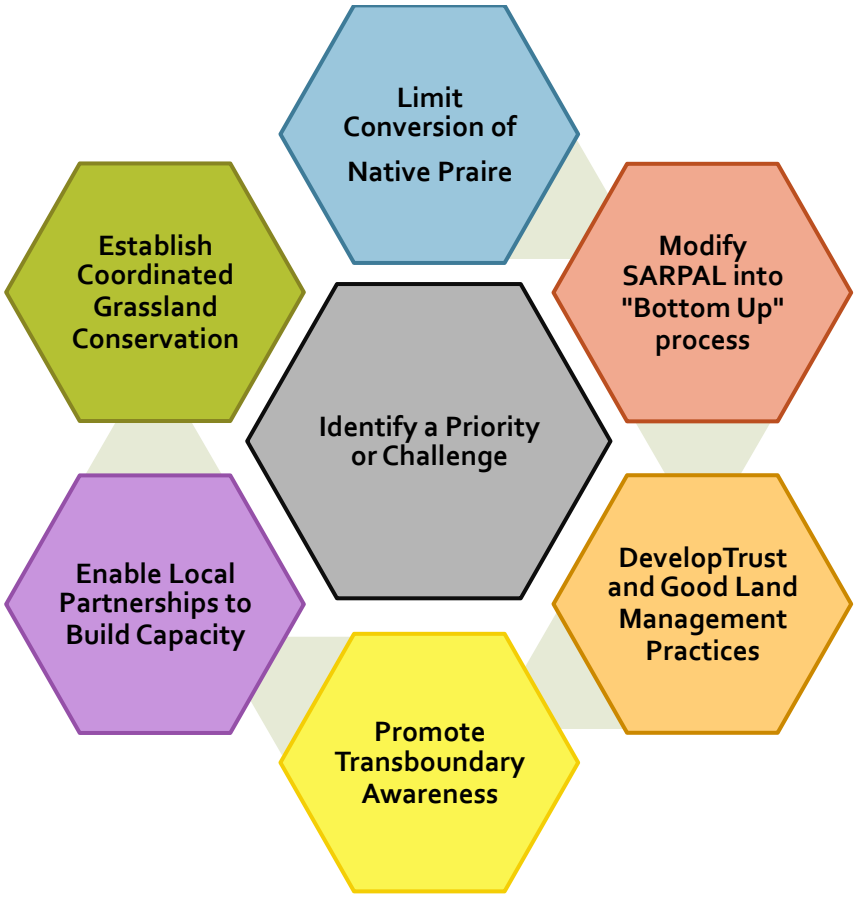
Action Planning Small Group Discussions

Identifying Goals and Actions to Improve Capacity over the Short, Medium and Long Term

This final workshop exercise required the six table groups from Breakout Sessions 1 and 2 to generate concrete goals for improving capacity, and place them in a short, medium and long-term timeline for achieving those goals. The discussion began with the identification of a challenge and focal priority, with the development of strategies to address the challenge, and actions to carry the priority issue forward.

Some group discussions focused on currently existing programs, such as (1) the Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL), an Environment and Climate Change Canada initiative that is focused on working with farmers. Other groups tackled similarly concrete goals, such as (2) limiting conversion of native prairie through prevention or incentives, while operating under the principle that producers are trusted native grassland stewards, and (3) establishing a coordinated mechanism for grassland conservation in the transboundary area. Other groups chose to address more generalized ideas or conceptual goals such as (4) supporting and enabling local partnerships to build community capacity and expand existing initiatives, (5) developing trust and encouraging good land management practices, and (6) promoting transboundary thinking and awareness.

Figure 1. Table Group ideas presented during Action Planning discussions.



Groups were asked to summarize currently available background information and synthesize ideas presented by workshop speakers. Participants applied research, practices and policy from their own experiences and backgrounds to produce creative strategies that could increase the pace and scale of their conservation goal. Results included:

- SARPAL's current trajectory builds on SODCAP Inc. and MultiSAR models, which involve collaboration between agencies and landholders in the voluntary stewardship of grassland species at risk in Saskatchewan and Alberta respectively. SARPAL is an ongoing pilot project, for which individuals or groups from this workshop could provide input, including research (J. Pittman, Liber Ero) and knowledge-holder (multi-generational ranch managers) feedback to critique and enhance the effectiveness of the SARPAL programs;
- Apply the model put forward by carbon offset programs (North Dakota) and conservation offset programs (southeastern Alberta), to ongoing projects such as the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan in AB and the Milk River Watershed Council of Canada – State of the Watershed, with leverage from SODCAP's conservation lease programs and similar habitat joint ventures;
- Identify projects that each organization (in the TGP) has in motion now, then have some "hard conversations" to identify common values and goals, as well as, the issues that the organization cannot agree on, and follow this by understanding what the organization expects from their local community or wider society, with the goal of challenging the status quo to move forward;
- Lobby (U.S.) and communicate with (Canada) federal and provincial government to develop:
    - Programs that support the creation of capacity to conserve innovative grassland management practices, and encourage ranchers to adopt proven practices such as off-site solar-powered watering near wetlands and streams;
    - Land swap programs to provide ranchers with options for grazing regimes, or grazing according to Conservation Agreements on native grassland with critical habitat for species at risk;
- Develop partnerships, joint ventures, etc. to connect community-based conservation efforts, and, as a combined group (ranchers, First Nations, transborder organizations and Tribes), with land stewardship as a mandate, federal and other funding will be more likely to be available; and
- Coordinate existing networks (PCAP, PCF, Native Plains Conservation Network (NPCN)) to develop a dedicated capacity to facilitate conservation progress and to meet challenges, such as:
    - the Iinii Initiative for Buffalo People (Blackfoot Confederacy and Blood Tribe) (in progress);
    - accomplish facilitation through proposing ideas like the "2020 International Year of the Grassland" to National Geographic (proposed).

The final stage of the Action Planning process involved mapping the planned approach, with short, medium and long-term steps that would result in improved transboundary collaboration. Focus was on the steps, groups or individuals who would take them, the timeline involved, additional background information needs, and what results would look like.

Workshop Survey Results and Conclusions

Throughout the final day of the workshop, participants were reminded to fill out the Survey Evaluation and Comment form. The survey asked participants eight questions:

1. Please indicate whether the workshop was Very successful, Somewhat successful or Not successful;
2. What was the most useful/informative part of the workshop?
3. What was the least useful part of the workshop?
4. What, if anything, would you change or add?
5. Following the workshop, what is the most important contribution you can make to transboundary grasslands initiatives?
6. What do you think the focus should be for the next Transboundary Grassland Workshop?
7. Please identify any agencies, organizations or individuals that should be invited to the next TBGW;
8. Please provide other comments.

Twenty-seven participants submitted survey, with all respondents categorizing the workshop as "very" to "somewhat" successful.

Input on the most useful or informative part of the workshop included:

- Opportunities to hear about other organizations' work and to network;
- Breakout sessions;
- Learning about:
    - Grassland-specific ecological processes (sequestered CO_2 in grassland),
    - NGO activity and progress, and
    - Current scientific research and political policy-making.

Constructive criticism of the workshop fell into three clear categories:

1. There was too much repetition between Day 1 and Day 2 for participants who attended both days;
2. Some attendees found it difficult to understand the connection between grassland conservation activities and regard for, or connection to the land described in many of the Indigenous presentations; and
3. Frustration with the themes, timing or general structure of the Breakout Sessions.

When asked what changes or additions they would make to the workshop, participants suggested:

Table 3: Survey Evaluation – Suggested Changes and Additions to the Workshop

Additions	Changes
Longer networking breaks	Provide Name Tags
More time for open discussion in Breakout Sessions to investigate new ideas	Integrate Indigenous component into main workshop
More discussion in smaller and lager groups verses presentations	Have a Breakout Session on Day 1 to get people talking
Choose a specific topic of focus for the workshop and ensure problem solving instead of vague planning, such working to develop a group similar to NAWAMP to proceed on fundraising, governance structure, etc.	Ensure that each speaker/group discusses their mission and describes how they envision successful grassland conservation

Responses varied to the question about the most important contribution participants could make to transboundary grasslands initiatives given what they had learned at the workshop. One attendee noted "I'm just happy to know and have heard that landowner's actually do know their land, and their management practices are valued and offer a great resource to others and to wildlife." A trend through many of the comments included bringing information from the workshop back to participants' local organizations. Staying connected with each other and investigating funding possibilities were also repeated by several attendees. Participants from Nature Conservancy Canada and the Milk River Watershed Council Canada noted their intention to return to their organizations with contributions for their websites, reports, as well as, the goal of increasing incentives and support for members and communities.

The workshop inspired great ideas for future workshop topics including:

- "Connectivity" - discussions & presentations focused on tools available for grassland conservation, and how to successfully integrate species at risk (SAR), habitat, culture and livelihood;
- Discuss government policy, property rights and economic challenges for landowners, with a focus on the priority that conservation unfold as a win/win with those who manage the land;
- Develop the workshop's Action Planning activity on Day 3 into a workshop:
    - Create vision of Grassland Conservation with concrete goals for grassland protection, wildlife and SAR management,
    - Prioritize the actions needed to ensure the goals are achieved, and
    - Create an action plan to complete the actions.
- Watershed focus with connection of land use planning to producer stewardship;
- Fundraising opportunities and strategies;
- Grasslands & Carbon;
- Invasive species; and
- More success stories - specifically from Producers.

Additional comments from participants included inviting more media attention to the next workshop, and a comment that "We're often unaware of what is going on across our borders.". This was followed by the suggestion that the Transboundary Grassland Partnership create of a monthly/quarterly newsletter, with grassland conservation updates from Montana, Alberta and Saskatchewan to keep participants informed about issues in each area.

Next Steps and Closing Remarks

The workshop closed with acknowledgment and thanks to the organizations, individuals, tribes and agencies present. This body of participants included more "decision makers" than the 2016 workshop. Return speakers provided a sense of ongoing progress in grassland conservation, while newcomers contributed with their stories and benefited from the continuity of long-term projects. This diversity of participants helped broaden understanding of programs beyond each attendee's' individual niche. Moving the Transboundary Grassland Partnership forward will require increased networking, either along the lines of some of the Action Plan outcomes (i.e., an interactive webpage with information on each group's initiative, as well as geographic proximity and links to each group's webpage), or through a workplan to organize short/long term goals and assign specific tasks.

Based on breakout discussions, and survey suggestions, next steps for the Transboundary Grassland Partnership (TGP) will lie in providing frameworks for individuals and grassroots organizations to stay connected. These may include an online resource with mapping tools providing information on proximity to like-minded groups, organizing formal meetings via webinar or nearest neighbor face-to-face meetings, newsletters to maintain information sharing, networking connections, funding opportunities and problem-solving conversations. TGP may also consider adopting roles and activities similar to those supplied by the North American Waterfowl Management Partnership (NAWAMP) to proceed on fundraising, governance structure, and services for the international grassland conservation community.

Despite cold weather and resulting agenda re-structuring, overall the workshop was a success; inspiring ideas for paths forward, forging new connections, and combining efforts to overcome individual challenges. Most importantly, presentations and discussions across the three days inspired ideas for ways forward and demonstrated the value of diverse collaborators and the need for patience and an open mind in hearing others' stories. The process of spending time together, and the value in face-to-face discussion proved to be necessary elements in building connections to strengthen capacity within individual communities, and across a landscape united in grassland conservation.