

High Value Landscapes (HVL) mapping layer methodology

Grasslands and parklands, together making up Alberta's prairies, are some of the most endangered ecosystems in the world. Alberta has already lost more than three-quarters of the province's native prairie, and are continuing to lose grasslands to agriculture (i.e., irrigation and conversion to cropland), infrastructure expansion (i.e. building of roads, railways, transmission lines), and development (i.e. building industrial factories, housing, as well as mining and renewable and non-renewable energy development).

The High Value Landscapes (HVL) layer was developed by Ian Dyson and Bill Dolan for the Prairie Conservation Forum (PCF) in 2010 to identify areas of value to prairie conservation. The layer is intended to support and direct efforts in conservation to core areas and migratory corridors.

The HVL broadly outlines areas of high intactness and low anthropogenic activity, incorporating structural and functional information. It was developed by manually finding areas of overlap and convergence between the following layers:

- Priority areas for multiple species at risk¹;
- Ecosystem Goods and Services²;
- Environmentally Significant Areas³; and
- Native landscapes (NPVI, GVI and Central Parkland Native Vegetation)⁴.

Spatial data from Ducks Unlimited Waterfowl Priority Areas was also considered.

The layer was described and assessed by the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI) in *The Status of Biodiversity in the Grassland and Parkland Regions of Alberta*, published February 16, 2016.

¹ Based on the Fish and Wildlife map available in 2010. A 2018 version is available from MultiSAR in [Multi-species conservation value modeling within the Grasslands Natural Region of Alberta](#) (page 21).

² Based on a preliminary map produced from [Ecosystem Goods and Services Southern Alberta](#) and [Ecosystem goods and services assessment - southern Alberta](#) reports by O2. Included all of the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and part of the Red Deer Regional Plan areas.

³ Available online from [Alberta Parks](#). Reports were produced by Cottonwood Consultants and Sweetgrass Consultants, and compiled by Alberta Parks.

⁴ Based on the Alberta native landscape layers available in 2010. The spatial information was integrated into PCF's [State of the Prairie](#). The ABMI Intactness Map was not included in determining the HVL layer as it was not available at the time.