



## Grasslands Conservation Council of British Columbia

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Grasslands Conservation Group Reduces Staff Due to Funding Cutbacks**

Kamloops, BC – July 2, 2010 The Grasslands Conservation Council of BC (GCC), a provincial non-profit dedicated to conserving BC's grasslands, has had to address their funding shortfall by cutting their education and outreach program and reducing remaining staff time by 20%. These measures will allow the GCC to stay functional until March 2011.

"We've made great strides in grasslands conservation, especially over the past two years," says Bob Moody, Executive Director. "It's such a pity to go backwards now, but in order to stay afloat, difficult decisions had to be made."

The GCC was formed in 1999 by a group of ecologists, ranchers, government representatives and concerned citizens to fill a gap in knowledge and awareness of BC's endangered grasslands. Although they cover less than 1% of the province, grasslands are essential for over 30% of BC's species at risk. With nearly half of grasslands privately owned and most of the remainder under crown grazing tenures, it is critical to provide tools and knowledge to land users, owners, managers and decision makers in order to conserve what remains.

The GCC has worked strongly and collaboratively with local governments in Kamloops and the Okanagan Valley to provide much needed support for land-use planning departments. The City of Kamloops partnered with the GCC on the Aberdeen Area Plan when Randy Lambright, Planning and Development Manager, recognized that identifying environmentally sensitive areas was critical to the city's future growth. According to Lambright, the value of working with the GCC is that it is "an environmental group that recognizes there are competing values in planning and that conservation does not operate in a vacuum."

The GCC also has a strong relationship with the ranching industry and is dedicated to keeping working ranches working on BC's grasslands. BC Cattlemen's Association President Judy Guichon is a long-standing board member, and currently the GCC and BCCA share a summer outreach student.

The GCC is funded primarily by foundations, such as the Vancouver Foundation, Real Estate Foundation of BC and Tula Foundation, with a small amount coming from donations from the public and the small but growing membership. Historically, over 50% of funding came from the provincial and federal governments; however that funding has been all but eliminated over the past two years.

"It's frustrating, because our work has supported many government land management requirements," says Tasha Sargent, Stewardship Planner. "Our work has helped create the base for new off-road vehicle regulations, assisted local governments in making land-use decisions and helped ranchers to improve conditions on their range. Now we must just focus on staying alive."

GCC Chair David Zirnhelt, a rancher and former BC Minister of Forests, says "The GCC fills a much-needed niche in our province, and while it's always good to find efficiencies and cut costs as a non-profit, our current situation will really hamper our ability to conserve this important ecosystem. This will affect many of our ranching, government and non-profit partners. It's a real shame."

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The Grasslands Conservation Council of BC is a membership-based, provincial non-profit located in Kamloops. For more information, please visit [www.bcgrasslands.org](http://www.bcgrasslands.org).

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