



Grasslands Conservation Council of British Columbia

Grasslands of British Columbia - Backgrounder

Definition of grasslands

Grasslands are open areas where grasses or grass-like plants are the dominant vegetation and where there are few trees. Grasses came to dominate over other species, because they are better able to thrive in hot, dry climates. In BC, they are home to many plant and animal species that are adapted to living where drought is common, summers are long and hot, and winters are cold and relatively dry.

Significance of BC's grasslands

- Less than 1% of the provincial landbase – 698,000 hectares – of native grasslands remain
- more than 30% of BC's species at risk rely on grasslands for at least part of their life cycle
- 20% of historic grassland of the province have been lost

Benefits of BC's grasslands

- They provide forage for wildlife and livestock
- Locals and tourists enjoy hiking, biking, bird watching, horse riding, and many other activities in grasslands
- Grasslands play important roles in filtering water, stabilizing slopes and storing carbon – of importance in light of climate change
- Healthy working ranches and healthy grasslands mutually benefit one another
- Of critical importance to First Nations, with large contiguous grasslands located both within their traditional territories and on Indian Reserves.

Threats to BC's grasslands

The long-term sustainability of the grasslands – one of Canada's most endangered ecosystems – are currently being threatened by increased pressures:

- urban expansion;
- subdivision and development;
- abusive recreation;
- invasive weeds;
- forest encroachment; and
- inappropriate land management practices.

For more information, please contact:

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