



Grasslands Conservation Council of British Columbia

For Immediate Release

December 1, 2009

Healthy Grasslands Key to a Healthy Ranching Operation

The Grasslands Conservation Council of British Columbia (GCC) is pleased to announce the official launch of the much-anticipated ***Grasslands Monitoring Manual for British Columbia: A Tool for Ranchers***. After six years of hard work and successful collaboration, the completed Manual represents a practical approach to managing grasslands – designed by ranchers for ranchers. Drawing from a diverse collection of backgrounds, professions and government ministries, the Manual is a true collaboration and proof that a committed group of individuals can reach consensus on a monitoring methodology for the ranching sector – what has been a contentious issue for decades.

The GCC has long recognized the need for a practical, easy-to-use tool for ranchers to monitor their grasslands. When the GCC took steps towards creating such a tool, ranchers joined the process with enthusiasm and provided essential knowledge, experience and feedback to the project.

Every rancher knows that healthy, reliable grasslands are essential to their ranching operations, but they have often relied on intuition and experience to assess the state and health of their grasslands. Darren Dempsey of Frolek Ranch explains, “A detailed scientific assessment was rarely undertaken, as it was deemed to be an expensive, time consuming process that the rancher would be unable to complete without the aid of off-farm consultants. This manual breaks down those barriers, allowing the rancher to independently commence a widely recognized scientifically based assessment that does not consume a rancher’s scarce resources of time and money.”

Because the Manual is a tool for ranchers, their role in its development was vital. Bruno Delesalle, GCC Executive Director and Chair of the Provincial Technical Advisory Committee, recognized the role of the ranching community from the beginning. “Ranchers were actively part of the development process and they were represented on the technical advisory committee. Most importantly, ranchers tested the methodology and the manual in each major grassland region of the province. They were trained and cut loose on the range with the manual – essentially a checklist with five questions. They used it, then provided us feedback. It was an invaluable and constructive process.”

The grassland monitoring manual is scientifically-based and provides a strong, systematic approach for recording what is happening on private and crown grasslands – changes that ranchers currently see on the land as well as changes they might expect based on their management practices. Director of Range Branch, David Borth, aptly summarized, “Monitoring is an important part of any range management system....The Manual is a significant contribution to grassland monitoring in BC, providing ranchers with a practical tool for managing their grasslands.”

Manual in hand, the GCC in conjunction with the BC Rangeland Management School is planning a series of training workshops for ranchers and range managers. The workshops will be planned through local livestock associations over the next two years. In addition, pilot projects in each region will be established to further test the manual and to showcase its usability and applicability to ranchers. Significant interest and participation is anticipated in both training and regional pilots.

The GCC extends a sincere thank-you to all funders. This project would not have been possible without the support of the Beef Cattle Industry Development Fund (BCIDF), Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, The

Brink/McLean Grassland Conservation Fund, The McLean Foundation, Tula Foundation, the Province of British Columbia, and Investment Agriculture Foundation through the Agriculture Environment Partnership Initiatives.

To download a free PDF version of the manual or to order a printed edition of the Grassland Monitoring Manual for British Columbia, please go to www.bcgrasslands.org.

About the GCC:

The Grasslands Conservation Council of British Columbia (GCC) is dedicated to the stewardship and conservation of the rare and beautiful grasslands of our province. Working with a strategic alliance of organizations and individuals, we build a better understanding of grasslands and provide methods and tools to better care for them. Together, we pursue a vision of healthy and life-sustaining grasslands in BC for current and future generations.

Accompanying photos:

Rancher testing the Monitoring Manual – PHOTO CREDIT: Bruno Delesalle

Grasslands of the Nicola Valley – PHOTO CREDIT: Richard Doucette

-30-

For further information, please visit www.bcgrasslands.org or contact:

Catrina Crowe

Communications and Outreach Coordinator
Grasslands Conservation Council of British Columbia
250-374-5787 Ext. 203
catrina.crowe@bcgrasslands.org