



*Grasslands Conservation Council of  
British Columbia*

**From Species to Landscape: New Recovery Approaches for Dry Forest  
and Grassland Species at Risk- Official Proceedings (DRAFT)**

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**Date:** Wednesday February 4, 2009

**Location:** Penticton, BC

1. Welcome and Workshop objectives (Oral Presentation)  
Don Gayton, Ecologist, FORREX

Don provided a workshop introduction beginning with discussion of the current situation of today's grasslands (occurrence in BC and amounts lost and threats). He acknowledged the importance of protecting habitats in order to improve the fate of species at risk. He identified the need to step out of the 'stove pipe' situation and embrace a multi species & multi-sectoral approach. He spoke about the interest in addressing more than species at risk (e.g. Keep common grasslands species common); he spoke about the importance of habitat. Don talked about using the phrase "grassland matrix" to describe the target ecosystems that are the focus of the project. He also talked about the need to be proactive and inclusive.

2. Grasslands Species at Risk Workshop 2006 [Powerpoint presentation]  
Bryn White, Program Coordinator, South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program

Bryn reminded the audience of the main presentations and findings of the Grasslands Species at Risk Workshop held in Kamloops June 6 & 7, 2006. This workshop initiated the Grasslands Recovery Implementation Group and Action Plans being discussed at this workshop. Julie presented the vision for the Grasslands Species at Risk project crafted at this 2006 workshop, and talked about the application of logic modeling to this project.

Q and A:

**[comment] Given the distribution of land ownership in the South Okanagan, you seem to have been missing a lot of key stakeholders at this meeting; there is a need to engage these missing stakeholders (e.g. real estate; regional government representatives). You need to modify goals defined in 2006 to include viewpoints of missing stakeholders.**

3. Interior Grassland Species at Risk Recovery: Conservation Priority Analysis [Powerpoint presentation] Orville Dyer, Wildlife Biologist, Ministry of Environment

Orville presented the Conservation Priority Analysis that has been developed and refined by members of the Grasslands Recovery Implementation Group Steering Committee. This analysis looks at the interior grasslands and species at risk found in these areas. It examines grasslands distribution, historical patterns of grasslands loss, species at risk listed on SARA Schedule 1 and Species at Risk listed in the BC Conservation Framework. Sorting these and other factors by ecosection (a geographic unit that has been mapped by Ministry of Environment), the analysis recommends priorities for recovery action planning for Grasslands Species at Risk

Q and A:

**[Comment]: We would like to have copies of statistics and spreadsheets you presented today.**

**How do you address likelihood of success in your priority setting framework?**

This is addressed within the BC Conservation Framework from which the indicators are derived. The framework also addresses recommended actions and is working to expand their coverage from species to ecosystems.

4. The Grasslands Conservation Council and Species at Risk Action Plans [Powerpoint presentation] Alison Peatt, Species at Risk Coordinator, Grasslands Conservation Council of British Columbia

Alison described the Grasslands Conservation Council programs/projects and presented the proposed approach for grasslands species at risk action plans. She described the action plan proposal which includes a document, map and spreadsheet detailing groups who are acting, what actions they propose, which locations, which species and what time frame. These action plans will be focused on protection of habitat, the primary threat to most species at risk. Plans will be ecosystem based, rather than focused on individual species. Although the priority analysis identified 13 priority grasslands ecosections requiring action plans, action planning will begin with 3 ecosections, including the South Okanagan Basin. Alison proposes to link the South Okanagan Basin action plan (when it is drafted) to the biodiversity plan (now under development).

5. First Nations, Grasslands and Species at Risk (Oral Presentation)  
Richard Armstrong, TEK Specialist, Penticton Indian Band and En'owkin Centre

Richard spoke about the large % of species at risk located on Indian Reserves. He spoke about Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and how these provide information on reserves and throughout the traditional territory. Richard talked about traditional burning practices and their influence on local habitats indicating the importance of burning to maintain the health

of the land. He spoke about the programs he is involved in highlighting the importance of education programs for school children. He talked about the role of the Sylix language in maintaining history and knowledge for Okanagan people. He talked about how the language sounds mimic behavior and sounds in nature. He encouraged all programs to contact and include TEK representatives in their work; he invited workshop attendees to look at the En'owkin Centre website and work together with local First Nations bands.

6. The East Kootenay Conservation Program and Conservation Fund [Powerpoint presentation] Nancy Newhouse, Wildlife Biologist and Program Manager, East Kootenay Conservation Program

Nancy presented an overview of the conservation program and the process used to achieve a regional tax-based fund for conservation in the East Kootenays. Their work beginning in 2004 has resulted in \$20/household yearly levy for property owners in the East Kootenay. This amounts to \$225,000 per year of funds available for conservation. Nancy also presented a short inspirational, automated powerpoint showing images of the East Kootenays which focused on what makes local residents and visitors value the landscape, what makes it worth conserving.

**What influenced you to exclude Cranbrook (west Kootenays) from your bid to obtain tax-based conservation funding? Was it that Cranbrook (more urban) residents failed to recognize the value of wilderness?** Nancy: Not sure that was it. Polls suggested that residents supported conservation funding; however, local politicians opposed us in that community. In fact, even in the east Kootenay area, it was Invermere residents (more urban) that carried the vote. It appeared to us that urbanites who have lost the direct connection to wilderness were more likely to recognize that loss and vote for conservation funding.

**When will program funding be available?** Nancy: No funding until our program development is completed. We have to define what we will fund, how we will solicit proposals etc.

**Did Calgary resident's influence the vote [many Calgary residents have 2<sup>nd</sup> homes in the Kootenays].** Nancy: Well, you had to be a local resident to vote in the referendum, but we heard from a number of Calgary residents who supported it and expressed their disappointment that they were unable to vote [in support] of the tax fund.

**[Comment] Rather than seeing a conservation fund as a liability, I would think that property owners could use the required conservation fund as a benefit which provides a way to link ecological goods and services to property value.** Nancy: There was mixed support for increasing tax levy with increasing property value so we made it the same for all properties.

**Will you expand to the West Kootenays?** Nancy: We will consider expansion in a few years when we have a track record for funding conservation projects in the East Kootenays.

**[Comment] Concern about loss of 5% management fee each year (to BC Government) for administration of \$225,000 fund.** Nancy: We didn't know about this until recently. We are looking into whether the province would be willing to donate services and dedicate the administration fee back into the fund.

**What recommendations would you make for an initiative if one was attempted locally?** There are a number of recommendations and pitfalls to be aware of. One example would be making sure that the referendum is tied to Mayor and council elections (for efficiency). Ensure that rural people know to vote in the election, even if rural representatives are acclaimed (which is not uncommon). Also, be aware of legal limitations related to the wording of a referendum. We had difficulties with the wording of the question posed for referendum and although we could not get agreement on a simply worded question, we did what we could to provide simple communications to local voters (e.g. vote yes to tax referendum).

7. Facilitated Discussion: How do we clear the obstacles to co-ordinated, habitat-based grassland species-at-risk recovery?
  - Found Nancy Newhouse presentation inspiring
  - Bryn White: Developing a similar concept locally is part of my work plan; I'm inviting interested partners to work with me on this; Harold King supports this
  - Nancy: Need to recognize government's role in supporting this; give them credit
  - Jim Shaver: Need to pay our politicians more
  - Nancy: Important to be inclusive of the development community; do not frame a conservation tax fund initiative as "anti-development"; move away from "us and them".
  - Two ways of seeing people: they are the problem or they are part of the ecosystem (more the way that indigenous people see themselves)
  - Harold King: The problem is our dependence on growth; growth is the problem, not the solution. We need an approach where the majority "buys-in" to conservation
  - Eva Durance: Parallels to the distinction between need and want; maybe we can't have everything and save the land/be sustainable
  - Nancy: A conservation fund by itself does not create sustainability; need a philosophical change; link to our past as hunter/gatherers
  - Don Gayton: Are the baby steps we're taking sufficient? Why is there such a disconnect between politicians and the people who live here? The survey on SAR says they agree with conservation, yet the politicians actions seem inconsistent with what people say they want.

- Nancy: I'm optimistic; one small step that has large implications is that in obtaining conservation funding through the regional district, we have defined ecological conservation as a "service" provided by the regional district; thus, even in a downturn, conservation is considered a legitimate part of the business conducted in the east Kootenays
  - Grant Furness: How much do local actions really mean? Does \$20 end up being nothing but a salve for a guilty conscience?
  - This conference focused on local solutions; links to different countries are also important.
  - John Surgenor: Need to refocus on the central theme of the conference; there is a need to seek solutions for local problems, to set priorities; that's why we brought people together; what can we do here and be effective with those actions?
8. Habitat Unlocked: Opening the door to new communications with the media (Oral Presentation) Karin Wilson, Journalist & Associate Producer, CBC Radio

Karin talked about her experience as a journalist and producer beginning in sports writing and moving from there to broader horizons in journalism. She encouraged those bringing stories to the media to remember that media reflects what you provide them. She talked about why people take a confrontational approach with media and how that tends to make media more aggressive in their search for answers about a story. She explained the different approaches to story-telling that different media outlets take (e.g. story telling lead by the interviewer versus story telling lead by the producer/news editor); she suggested that we select media based on the story we have to tell (e.g. TV is best for visual stories).

Karin talked about the job of the media defining this as entertainment, informing the public, promoting government accountability and advocacy for the public. Ideally, media stories promote discussion. She suggests the media should reflect all of society. Every story has a formula (a person or people, doing something, for a specific reason). Reporters are looking for people and emotion.

As part of the exercise, Karin asked the audience to participate in an exercise to both define their relationship with the media and the stories they would like media to tell; audience members recorded their ideas individually and then discussed them in the larger group with Karin facilitating.

Karin addressed the concept of habitat specifically. If you want to talk about habitat, she suggested you tell the story in a way that "humans" can relate...link habitat to species so people can visualize the places you are talking about. There may be better words to use than habitat (e.g. home, or the place where animals live); when you talk about conservation priorities and statistics, focus on the losses not what is remaining (bad news is still better/more marketable than good news).

Finally, Karin provided a number of tips for dealing with the media and illustrated some of these in a mock interview based on an old news release. Some sample tips include: when media contacts you about a potential story, put them off long enough to prepare your answer/your story; call back when you say you will (within a reasonable amount of time given media deadlines). When you talk to the media, stick to the problem; don't lay blame. Answer the question to the best of your ability; avoid being evasive. If you don't know the answer, admit that you don't or commit to providing an answer at a later time. Don't be defensive, but be prepared to answer tough questions.

9. Writing Slam (Audience participation exercise) Karin Wilson and Don Gayton (facilitators)

Don Gayton spoke about science writing. He reminded the audience of the importance of keeping things simple, being brief and avoiding the use of jargon and government acronyms. He suggested that good analogies drawn from everyday experiences can be very effective in explaining complex concepts. He talked about the value of writing in the first person and the need to avoid writing in the third person, as many science trained writers have been taught (e.g. "I know" versus "it is known that"). He commented that good presentations can be effective without powerpoint and he encouraged powerpoint users not to make slides with print smaller than 24 point font size. "If you have to apologize for it, don't use it." Gayton reminded the audience.

As a final exercise, the audience was divided into groups and given different phrases or jargon words. The groups each had to find other ways to explain the concept using simple words, phrases or analogies that everyone would understand. The audience learned that some jargon can easily be substituted for simple phrases. Other jargon is more difficult to explain and may mean different things to different people; words like this are better to avoid altogether.

10. Closing Remarks (Oral Presentation)

Don Gayton, Ecologist, FORREX

11. Products/Results to be made available from workshop

- Notes from workshop sent to participants by email
- Proceedings will be posted on GCC website within 3 months of meeting
- Make results of priority analysis (tables/summary information) available to interested conservation partners