



*Grasslands Conservation Council of
British Columbia*

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

Date: Tuesday March 3, 2009

Location: Kamloops, BC

1. Welcome and Workshop objectives (Oral Presentation)

Don Gayton, Ecologist, FORREX

Don provided context in the form of the current situation of today's grasslands in terms of occurrence 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. Don spoke about the increasing focus on keeping common species common rather than exclusively focusing on species at risk. He likened the current grassland situation as a perfect storm where ORV abuse, weeds, ingrowth and overgrazing, climate change, and the current economic crisis will be the impetus for great change. He described the current crisis as an opportunity and quoted Wendel Berry: don't know where we've been going because we don't know where we've come from. He talked about how concepts can be organized (e.g. species need habitats and ecosystems need landscapes). He told the audience that the workshop would look at how to enable a process that supports recovery of grasslands species at risk and considers what our targets should be for this process. He indicated that common to many recovery plans is the focus on immediate threats to habitat and suggested this is likely to be a focus in addressing conservation of grasslands and the species at risk associated with them.

What jurisdictions are we dealing with? Need to include all (e.g. province, First Nations). There are concerns about overlapping legislation and lack of clarity about what is required. Could this be addressed by provincial and federal collaboration?

[Comment] We need to know about the historical work that has been done on the grasslands. Is this information being considered in the development of future approaches? – e.g. species at risk, habitats and ecosystems; need to know where we came from; archival information is important; historical air photos and maps; We agree. GCC and others would like to develop a provincial grasslands database Among other mapping/data products, GCC has developed grasslands mapping (2004). Other products include the mapping product developed by Ted Lea.

Do we have a plan for when cities reach their full density and need to expand outward? The identification of Settlement Zones' in the Kamloops Land and Resource Management Plan helps define expectations. Differences of opinion in audience about whether the objective should be to control growth or manage the impacts of growth. Some expressed the belief that it may not be realistic to prevent habitat loss while others believe that there are or should be limits to population growth. The challenge will be to maintain the current grasslands among all the competing demands. We need to instill desire and understanding about the need to protect grasslands; one approach is to focus on societal needs - i.e. local food security, support for local producers, etc.

2. Grasslands Species at Risk Workshop 2006 [Powerpoint presentation]
Bruno Delesalle, GCC Executive Director

Bruno 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. Bruno presented the vision for the Grasslands Species at Risk project crafted at this 2006 workshop and some of the example strategies that were described by this workshop.

ACTION: GCC will post 2006 workshop proceedings summary on their website
Q&A

3. Using the Conservation Framework to support recovery of Species at Risk
[Powerpoint presentation] Carmen Cadrin, Program Ecologist, Conservation Data Centre

Carmen spoke about the provincial Conservation Framework being crafted to support recovery of all species at risk (including those in the grasslands). The framework including supporting documents and spreadsheets is available for viewing on the provincial government website and can be used interactively to search for species and ecosystems in specific areas of the province. See the following website for more details <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/conservationframework/>

Q and A

Don Gayton: Does the conservation framework mean downgrading the importance of other species? No because part three of the framework focuses on maintaining species diversity; this includes species at risk and all other species as well.

[Comment] Ian Mackenzie: Important to consider tradeoffs in terms of ranks – i.e., in a given area, if there is 1 high priority species vs. 3 lower priority species – and balance priorities in a practical way. Also consider spatial configuration.

Are other organizations involved in the Conservation Framework? Goal is to extend the framework to all ministries and stakeholders and enlist support. MOE Regions and MOFR and being engaged right now.

4. Interior Grassland Species at Risk Recovery: Conservation Priority Analysis [powerpoint presentation] John Surgenor, Wildlife Biologist, Ministry of Environment

John 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] Judy Guichon: I am concerned about the inference you make about the security of Crown Land vs. Private Land; species don't know where the lines are drawn. Your work appears to imply that private land is more at risk because private owners are somehow poorer managers. John: the work does include collaboration with different stakeholders; **Judy: Private land is easier to manage for these values; there may be fewer demands on private land than on crown. You need to work with people on the ground; I disagree that crown land is less at risk than private land;** John: from a development perspective, Crown land is easier to manage in some ways as is it safer from development; government has more power to determine what priorities will be implemented on crown land.

[Comment] Rick Howie: There are various pressures on land/habitat and these pressures are always changing; we need to understand how these factors affect grasslands. What opportunities might there be to consider research that looks at these pressures and anticipates what might be the biggest future challenge; what lands/species are likely to be most at risk in future? We need to get ahead of the curve.....not always react to what is past bad news. We should think about how we can influence future trends in ways that support species/ecosystems. Should work on identifying process and pressures on resources (alienation, urban, vineyards, climate change, and recreation abuse). What happens if there is more or less grazing? And can we do something to influence the pressures on these lands?

[Comment] Don Thompson: Good idea to add to the conservation process; take into account the influence of pressure trends. Multiple issues need to be addressed, not just Species at Risk – working ranches are also a concern, need to have organizations working together towards sustainable ranching. Species at Risk issues are important, but there are other emerging issues as well. Need to

move towards working together for the larger landscape; support existing capacity rather than always seeking to generate new capacity.

5. Thompson Basin Priority Grasslands Mapping [Powerpoint presentation]
Ian Mackenzie, GCC GIS Analyst

Ian presented the approach that GCC is currently using to develop priority grasslands mapping. He discussed the method used using examples from the finished priority mapping portfolio for the Thompson Basin. These portfolios are produced using Marxan, a program that allows conservation planners to use different types of spatial and technical information to identify conservation priorities. GCC intends to provide these kinds of portfolios throughout the grasslands regions of the Southern Interior. They are currently working on priority mapping portfolios in the North, Central and South Okanagan-Similkameen and would also like to complete similar portfolios in the Nicola, Cariboo-Chilcotin and Kootenay landscapes over the next several years.

6. First Nations perspective on Grasslands and Species at Risk (Oral Presentation)
Christine Saddleman, First Nations Representative from Quilchena-Spahomin Reserve

I'm an Okanagan Nation Member. Our traditional territory ranges from Merritt – Westwold – Kootenays – Colville Washington – Princeton & back to Merritt). I am registered with the Upper Nicola Band & live on the Spahomin & Quilchena Reserves. We have a high % of grasslands on and around our reserve lands. Hearing the stories of my Elders of how our grasslands used to be compared to today, there has been a devastating change for the worst. The departments that I work in have been participating in the study of 'Burrowing Owl' and researching the 'Predictive Ecosystem Mapping' & 'Plant & Animal Species Habitat & Cultural' With the interviews with our Elders regarding the plant & animal species, the diversity and numbers are not what they used to be due to overgrazing, long-term grazing licences, urbanization, lack of water, and different management systems for the land. This all results in poor range conditions on the reserve lands because the members have cattle or horses continuously grazing on the range [on reserve], year after year. We are told to take up [crown] grazing area in Princeton B.C. , while the major ranches around us get the prime local grazing areas. A past chief was and still is totally against SARA with concerns that it is just another way for the government to take control of our lands and resources and I supported him on his thoughts. However, in the past few months, I have been looking at the bigger picture: not only looking at our reserve lands but looking at my whole territory, which includes all the territory land that I described earlier. With people working on different projects here and there, why can't we all come together and work together on the issues of the poor grasslands and SAR species in a positive way? How could we First Nations work with non-native on these issues or how can non-native work with us First Nations on these issues? First Nations need to be at the table when making discussions on how to care for the lands; we have been the care takers for many years & generations and still are. First Nations have always looked after the land and resources. We look beyond our own age group

and consider what will happen for the next 7 generations. That's what I need to do for my children and future grandchildren. How can we work together with all the overlappers that have been pointed out (FN's, ranchers, ministries, developers...) for the health of our lands, animals and resources? To have the First Nations at the table, I'll tell you now, that there are agreements that will be required. I am not willing to tell you all my secrets of my culture and beliefs with the risk of it being put out there for the public to destroy at some point in time. We could consider using agreements to help us become comfortable with sharing our information. Some examples are: Memorandum of Understanding, Intellectual Property Rights & Data Sharing Agreements.

7. Ecosystem Restoration in Kamloops Forest District (Oral Presentation)
Al Jacobs, Forest Technician, Ministry of Forests and Range

Al spoke about the Ministry of Forests and Range work to establish an ecological restoration steering committee to coordinate ecosystem restoration in the Kamloops Forest District. They are looking into multiple sectors for funding. This year, funding has declined and he anticipates only receiving \$20,000 for restoration projects. Al was hired to do field work to find potential areas for restoration, targeting mainly Natural Disturbance Type 4 areas. Most projects have involved removal of dead, beetle killed Ponderosa Pine. They have hired a consultant to set up restoration prescriptions. In 2008-2009, projects first focused on cutting over-storey trees to open up forested stands (e.g. treatments on 173 ha in Barnhartvale, 188 ha in Duck Range area, 126 ha in Heffley, and 126 ha on Kamloops Indian Band lands). Next, they concentrated funding on understory clearing. They have planned some wetlands work (focused on fencing to keep out damaging recreational activities); this work is not yet completed. Work plan includes a May review of previous restoration work completed in the Dewdrop and Hat Creek areas.

Q&A

Ted Tom: Are there plans to introduce prescribed burning? First Nations Elders support this; I really like the ecosystem restoration approach.

Possibility, but just opening up stands right now.

Dave Low: [Comment] Used to more grasslands, encroachment of forest damaging to their value; concern about overemphasis of what is current or recent past habitat rather than managing large area for habitat supply and "allowing" habitat on specific sites to change over time.

8. 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 presented the proposed approach for grasslands species at risk action plans which is proposed to include 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 Thompson Basin. Building an action plan in the Thompson Basin will be facilitated by the recently completed priority mapping for the area, but there is a need to identify partners to deliver actions on the ground once the action plan is drafted.

Q and A:

[Comment] Ted Tom – pointed out that some species at risk have been located in the Nicola area (Nooaitch Reserve), and data not necessarily reflected. Mention of seven Williamson sapsuckers nest , badgers, and rattlesnakes encountered in field surveys by upper Nicola Band. Alison noted we are working with available data, some pieces still missing, it's a work in progress

[Comment] Don Thompson – Federal Lands are managed by different resources (i.e., Dept. of Agriculture, Dept. of National Defense). These should be acknowledged separately in presentation as the tool and funding are different for federal lands. Locally there are few hectares of Federal non-Indian Reserve lands, but some of the little that we do have is grasslands. These areas have allocated funding but need to better links and partnerships with other agencies

Angela Knopp: In the Chilcotin, the federal government owns 40,700 ha, but not all of it is grasslands; these lands include Beecher's Prairie

Rick Howie – how does the recovery action plan relate to SARA. What is the difference between implementation of recovery strategies and Action Plans? The current focus of action plans on habitat comes from recovery plans; some areas (e.g. Okanagan are doing species specific action plans which are feeding into grasslands action plans for priority ecosections); otherwise, at this point, I will incorporate habitat focused priority actions from recovery plans into Grasslands action plans for the grasslands species on the our list.

9. MultiSAR: Helping Landowners Benefit from Species at Risk [Powerpoint presentation] Francois Blouin, Acting Lethbridge Species at Risk Biologist, Province of Alberta

Francois presented the details of an Alberta government sponsored program to address species at risk conservation in Alberta. He highlighted the component of the program that involves providing free assessments for landowners including recommendations for management approaches that can benefit both species at risk and the landowner. If the landowner chooses to adopt these recommendations, MultiSAR works with the landowner to achieve the necessary funding and desired

management improvements; if both parties agree, the project is implemented after a 5 year stewardship agreement between MultiSAR and the landowner is signed.

Q and A:

Pedro Lara Almuedo – **Can the certificate provided for participating in the MultiSAR Program be used to market agriculture products?** Hasn't been used for that yet, but there is potential for that (distant dream), would like to get there somehow – something that the landowners may want to take the lead on

Helen Davis – **What is the motivation level of ranchers to get involved in your program?** When they are shown the benefits, natural resources in terms of wildlife, they understand they have a role to play, recommendations are made by experts and provide them with positive benefits (i.e., weight gain for their cattle). We are working towards having landowners recognized for protecting important habitat – ideally we would like something formal that could give landowners some peace of mind that they have participated in conservation and lessens their chances of federal government taking action under SARA to protect habitat or SAR. **What percentage of those approached have agreed to participate?** A lot of ranchers needed to see the process in action before they wanted to participate. Did a demonstration project with one willing rancher; based on the results of the pilot, other neighbors agreed to participate– there have been 3 ranches side by side. Now people are approaching MultiSAR. **Do you or other MultiSAR staff go to the farm and meet?** Meet one on one with ranchers at their home to discuss possible participation in program. If a rancher signs up, he/she comes to the office in Lethbridge for next meetings. Boardroom environment for meetings; easiest way to include multi-disciplinary team.

How do you address fine filter (microhabitat or water features) when you are taking a coarse filter approach? We do look for key habitat features during our field surveys. Pastures will be assessed and receive a range score, certain types of soil present – depending on wildlife species that are found, the ones with the highest degree of endangerment will dictate the kinds of actions taken – this can include management of habitat features or broad scale management strategies. **How do we get down to specific habitat features?** Field work; Expert opinion enters in to the mix – or more specific surveys in appropriate conditions. Determine which areas are being used by which species – by walking micro habitats.

10. DISCUSSION GROUPS Wendy Gardner, Thompson Rivers University acted as facilitator

Breakout sessions were used and break out groups provided their feedback in writing to the facilitator who integrated/summarized the results and presented them to the audience providing opportunities for correcting inaccurately summarized material. The final summary of that work is provided on the following pages.

Question 1. How do we integrate species at risk management with other values we have for grasslands?

Breakout Groups Summary:

- a) Education/extension
 - i. Identify and be familiar with your audience
 - ii. Increasing awareness of issues, BMPs
 - iii. Changing attitudes (e.g., smoking, seatbelts), of stakeholder groups towards sustainable practices. Encourage behavior change, need paradigm shift, make priority “ingrained to protect our resource values”
 - iv. Youth – general public
 - v. Extension towards stakeholders and land managers, owners, decision makers
 - vi. Workshops

- b) Communication & Coordination
 - i. Improving data sharing
 - ii. Need all stakeholders at the table from the start, need to identify all stakeholders
 - iii. Distinction for First Nations
 - iv. Jurisdictional stakeholders vs. interested stakeholders
 - v. Stakeholders meetings, establish values and ranking – seek management practices that are favorable to more than one value
 - vi. Coordination amongst agencies
 - vii. Someone outside government to drive project forward
 - viii. Integration with other programs and plans, need for understanding and coordination with existing programs
 - ◆ i.e., Environmental farm planning, Biodiversity plans, South Thompson overview plan, Invasive Plant Council, livestock associations, Tribal councils, ER committees
 - ◆ integration of concerns private land and crown land, steering committee to head up
 - ◆ integrated team of professionals
 - ◆ support for stewardship agreements

- c) Zoning/Land Tenure
 - i. Private vs. Crown land > need steering committee to integrate policies or approaches
 - ii. Incorporate federal and First Nations lands
 - iii. Incorporate goals into local/regional government planning
 - iv. Explore existing resource plans/committees from different agencies to identify active partners

Other Notes:

As part of integrating SAR with other grassland related values, and in a larger context, we need to consider impacts from the loss of forests (Pine Beetle etc.) and climate change.

One group indicated that to answer the question, they needed first to identify the “other values” referenced in the question; they summarized those values as listed below.

Key Values Identified: Ranching, Forestry, Recreation, Tourism, Development, Hunting, Traditional Use/FN, Aesthetics, Watersheds, Agriculture, Research, Other wildlife (non-SAR)

Several groups commented on broader issues that were influencing or could influence SAR management; while there was uncertainty about how these would influence SAR, these concerns were considered important to keep in mind and consider as strategies are developed.

Question 2. Is some form of grasslands species at risk conservation partnership a viable option for the Thompson Nicola grasslands? If so, what does it look like? A non-profit? An organization of organizations? Who would be involved? Should partnership have a broader scope than just species at risk (e.g., should it involve keeping working ranches working, etc?)

Breakout Groups Summary:

Yes, this is a viable option. Summary of key points:

- i. Representation from all stakeholders, important to have stakeholder buy in. Note: different areas may need to have different key stakeholders (i.e., specific to region), focus on partnerships not single interest advocacy.
- ii. Do not re-invent the wheel, use existing models (similar to SOSCP, OCCP, EKCP)
- iii. Broader scope
- iv. Transparent
- v. Holistic perspective – working for the group not for particular interests
- vi. Government must have role along with other parties
- vii. Needs to be a coordinator (outside of government)
- viii. Need emphasis on staff time rather than on funding alone – look at job sharing or donations of staff time from other organizations
- ix. Question, geographic scale – i.e., Thompson Nicola as one committee OR separated by region (Thompson and Nicola separate)?
- x. Challenges – funding, stakeholder buy in, avoiding committee burn out, keeping people engaged, keeping group streamlined (not too complicated/cumbersome)

Question 3. Prioritize the next key steps to establishing this partnership. What are the top 3 points; What are the strengths/weaknesses, opportunities/threats

Summary of key points:

- i. Get information from SOSCP etc. budget, structure, set up
- ii. Identify existing grasslands/related groups in our region, and encourage connectivity between regions
- iii. Summary of all potential ‘players’, identifying allies, listing possible groups that may impact grasslands, influence land-use decisions (e.g. is it land developers and recreational development companies? Is impacts driven mainly by economic interests?)
- iv. Introduce a pilot, something with short time frame, action and success early to get the ball rolling
 - v. Define partnerships and develop plans for implementation
 - vi. Focus on communication and education
 - vii. Garner political support from local level to Victoria
- viii. Develop a list of Stakeholders – give incentives for getting involved (dangle a carrot), recognize burnout
- ix. Certification and marketing, branding opportunities
- x. Identify funding sources and begin to secure funding
- xi. Engage the public, Bring to public forum, consider engaging TRU students
- xii. Implement actions! Not just “participate/contribute”

Alternate ideas:

- Address the ‘pieces’ of Species at Risk through existing groups
- ◆ E.g., SAR development, SAR ranching, SAR weeds: Provincial Noxious Weed committee/South Interior Weed Committee, Planning for Change Initiative, Environmental Farm Plan; Nicola Watershed Community Roundtable for Merritt Area; LRMP or similar group for Kamloops Area; Ecological Restoration teams in each area?

11. Closing remarks (Oral presentation)

Don Gayton, Ecologist, FORREX

Grassland species at risk is just the tip of the iceberg. Could grasslands conservation be lead by GCC chapters? Possibly. The big positive of GCC is that they are outside of government. In the workshop, we’ve talked about the need for a local champion; someone who could function in the way that Bryn White (SOSCP) acts as an advocate for the South Okanagan-Similkameen. Is this a role that Thompson Rivers University could play for the Thompson Region? Mapping of values is of key importance to municipalities. We’ve gone through the issues, now we need to reach out and collectively work on solutions. Ideally, we would treat Thompson Basin and Nicola Basin separately. In the Okanagan-Similkameen, the Meadowlark Festival is important to bring grasslands to the public’s attention. What about a festival here? You already have something similar; could more be made of the burrowing owl release? Maybe FORREX can play a facilitative role. We have an office in Kamloops. Today, we heard general agreement from those at this workshop, that a

conservation partnership would do more than focus on species at risk; the partnership might focus on grassland ecosystems. GCC will post 2006 workshop proceedings summary on their website. Notes from the workshop sent to participants by email and posted on the GCC website within 3 months of the meeting. In 3 months, we will call another meeting of stakeholders (those who attended this workshop would be invited). Meanwhile, FORREX will develop a discussion paper on existing conservation programs across the province. GCC & FORREX will work to help move these ideas/concepts forward.

Other small group conversations in workshop:

- Department of National Defense biologist: Currently army is looking at addressing intensive impacts to Wainright, Alberta base by shifting more training to Beecher's Prairie (in particular...more tanks).