



*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:** Thursday March 5, 2009

**Location:** Williams Lake, 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. He suggested that the grassland situation is currently a perfect storm with issues and threats such as off-road vehicles, weeds, forest ingrowth, overgrazing, and climate change, but that the current crisis is an opportunity to go from the perfect storm to a perfect solution. Don told the audience that there would be some discussion later in the workshop about conservation programs that currently exist in other regions

2. Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Society (Oral Presentation)

Marg Evans, Coordinator for CCCS

Marg told the workshop that Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Society works to introduce environment issues and conservation to as many people/groups as possible, that their goal is to foster caring. She also indicated that CCCS is an "on-the-ground" grassroots organization. She described some of the education/art displays/exhibits they have available for use. She talked about a current project involving sign construction for Junction Sheep Range area. She talked about how her organization is currently working with Williams Lake sportmen/ranchers to address problems with recreational use on Junction Sheep range. She notes that they also provide programs at Gavin Lake Outdoor School and are involved in Invasive plants/ecosystem restoration groups. Their education modules are taught to over 800 local students. Marg talked about their work with Williams Lake Field Naturalists to provide Scout Island displays and also their work with Baker Creek Enhancement Society

(Quesnel). She also noted that the society has prepared some Species at Risk information specific to the Cariboo-Chilcotin (brochures).

3. Friends of Churn Creek Protected Area (Oral Presentation)  
Michael Kennedy, Vice President of FCC

Mike talked about the conceptual beginning 1 ½ years ago for Friends of Churn Creek Protected Area. He described a workshop held 8 months ago with the assistance of Tom Hughes. In the workshop, they examined various options including existing models for “friends of” organizations in other jurisdictions. Mike commented that the Churn Creek grasslands are world class (may be the most intact grasslands left in the world). Although conservation of these grasslands is the responsibility of the province, Mike noted that this protected area has been affected by various issues including: public use, invasive plants, as well as lack of staff and funding resources given its large size (36,000 ha). Mike told the audience that Friends of Churn Creek would like to focus on public education, research, funding through HCTF and Ecosystem Restoration activities. He indicated that a constitution is currently being drafted and they will pursue registration as a society. He invited those attending the workshop to attend the launch meeting which will occur in Williams Lake (Thompson Rivers University campus) on April 18 at 12:30 pm. The Friends of Churn Creek will be selling memberships at this meeting and would appreciate as many as possible to support them either by attending the meeting or purchasing a membership.

Q and A:

**With the low budget, what is suffering?** Michael: Many things: baseline research opportunities, concerns with public use of the Protected areas, issues with invasive species, and public education opportunities.

**[Comment]: You should consider the addition of bluebird nest boxes to control grasshopper populations.**

**[Comment]: There is only one BC Parks staff person with responsibility for Churn Creek; that person has responsibilities for a number of other parks as well and can only dedicate less than one fifth of their time to Churn Creek. More on-the-ground attention is needed for this area.**

4. BC Parks and Chilcotin Grasslands  
Tom Hughes, Area Supervisor, BC Parks [Powerpoint presentation]

Tom presented on the BC Parks role in grasslands conservation focusing on Churn Creek Protected area and the restoration projects that are being completed to address substantial areas of forest encroachment into grasslands. Over the last couple of years much of the funding has been originating from the MOFR Ecosystem Restoration Program. Key wildlife species mentioned were Mule Deer and California Bighorn

Sheep. Key challenges to these initiatives include: lack of funding, and need to address potential impacts of ground disturbance (address invasive plants) and cattle use. One approach to address invasive plants has been the preparation of Pest Management Plan in partnership with Cariboo Regional District and the Invasive Plant Council. Four proposals for the next field season have been submitted, but funding for these projects remains uncertain.

Q and A:

**How long was the land rested from cattle grazing after a prescribed burn and did the return of cattle grazing have an impact on restoration efforts?** Tom: the cattle were allowed in the prescribed burn area within a year, and yes, this could have hindered rejuvenation of grass.

**What was the condition of the biological crust prior to the prescribed burn and is post-burn monitoring happening?** Tom: based on pre-burn work conducted by Kristie Iverson including some baseline information from 2003, the biological crust was nearly absent. Monitoring of response vegetation, including biological crust, is part of the prescribed burn plan.

5. Ecosystem Restoration Program [Powerpoint presentation]  
Harry Jennings, Ecosystem Restoration Team Leader, Ministry of Forests and Range

Harry highlighted the importance of the restoration program which requires active projects to prevent degradation of ecosystems. He noted that these restoration projects require a champion; that experience has shown that little is completed if no one is given time in their work plans to complete these tasks. Ongoing funding for Harry's Team Leader position is uncertain after November of this year. At present, available project funding is insufficient to complete all the project ideas available; funding sources include: (Forest Investment Account and Job Opportunities Program). Harry is presently exploring a new \$25 Million funding opportunity (Oil funding for Sheik in United Arab Emirates). All project funding is via grant applications; there is no base funding. Harry talked about how the ER program requires people; 80% of program funding is directed to First Nations as they live in/use the areas being treated. The Restoration program focuses on tree encroachment in the region; this encroachment appears to be occurring in 20 year flushes (e.g. Beecher's Prairie). While removal of dead pine is not a public/agency concern, removal of encroaching fir may be an issue of perception for some people. Harry talked about the value of information signs to explain restoration projects and profiled a "Grassland Again" sign constructed for a project near the highway. This project profiles a managed burn. He mentioned the establishment of grassland benchmark areas in the LRMP that were negotiated with the forest industry. These areas are not yet formally legalized, but will be soon. Harry talked about the links between ecosystem restoration and other initiatives like bioenergy and highlighted the need for more education, research, and monitoring.

6. First Nations Perspectives on Grasslands [Powerpoint presentation]  
Kristy Palmantier, First Nations Liaison, Ministry of Environment

Kristy introduced herself to the audience as a Sugar Cane Band member, rancher, casket maker and vice chair of the Invasive Plant Council of BC. She talked about the history of First Nations locally and within the Thompson-Cariboo-Chilcotin regions. She spoke about the spiritual and medicinal significance of grasslands for her people. She indicated that the 1862 small pox epidemic is seen by First Nations as last week or yesterday in their oral history timeline. The names of the numerous people lost to that disease are still known today. She spoke of the slow recovery of local surviving band members since the epidemic, when there were more than 3000 people in the area (early 1800s, before European contact), to 100s in the early 1900s and now approximately 500. She talked about the varied perspectives on wild (feral) horses and expressed strong support for management of invasive plants. She spoke about First Nations traditional burning practices in grasslands. She discussed a number of grasslands species highlighting the current work being done by Canoe Creek band members to survey Spadefoot Toads and Badger. She highlighted the importance of Fraser River Sockeye and Sturgeon as keystone species and indicators of environmental health. Kristy highlighted concerns about climate change and expressed an interest in continuing to work cooperatively with others at the workshop on these and other important areas of shared concern.

Q and A:

**Are the High Bar and Green Lake/Green Timber different bands and are there a few left from that band?** Kristy: Yes, they are different bands. There are few members of the Green Lake/Green Timber band left. I am working on paper on that topic and looking at some of Tate's work as part of my research.

7. Grasslands Species at Risk Workshop 2006 [Powerpoint presentation]  
Julie Steciw, Wildlife Biologist, Ministry of Environment

Julie 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.

Q and A:

**[comment] Don Gayton: Reviewing the vision today, I see that there may be a need to revise the vision to include a cultural/spiritual element in the vision.**

8. Using the Conservation Framework to support recovery of Species at Risk [powerpoint]  
Jeff Brown, Recovery Planning Coordinator, Ministry of Environment

Jeff 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: There seem to be a number of species at risk categories/lists. For example, COSEWIC has a list, the province has a red and blue list as well as a list of Identified Wildlife. Is there a plan to integrate these lists?** No the lists serve different purposes. The SARA schedule 1 “list” which is produced by COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada) links to the federal Species at Risk Act. Legal requirements related to recovery planning apply to species on those lists. Identified Wildlife are defined in the province of BC; specific requirements affecting forest and range practices on crown land apply to species on the identified wildlife list. These requirements are enacted through general wildlife measures and wildlife habitat areas through the Forest and Range Practices Act. The red and blue lists are also produced in BC, by the provincial government. These provide a list of species for consideration for more formal designation as Endangered or Threatened, either provincially under the British Columbia Wildlife Act, or nationally by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC); they also help BC to set conservation priorities for species/ecological communities considered at risk in British Columbia.

**Don Gayton: What are the Species at Risk Act Schedule 1 (COSEWIC) listed grasslands species in the Cariboo-Chilcotin?** **Alison:** At present there are 9 species in the Fraser River Basin Ecosection that are both SARA Schedule 1 and defined as “grassland” users by the Grasslands Recovery Implementation Group Steering Committee. These species are Short-eared Owl, Western Yellow-bellied Racer, Long-billed Curlew, Western Rattlesnake, Columbian Carpet Moss, Gopher Snake, Rusty Cord Moss and Alkaline Wing-nerved Moss, and Rubber Boa. Grassland users are classified into three groups including: grassland focused species (e.g. traditional users of grass dominated habitats e.g. Short-eared Owl), grassland matrix species (users that focus on habitats that are generally surrounded by grasslands e.g. Rusty Cord Moss) and partial grassland species (found sometimes in grasslands but also in other ecosystems e.g. Rubber Boa).

9. 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]: You may want to consider adding “likelihood of success” as an indicator or criteria for establishing priorities for action planning.**

**Mike Simpson: Asked for more details on the conservation programs in southern BC?** There are three such conservation programs in the south eastern part of BC; Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program, South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program, and East Kootenays Conservation Program. Don Gayton mentioned that he had committed at the Kamloops workshop to write a discussion paper describing these organizations and what can be learned from them.

**Roger [Comment]: You need to incorporate what has been already done to prevent further loss.**

**Don Gayton: Where does the SIGRIG (South Interior Grasslands Recovery Implementation Group) operate? Does it overlap with other groups that exist in the Cariboo-Chilcotin? Is another group required to implement action plans if the SIGRIG already exists?** SIGRIG includes everyone that attended the 2006 meeting. Since it was not practical to contact everyone, every time a decision was needed, a Steering Committee was established. The Steering Committee includes provincial recovery planning experts in applicable regions and in Victoria as well as conservation program representatives where these programs exist. In the Cariboo-Chilcotin, Julie Steciw is the Steering Committee representative. Neither the Steering Committee nor the SIGRIG would provide the necessary regional involvement that we would like to see.

10. Thompson Basin Priority Grasslands Mapping [Powerpoint presentation] Richard Doucette, Conservation Planner, Grasslands Conservation Council of British Columbia

Richard 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.

**Can you incorporate other ecosystem data layers or are you limited to the ones you describe in your presentation?** Yes. Marxan is a flexible program and can work

with many different kinds of data. Our intent is to adapt the approach to reflect regional priorities and utilize the different kinds of data available in different regions.

**How much ground-truthing do you do to confirm that your mapping priorities reflect what is actually on the ground?** There is some ground truthing/field work that has been done to support the Thompson Basin project, but field work is limited. We have distributed the portfolio with a disclaimer that highlights the limited ground-truthing that has occurred. Improving field verification of the portfolio maps is something that could be taken on by another agency, perhaps Thompson Rivers University could do more on this. Although the results are not verified by systematic field visits, there are a number of other ways that data is verified. For example, where we use VRI and other types of vegetation mapping, field verification is built into that mapping product. Also, we review recent air photos. Finally, our product has been reviewed by a panel of experts familiar with the areas being mapped.

**Who are you marketing this portfolio to? In the Williams Lake area, who would use a local priority grasslands portfolio?** Provincial, regional and municipal governments in other jurisdictions find the portfolio useful in planning and priority setting. To the extent that it helps identify spatially where the conservation priorities are located, it helps to direct various types of activities: development, recreation, conservation initiatives, etc. It has been used to help justify funding proposals where conservation priorities are identified. Locally, it could help support/incorporate priorities for ecosystem restoration.

**Grant Huffman: How are the ALR boundaries incorporated into the portfolio?** The Agricultural Land Reserve or ALR is mapped in key maps in the portfolio. The area of overlap between ALR and priority grasslands is also quantified in tables within the document. Selections of priority grasslands were made independent of ALR designations; ALR location did not influence selections.

11. 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 Fraser River Basin. Alison proposes to consider expanding the Fraser River action plan to include both the Cariboo Basin and Cariboo Plateau ecosections as the actions may be similar enough between plans and the species at risk locations sufficiently rare to make this feasible.

Q and A:

**Do any lands trust organizations own land in the Cariboo – Chilcotin area? Yes.**

A number of individuals in the audience mentioned a couple of properties owned by land trusts.

12. 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:

**What is the incentive for landowners to get involved in your program?**

Landowners are already interested in protecting species and range quality/health. The program is marketed as one that provides a potential for increased income for ranchers; better grass/range health should result in better health of cattle and improved weight gain. Land owners also receive a free wildlife assessment/survey of their lands. We do practical things like install offsite water in a location where there is either poor quality water or no water; this type of work is shown to result in better utilization of grass, and healthier cattle that exhibit improved weight gains. Some landowners are concerned about the Species at Risk Act and that the federal government may intervene on their private lands. Participating in a program like this helps ensure that this does not happen; it shields them from the potential consequences of SARA.

**Do you engage Urban groups as well or does the MultiSAR program apply only to ranchers and rural landowners?** MultiSAR connects with urbanites more through local watershed groups. One of our staff members sits as a member of these watershed groups. Our program has an education component; we do presentations whenever we can. The biggest concern we have with urban impacts to species at risk is through roads networks. Alberta has an extensive road network which is well developed, even in rural areas. Urban sprawl is another concern, but roads are the biggest threat related to urban people.

**Do you work cooperatively with the United States? Yes but we could do more.**

One of our MultiSAR areas of focus (south of Lethbridge) is adjacent to the Canada-

US border. In the US, there is native habitat east of this priority area and farm land to the south. The Milk River Basin Watershed Group in Alberta works directly with the US and we participate in that watershed group.

**Do you work with local First Nations people on MultiSAR projects?**

Yes. We work immediately south of the Blood Indian Reserve. We have worked with the Blood Nation on habitat suitability index models (e.g. training) and are working on reintroduction of the Swift Fox; there is lots of potential for future partnerships and we want to see more first nations culture incorporated into the management plans we are crafting.

**What is the landownership for lands that you work on?** There is a mix.

Approximately half is crown land and the other half is private; the approach is the same regardless of ownership as the crown and private lands tended to be managed together as a unit (ranch). We have more control & tools to conserve species on crown lands (e.g. the Species at Risk Act provides an opportunity for set backs, timing restrictions and development restrictions on crown lands). These types of recommendations can only be suggested for private land; they are not legally required.

**How long was the MultiSAR program in the planning stages before it was implemented?** Planning occurred from 2002-2006; during that time government undertook background surveys to assess the suitability of the models being proposed for implementation and the program was initiated in the Milk River. Since 2007, we have been implementing the model over a much larger area that includes the Milk River.

13. DISCUSSION: How do we clear the obstacles to co-ordinated, habitat-based grassland species at risk recovery? What are the next steps in co-ordinated, habitat-based grasslands species at risk recovery? Mike Anderson, Fraser Basin Council acting as facilitator for the discussion, with help from Don Gayton and Alison Peatt. The facilitators lead a discussion of all workshop participants structured by three questions (see below); answers were recorded on a word document visible to the workshop and corrections were made to the record based on audience comments.

**1. What organizations exist in this area and would be interested in involvement with the Grasslands Species at Risk Project?**

Possible local partners or organizations that may influence land management in the Fraser Basin and surrounding eco-sections include: Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Invasive Plant Committee, Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Society, Friends of Churn, Williams Lake Field Naturalists, Ducks Unlimited, Fraser Basin Council, Ministry of Forests and Range, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Northern Shuswap Tribal Council, Tsilhqot'in National Government, Carrier Chilcotin Tribal Council, Esketemc, BC Cattlemens Association, Canadian Cattlemens Association, The Land Conservancy, Department of National Defence,

Important Bird Areas Initiative, Canadian Wildlife Service, Academia (University of BC, Thompson Rivers University, Simon Fraser University, University of Northern BC, University of Saskatchewan, University of Alberta, University of BC-Okanagan), BC Parks, Upland Bird Society, Local Weed Committee, Grasslands Conservation Council of BC, BC Wildlife Federation, Local governments, Wild Sheep Society, Mtn Bike Association, Guide Outfitters, ATV association, Back Country Horseman, Bluebird Society, Cariboo-Chilcotin Ecosystem Restoration Steering Committee; Williams Lake Sportsmen, Partners in Flight, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Nature Trust. Some workshop participants mentioned that many of these groups are interested in grasslands land use, but the majority may not be active in “on the ground” projects.

## **2. How can we achieve coordinated species recovery for Cariboo-Chilcotin grasslands?**

### **Funding:**

- We may be able to do this as part of the Ecosystem Restoration effort, but there are concerns re funding, medium term funding for current staff.
- Participants wondered if setting up a partnership sponsored by an NGO would have a longer life span/more secure funding than a government supported approach.
- Some workshop participants are concerned about fund-raising being part of a coordinators job; this can take up all the time a coordinator has and limit the options for actions required.

### **Partnership models:**

#### General:

- We need to look ahead and consider what the issues will be in 20-30 years; given that there are similar interests from a number of different groups, it would be more efficient, given limited resources, to plan for the future in a coordinated, collaborative way. Every region is different, so a regional focus is reasonable.
- If this is to be successful, the approach must include benefits for those that participate. Would a broader approach be of greater benefit?
- The workshop attendees agree on an action focus; people want to “do” rather than “plan”; they want to get partners to agree on priorities. The question is how do we organize this and balance it with other priorities?

#### Existing Committee:

- Participants spoke about the challenges of staffing the committees that already exist; there is resistance to initiating another committee.
- Some believe the Ecosystem Restoration Committee could be the best fit, but they are not sure how species at risk would change the focus of the committee or sit with existing partners.
- There is still interest in exploring the role of the Ecosystem Restoration Committee. Just about every group listed in question 1 is represented on the

committee (missing a representative from the land trust (but they are interested) and forest industry).

- The workshop participants talked about the existing level of collaboration between NGOs in the Chilcotin. The facilitator asked if participants want to be coordinated; what is the closest thing to coordinated approaches that currently exists? Participants named the Ecosystem Restoration Committee. Is the focus of that committee sufficiently broad? Maybe a broader focus could be developed within the committee.
- The Ecosystem restoration committee is active and operational with appropriate linkage between operational/strategic. We don't want to be weighed down by strategy, so that we can't get to action and we see no way to get away from oversight/responsibility to funding. There is some residual concern that not everything goes through Ecosystem Restoration Steering Committee and that as action focused as that committee is, there isn't enough action on the ground to satisfy everyone.

Shift Ecosystem Restoration Committee focus to include species at risk/grasslands conservation mandate

- Grassland importance has risen and fallen over a long time frame; some people remain concerned about an ecosystem restoration committee stopping or being diluted by taking on other responsibilities. They believe it might be better to create another group. Clearly, there is a need for some strategic planning/lots of work yet to be done.
- The facilitator asked if there was a desire to restructure the ER Committee and broaden its focus- perhaps take some of the focus of the committee outside government? If the committee funding is currently uncertain, what is the mechanism to address this problem? Do participants collaborate within the ER Committee? Participants believe that the committee is cooperative but this may be because of its focus on oversight/input into Ecosystem work; the committee continues to be a work in progress, after 1.5 years since it was formed. There is uncertainty about whether it would be appropriate to dissolve the Ecosystem Restoration Committee and reform it into something else or whether the ER Steering Committee could just broaden its mandate to address species at risk.

Other models to consider:

- Will it take too long to get a government position?
- Francois Blouin suggests we consider a model like Prairie Conservation Forum which exists in Canada's prairies;
- Are there two levels to this project: a strategic level to provide broad direction and then a group to implement on the ground; yes, there is a project Steering Committee already that provides strategic direction but still need a group to implement actions on the ground.
- Participants would like to know more about partnership models that currently exist.
- Would there be interest in a Cariboo Chilcotin Grasslands Committee?

- What about a partnership between GCC and Ecosystem Restoration? What is the potential for confusion with GCC? Could we merge the Ecosystem Restoration Committee with the GCC local chapter if one were created? Would the Ecosystem Restoration Committee be limited by the “grasslands” mandate if the alliance was mainly with GCC Chapter? This is probably okay given the current area of focus is grasslands and large areas need restoration. Forest ecosystem restoration is unlikely to be a focus in the short term.
- Should we look at creating a GCC chapter in the Cariboo-Chilcotin?
- How does Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Society and Friends of Churn fit into this?
- Would Fraser Basin Council expand their mandate?
- Some people suggest something like a combination of Ducks Unlimited and MultiSAR would be an effective model if applied to grasslands. These agencies are already helping those on the land; could we add to what they are already doing.

**Agency to lead partnership:**

- If the focus was ecosystem-level/grasslands, who would logically lead this. Should province of BC lead because of legislative responsibilities? Will it take too long to get a government position approved?
- The workshop attendees broadly support a leadership role for GCC.

**Project/Program focus: Species at Risk, Grasslands Conservation or something else?**

- Are grasslands species at risk the tip of a grasslands iceberg? Maybe a grasslands umbrella is more what we are looking for?
- SAR would be too narrow a focus for a grasslands committee; there is a need to build on a wider focus.
- There is a choice to be made: focus on species at risk within grasslands or a broader focus (e.g. grasslands ecosystems including species at risk). Local experts noted there are only a handful of species at risk that are grasslands dependent in the Cariboo-Chilcotin; there are only two species (badger and spadefoot) with completed recovery plans; Experts suggest we should focus on grassland health/preventing species/ecosystems from becoming at risk.
- The facilitator highlights that the goal could be broader than just species; we could take an ecosystem approach and give that committee/project the responsibility for coordinated management.
- The facilitator doesn't hear anyone speaking against a broader mandate (i.e. grasslands conservation) for this project.

**Need for Regional Partnership Coordinator:**

- Participants believe there is a need for a champion for the GSAR initiative; some people are doing this (off the corner of their desks) but this work may not be in their job descriptions;

- The participants believe that a paid coordinator is needed, that a focus on this type of work is not happening now and will not happen successfully without that support. This work needs to be someone's responsibility.
- The workshop attendees generally support the idea of an NGO coordinator paid to move things forward.
- Example: you may want to involve private land in the work you do/actions you take; how could a coordinator help with that. A coordination job wouldn't be telling groups what they have to do; rather, it would involve talking about who might want to collaborate on projects, bringing those people/partners together to deliver on shared interests.

In summary, participants agreed that funding will be challenging but that delivering on recovery of species at risk is critical to grasslands conservation and that species at risk recovery is one of the few sectors where funding still exists. Therefore, it makes sense to pursue this project. Participants support a more holistic focus for the project...not just species at risk but rather healthy grasslands ecosystems. They agree there is a need for a paid coordinator to manage a partnership/group but are uncertain about what form this entity should take. The Facilitator described the choices under discussion: a) work with the existing ecosystem restoration committee; b) dissolve ecosystem restoration committee and reform group with a new/broader focus on grasslands ecosystems/species at risk (including ecosystem restoration projects); c) form a whole new group. There is broad recognition of the need for a better understanding of objectives of the various groups involved in ecosystem restoration work and those that might be interested or affected by the species at risk project.

### **3. What are the next steps in co-ordinated, habitat-based grasslands species at risk recovery in the Cariboo-Chilcotin grasslands?**

Workshop participants recommended that the grasslands species at risk project work through the ecosystem restoration committee to set priorities for recovery actions and deliver them in the interim while GCC, FORREX and potential regional partners work to define a long term approach. Participants are interested in exploring possible models for delivery of grasslands ecosystem conservation (including species at risk recovery actions) and considered the various models during the workshop, without resolving on which model was the best. They agreed that more information was needed and FORREX offered to prepare and share a paper on the various conservation partnership models that currently exist in western Canada. Participants recommended another meeting in six months (September), to discuss the FORREX paper, workshop summary, action planning progress/approach in the future and progress with securing funding for the Ecosystem Restoration Committee. Participants also recommended further outreach with groups that missed the workshop, with the help of the Ecosystem Restoration Committee.

#### 14. Closing Remarks (Oral Presentation)

Don Gayton, Ecologist, FORREX

Grassland species at risk is just the tip of the iceberg. Could grasslands conservation be led 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 there a role for the Ecosystem Restoration Committee? Is there a role for Fraser Basin Council? We've gone through the issues, now we need to reach out and collectively work on solutions. 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 6 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.

#### 15. 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
- In 6 months, call another meeting of stakeholders (those who attended this workshop would be invited); discuss the FORREX discussion paper and future actions required to initiate a regional conservation partnership, if the meeting participants continue to support this concept.
- FORREX to develop discussion paper on existing conservation programs across the province.
- GCC & FORREX to help move things forward

Other small group conversations in workshop:

- Former BC Parks Employee: Suggested data source to assist with action planning; check out PASO (Protected areas data base which lists details of SAR and activities in parks and protected areas; organized by ecosection).