The Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan Partnership

2020-2021 Annual Report

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Front cover photo: Tara Mulhern Davidson

Introduction

The Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan (SK PCAP) Partnership brings together agencies and organizations representing producers, industry, provincial and federal governments, non-government organizations and research and educational institutions (the Partners). Together, the Partners establish a five year Framework for collective action which provides the context for annual work planning.

The 2019-2023 Framework is built on the Partnership's Vision and three Goals:

Our Vision: Healthy native prairie ecosystems as vital parts of our vibrant and strong communities.

Our Ecosystem Goal: Native prairie ecosystem health and biodiversity are conserved and restored as part of a functioning landscape.

Our Economic Goal: Sustainable uses of native prairie improve the livelihoods of Saskatchewan people.

Our Cultural Goal: Native prairie is a valued part of our culture and identity as Saskatchewan people.

In the 2019-2023 Framework (https://www.pcap-sk.org/rsu_docs/documents/pcap-framework-2019-2023-web.pdf), the Partnership identified three strategic focus areas to prioritize actions. These are:

- 1. Native Prairie Awareness and Appreciation
- 2. Responsible Land Use on Native Prairie
- 3. Native Prairie Ecosystem Management

Executive Summary

The Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan (SK PCAP) celebrated its 22nd year in 2020-21. SK PCAP's goals and vision are enduring in an ever-changing landscape as diverse partners and stakeholders continue to come together to support prairie and species at risk conservation efforts in Saskatchewan.

This report summarizes the activities undertaken by SK PCAP in the 2020-21 implementation timeframe. Where applicable, these activities are reported to align within the 2019-2023 Framework and work towards our Vision, Goals, and Objectives as they are relevant to each of the three focus areas identified.

SK PCAP continues to have a broad audience and network with which to share information, methodologies, new and applied research, and strategies. SK PCAP endeavours to provide audience-specific information through a variety of forums which includes: public displays, workshops and speaker series; online and social media outlets, such as our website (www.pcap-sk.org), Twitter, Instagram and Facebook; articles in print media and monthly e-newsletters; as well as education programs for students of all ages.

Highlights from this year include the development of a draft Guide to Habitat Attributes by Ecosite for Multiple Species At Risk (or Multi-Species at Risk Guide). The Guide combines the habitat attributes from the precious 9 species at risk habitat attribute guides, and illustrates how those habitat attributes overlap and contrast between species. PCAP also provided 13 Native Prairie Speaker Series webinars, 6 Native Prairie Appreciation Week webinars. We also co-organized two virtual workshops for landowners and land managers on "Multiple Species Management" and "Bird Species at Risk". In addition, SK PCAP hosted the 5th annual Ecological Goods & Services Week titled, "Prairie's Got the Goods!" where more than 1060 participants were engaged in 6 webinar broadcasts. We successfully delivered our youth Education Programs, Adopt a Rancher (Grade 10) and Taking Action for Prairie (Grade 6-8), to 5 classes, 160 students and 6 teachers and ranchers. We hosted a virtual Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation Workshop to over 300 participants. Finally, we improved the visibility of SK PCAP in the Social Media, increasing the number of Facebook and Instagram followers and impressions in Twitter, as well as the e-newsletter subscribers and page viewers on our website.

The PCAP staff consists of Carolyn Gaudet (Manager), Caitlin Mroz (Stewardship Coordinator) and Julie-Anne Howe (Education Coordinator). Contract staff were hired to complete the draft of the Multi-Species at Risk Habitat Attributes Guide (Sue Michalsky, Heather Peat Hamm, Eric Green and Leanne Heisler).

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Native Prairie Awareness and Appreciation

1.1 Objective 2019-2023

Increase awareness of the ecological, cultural, and economic importance of native prairie and biodiversity including species at risk among students, general public, industry, and policy makers.

Strategy

1.2.1 Gather evidence-based and traditional ecological, cultural and economic knowledge about native prairie, Species at Risk and all species issues. Develop this knowledge with key partners, including indigenous representation, and share this information broadly with partners, industry, indigenous communities and target key policymakers.

1.2.3 Provide urban and rural general public with information about native prairie stewardship and biodiversity through awareness programs such as social media, Native Prairie Speaker Series, Agribition, Native Prairie Appreciation Week and Ecological Goods and Services Week.

- Produced and distributed twelve electronic newsletters to just over 2,000 PCAP subscribers.
- Prepared and distributed two news releases
 - Native Prairie Appreciation Week Proclaimed in SK (Media Release by MOA and MOE)
 - Virtual Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation Workshop (January 28, 2021)
- Curated web content on our website www.pcap-sk.org
 - 29,566 page views from 11,451 users, representing an average of 83.4% new visitors and 16.6% returning visitors. This is significant increase from the same time period in 2019-2020 (17,897 page views). 54% of website users were male, 33.5% between 25-34 years old and 27.5% between 18-24 years old. 75% of users were from Canada and 17.5% are from USA. 15% from Regina, 11% from Saskatoon, 7% from Calgary, 11% unknown, and 56% from other cities. Top Four Pages were: PCAP Homepage, "NPRRW/TGPW, "Native Prairie Speaker Series" and "What is Native Prairie".

- > Communications on Social Media:
 - ➤ The SK PCAP **Facebook** page currently has 4,030 followers compared to 3,314 at the end of the 2019-20 fiscal year. A total of 3,750 'likes,' is an increase from 3,147 'likes' from the previous year. SK PCAP produced about 51 posts per month on average during 2020-21, compared to 55 in 2019-20. The Facebook page had a total reach of 680,972 which is up from the 2019-20 total reach of 585,655. Of the reach of 680,972, 341,184 are "organic" impressions (i.e. not paid), while 339,788 are "paid" or sponsored impressions.
 - The SK PCAP Twitter account currently has 1,611 followers, which has grown by 156 followers since April 1, 2020. SK PCAP currently posts an average of 36 tweets per month. This is lower than the last period, avg 64 tweets per month. We averaged approximately 25,000 monthly impressions which a decrease compared to last fiscal period (28,000).
 - The SK PCAP Instagram averaged 38 posts per month, and most were NPSS webinar promotions or the #SARSweetTweet Campaign. Total followers to date are 912, up from about 685 at this time last year. On average, have 45 profile visits per week and each month we reach an average 27,047 accounts, have 13,040 impressions and receive 955 likes from our followers.
 - SK PCAP posted 27 new videos on YouTube in 2020-21, including 12 from the Native Prairie Speaker Series (webinars), 6 from the Native Prairie Appreciation Week Speaker Series, as well as 6 from the Ecological Goods & Services Week and 3 from the SODCAP AGM where we had a presentation. SK PCAP has a total of 26,110 views to date on its YouTube channel, up from 17,200 views last year (www.youtube.com/user/SKPCAP). There are currently 443 subscribers to the SK PCAP YouTube Channel. Since the channel began, over 3,990 hours of PCAP videos have been watched.
- Displays at urban and relevant producer venues across Saskatchewan were not provided in 2020-21 as many in-person events did not occur. SK PCAP contributed to the SODCAP AGM by providing a virtual venue and a speaker.
- Provided one Native Prairie Speaker Series presentation through a public forum and twelve webinars across the province for a total of 13 Native Prairie Speaker Series presentations.
 - Impacted a total impact of over 2000 people through live webinar attendance. The YouTube videos of these presentations have been viewed by 2258 more people to date.
- Provided 6 Ecological Goods and Services Week webinars.

- Impacted a total of 1060 people through webinar live attendance. The YouTube videos of these presentations have been viewed by 525 more people to date.
- Provided six articles in Beef Business magazine and one in Nature Saskatchewan Annual Newsletter
 - > Articles included: 1. A webinar recap: Adapting Grassland Grazing to Boost Carbon Sequestration, Beef Business magazine. May 2020; 2. Stewardship Tool For Farmers: Adding Native Perennials in Low-yielding Cropland Areas or Edges, Beef Business magazine. September 2020; 3. Grazing in Native Prairies: Past Form, Present Function and Future Potential, Beef Business magazine. November 2020; 4. Swallows of the Country: landowners can coexist with Barn Swallows, Beef Business magazine. January 2021; 5. The Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan (SK PCAP) is looking forward to virtually hosting the 8th Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation Workshop, February 1-5, 2021. Beef Business magazine, January 2021; 6. Scientific results encourage restoration and reclamation practices, Beef Business magazine. March 2021.and 7. A New Tool to Help Manage Habitat for Multiple Species at Risk in the Nature Saskatchewan Stewards of Saskatchewan Annual Newsletter.
- Organized annual Native Prairie Appreciation Week events, including NPAW declarations.
 - NPAW was declared by the province (Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture), and the cities of Regina, Saskatoon, Swift Current and Moose Jaw.
 - SK PCAP held a Youth Poster contest for children ages 7-16, which received 72 entries. Three winners were chosen for each category. The 1st place winning entries were printed on a bookmark that was sent out to the winners.
 - SK PCAP held a Photo Contest on our social media platforms. Over 100 photo entries met the criteria and were posted to the SK PCAP Facebook page, where the winners were chosen by the public. One winner and one runner-up were selected in each of the four categories: Best Native Prairie Wildflower, Prairie People on the Landscape, Prairie Wildlife in Action and Native Prairie Landscape.
 - The tour co-hosted by the Society for Range Management-Prairie Parkland Chapter had to be cancelled. A Native Prairie Appreciation Webinar series was planned instead. The NPAW webinar series impacted a total of 819 people through webinar live attendance. The YouTube videos of these presentations have been viewed by 1283 more people to date. Topics included range and riparian health assessments, native prairie appreciation, native plant identification and mapping remaining native prairie in SK.

The NPAW news release was picked up by 4 news sources: Moose Jaw Today, Weyburn Review, SwiftCurrentOnline.com and PANow

Strategy

1.2.2 Develop and provide Saskatchewan students with information about native prairie stewardship and biodiversity through education programs, such as Adopt a Rancher and Taking Action for Prairie, while also exploring new ways to share awareness.

Measuring success

Our education coordinator, Julie-Anne Howe, promotes and delivers SK PCAP education programming as well as assesses the current programs to ensure they are meeting curriculum needs.

Teachers were recruited mainly by word of mouth, we also did some advertising on social media and in the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation newsletter. No education/science forums were attended this year. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Adopt a Rancher and Taking Action For Prairie were modified for virtual delivery as field trips and in-person program delivery were generally not allowed.

- Planned and virtually delivered Adopt a Rancher Grade 10 curriculumsupported program.
 - In 2020-21, Adopt a Rancher was delivered to 3 classes reaching
 84 students and 4 adults (teachers, ranchers).
- Virtually delivered Taking Action for Prairie programming
 - > Taking Action for Prairie was offered in 2020-21 to **two** classes with 76 students and **2** teachers.
 - Evaluation forms were updated this year and they indicated a very positive response from students and teachers. Teachers agreed with the components and delivery of the program and would participate again.
 - Despite the Canadian Western Agribition being cancelled in 2020, we modified some of the programming for virtual delivery including the 'Whose Nest Is This?" display and the Pitch it for Pipits and Plovers game show.
 - > The Instructional video *Pitch it for Pipits and Plovers* game show was viewed 41 times.
 - > The "Whose Nest is This?" instruction video was viewed 115 times.

Strategy

1.2.4 Engage, build and maintain a positive relationship within the PCAP partnership that is inclusive of all native prairie stakeholders.

- > SK PCAP hosted **one** PCAP Steering Committee meeting.
- > SK PCAP hosted **one** PCAP Executive Committee meeting.
- > The Covid-19 pandemic led to cancelling the Spring 2020 meeting and the Fall 2020 meeting was in November so an additional virtual winter meeting was not deemed necessary.
- SK PCAP is continuing to look for ways to improve virtual meetings and the partnership, including new ways to actively engage partners, such as regular partner presentations at Steering Committee meetings, as well as continually looking for new partners to join the PCAP partnership.
- > Three new partners joined in 2020-2021, the Meewasin Valley Authority, Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport and SaskEnergy.

2. Responsible Land Use on Native Prairie

2.1 Objective 2019-2023

Provide land users with balanced, evidence-based information about ecological, economic and cultural influences and promote beneficial management practices to sustain healthy native prairie and species at risk populations within a working landscape while mitigating adverse impact.

Strategy

2.2.1 Facilitate the identification and understanding of current types of development and land-uses of native prairie in Saskatchewan, and associated monitoring, management and risks of these developments.

Measuring success

- There was a presentation during the Native Prairie Appreciation Week Webinar Series about the SK Ministry of Environment's Prairie Landscape Inventory initiative.
- Figure 1. There were two presentations in the Native Prairie Speaker Series about Effects of oil development and anthropogenic noise on grassland songbirds in Canada by Nikola Koper and Grassland passerines are sensitive to the cumulative effects of oil and gas development in southern Alberta by Jody Daniel a PhD Candidate from the University of Waterloo.
- This strategy will continue to be reviewed in the future.

Strategy

2.2.2 Engage and interact with key policy makers, stakeholders and the public about the value of native prairie as a working landscape in Saskatchewan.

- Co-hosted two virtual workshops for landowners and land managers on "Bird Species at Risk" on March 11th, 2021 and "Multiple Species Management" on March 18th, 2021. Workshops were attended by 196 individuals, including 22 landowners.
- ➤ Hosted the 8th Native Prairie Restoration and Reclamation Workshop (NPRRW): "Restoration and Reclamation in a Changing Environment: Adapting to Change, Building Resilience" took place in virtually, Feb 1-5,

2021. Information was presented to over 300 stakeholders from various interest groups related to native prairie conservation and restoration. Themes included: resilience, native seeds, industry perspectives, weed management, soils and landscaping with native plants.

- > The 5-day virtual workshop consisted of **27** presentations, **15** discussion groups, **2** case studies and one panel discussion.
- > 10 tradeshow booths representing native seeding industry, land conservation groups, nature groups, and consulting companies were in attendance.
- 10 poster presentations were present including projects about invasive species management, prescribed burning, seed mixtures, restoration of industrial development on native prairie, bison and grassland and species at risk conservation.
- PCAP is considering organizing the 9th Native Prairie Restoration/ Reclamation Workshop in February 2022.
- Provided event participants with at least sixteen formal opportunities to share feedback through an evaluation of PCAP informational events, including Native Prairie Speaker Series, Birds/Multiple Species Management Workshops, the Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation Workshop.

Strategy

2.2.3 Communicate to land users beneficial management practices, planning processes, policies and regulatory requirements for sustainable and responsible land uses of the mosaic of native prairie in Saskatchewan.

Measuring success

- Co-hosted two workshops for landowners and land managers on Bird Species at Risk Workshop where Birds Canada presented about their Incentives Guide that included information about responsible land uses and the "Multiple Species Management" Workshop where there was a presentation from the Canadian Forage and Grasslands Association on their beneficial management practices tool. There were 22 individuals present at the workshops that self-identified as landowners or managers.
- The Prairie's Got the Goods Week webinar series included two presentations on linking rotational grazing with greenhouse gas dynamics and cattle grazing effects on water infiltration.

Strategy

2.2.4 Facilitate research and knowledge transfer about the values and benefits derived from native prairie as a working landscape in Saskatchewan and other jurisdictions.

- ➤ SK PCAP hosted the 5th Annual Ecological Goods & Services Week "Prairie's Got the Goods!" on March 15th 19th, 2021.
 - 6 webinars were organized to highlight the wide range of ecological goods & services that native prairie provides. Topics included quantifying ecosystem services from wetlands, carbon offset markets, rotational grazing, biodiversity in agro-ecosystems and grazing effects on water infiltration.
 - > 1060 people watched the webinars in real time and other 525 people viewed the uploaded presentations through our YouTube channel to date.

3. Native Prairie Ecosystem Management

3.1 Objective 2019-2023

Promote the importance of land management knowledge and adoption of practices that have a positive impact on biodiversity, species at risk, and prairie ecosystem health including carbon sequestration and climate change.

Strategies

3.2.1 Increase knowledge among native prairie land managers regarding the function of disturbance processes (such as grazing and fire) and the relationship between healthy prairie ecosystems and economic returns.

- ➤ Hosted **thirteen** webinars highlighting conservation of prairie species (including species at risk and rare species) as well as a presentation about invasive species in a variety of land-use settings.
- ➤ SK PCAP hosted Ecological Goods & Services Week "**Prairie's Got the Goods!**" on March 15th 19th. Through 6 webinars, the relationship between healthy prairie ecosystems and economic returns was highlighted.
 - 1060 people were reached through webinar live attendance. The YouTube videos of these presentations have reached other 525 views to date
- Provided three articles in "Beef Business" magazines that reached producers and land managers in Saskatchewan that discuss disturbance processes and how to increase economic return
 - Articles included: 1. A webinar recap: Adapting Grassland Grazing to Boost Carbon Sequestration, Beef Business magazine. May 2020; 2. Stewardship Tool For Farmers: Adding Native Perennials in Low-yielding Cropland Areas or Edges, Beef Business magazine. September 2020; 3. Grazing in Native Prairies: Past Form, Present Function and Future Potential, Beef Business magazine. November 2020; March 2021.
- ➤ Monthly social media campaigns about Species At Risk: #SARSweetTweet
 - Covered 9 species at risk: Sage Thrasher, Baird's Sparrow, Hog Nose Snake, Bank Swallow, Greater Short-horned Lizard, Hairy

Prairie Clover, Western Spiderwort and Tiny Cryptanthe and Western Tiger Salamander.

➤ Two session at the Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation Workshop was about invasive species, which included presentations on how to identify invasive species and how to manage them with disturbance processes.

Strategy

- 3.2.2 Promote access to balanced, evidence-based information and decision-making tools for native prairie land owners and managers through various communication channels including newsletters and the website.
- 3.2.3 Develop new habitat identification tools for species at risk targeting land managers.

Measuring success

- SK PCAP has developed a draft Multi-Species At Risk Guide, that combines the habitat attributes from the previous 9 species at risk attribute guides, and illustrates how those habitat attributes overlap and contrast between species. The draft will be sent out for review in 2021/2022.
- ➤ The 12 monthly newsletters included links to online resources, links to grassland news articles, articles by various NPRRW sponsors, and events that were either training opportunities or balanced, evidence-based information.

Strategy

3.2.4 Among stakeholders, increase knowledge and use of current and proposed data collection and monitoring methods and facilitate entry of data into applicable databases (range health, invasive species occurrences, and species at risk occurrences).

- During the Native Prairie Appreciation Week Webinar Series, there were presentations on how to conduct range health and riparian health assessments.
- Through the Native Prairie Speaker Series, participants had the opportunity to learn about various species at risk and methods of collecting data.
- ➤ SK PCAP gathered PCAP partner updates for the Fall 2020 Steering Committee meeting November 4, 2020, whereby partners shared information related to their own species at risk or grassland conservation

programs, monitoring, activities and initiatives, increasing comprehension of overall SK PCAP partnership efforts towards species at risk and grassland conservation.

Strategy

3.2.5 Identify best practices to sustain resilient native prairie ecosystems that are able to support species at risk, minimize the threats of invasive species, maintain biodiversity, and be resilient to extreme weather events (such as droughts or floods).

Measuring success

- SK PCAP has developed a draft Multi-Species At Risk Guide, that combines the habitat attributes from the precious 9 species at risk attribute guides, and illustrates how those habitat attributes overlap and contrast between species. The draft will be sent out for review in 2021/2022.
- There was a session (four presentations) at the NPRRW all about Rangeland, Restoration and Resilience.
- There was one presentation in the Native Prairie Speaker Series about droughtproofing.
- SK PCAP hosted themed social media weeks to educate about invasive species and minimizing the threat of invasive species and supporting practices. The invasive species discussed were: Dames Rocket, Baby's Breath, Field Bindweed, Downy Brome, Purple Loosestrife, Salt Cedar, Common Tansey, and Wild Parsnip.

Strategy

3.2.6 Facilitate discussion, as well as gather and share information about prairie carbon sequestration and carbon release from prairie conversion.

Measuring success

Through the Prairie's Got the Goods Week, participants learned about Retaining Canada's Grasslands Using Carbon Offset Markets and a Roadmap to Quantify Grassland Soil Organic Carbon.

Appendix 1: 2020-21 SK PCAP Partnership

- Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) Science and Technology Branch
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS)
- Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC)
- Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) Canadian Wildlife Service.
- Meewasin Valley Authority
- Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan Inc. (NPSS)
- Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC)
- Nature Saskatchewan (NS)
- Parks Canada Grasslands National Park of Canada (PC-GNP)
- Prairie Wind & Silver Sage Friends of the Grasslands (PWSS)
- Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve Association Inc. (RLBR)
- Saskatchewan Bison Association (SBA)
- Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association (SCA)
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport
- Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM)
- Saskatchewan Burrowing Owl Interpretative Centre (SBOIC)
- Saskatchewan Environmental Society (SES)
- Saskatchewan Forage Council (SFC)
- Saskatchewan Outdoor and Environmental Education Association (SaskOutdoors)
- Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association (SSGA)
- Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation (SWF)
- Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds (SAW)
- SaskEnergy
- SaskPower
- Society for Range Management (SRM) Prairie Parkland Chapter
- South of the Divide Conservation Action program Inc. (SODCAP Inc.)
- University of Regina
- University of Saskatchewan College of Agriculture and Bioresources
- Water Security Agency (WSA)

Appendix 2: 2020-21 Financial & In-Kind Support

SK PCAP gratefully acknowledges financial support in 2020-2021 from:

Crescent Point Energy Corp., CN, Ducks Unlimited Canada, EcoFriendly Sask, Enbridge Pipelines Inc., K+S Potash, North American Helium, Parks Canada – Grasslands National Park, Peavey Industries LP, Pembina Pipeline, Ranchers Stewardship Alliance Inc., Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment - Fish and Wildlife Development Fund, SaskEnergy, SaskPower, SaskTel, SaskWater, TC Energy, The Mosaic Company, Trace Associates, Truax Company, University of Regina – Faculty of Science, University of Saskatchewan - College of Agriculture and Bioresources, Water Security Agency, Wildlife Habitat Canada, and the Government of Canada through the federal Department of the Environment (Environment and Climate Change Canada).

SK PCAP gratefully acknowledges in-kind support in 2020-21 from:

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada - Science and Technology Branch, ALUS Canada, Blazing Star Wildflower Seed Company, Canadian Parks & Wilderness Association, Canadian Western Agribition, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada- Canadian Wildlife Service, Friends of Wascana Marsh, Meewasin Valley Authority, Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Nature Saskatchewan, Parks Canada – Grasslands National Park, Prairie Wind & Silver Sage – Friends of Grasslands, Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve Association, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, Saskatchewan Bison Association, Saskatchewan Burrowing Owl Interpretive Centre, Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre, Saskatchewan Environmental Society, Saskatchewan Forage Council, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment, Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources, Saskatchewan Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, SaskEnergy, SaskOutdoors, SaskPower, Society for Range Management - Prairie Parkland Chapter, South of the Divide Conservation Action Program Inc., University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan – College of Agriculture and Bioresources, Water Security Agency and the many speakers for the Native Prairie Speaker Series and the Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation Workshop and Transboundary Grassland Partnership Workshop.