

The Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan Partnership

2023-2024 Annual Report

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Saskatchewan
Prairie Conservation
Action Plan

Front cover photo: Caitlin Mroz-Sailer

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 25th year in 2023-24. 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 2023-24 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 completing the 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 previous 9 species at risk habitat attribute guides and 3 additional species, and illustrates how those habitat attributes overlap and contrast between species. PCAP also provided 12 Native Prairie Speaker Series webinars, one of which was during Native Prairie Appreciation Week. We also co-organized two workshops for landowners and land managers on "Badgers and Pastures: A Landowner Workshop" in Val Marie and Eastend with Nature Saskatchewan, SODCAP and SK Stock Growers Foundation. In addition, SK PCAP hosted the 8th annual Prairie's Got the Goods Week where over 700 participants were engaged in 5 webinar broadcasts. The 10th Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation Workshop returned in person and hosted 260 participants over two days. We successfully delivered our youth Education Programs, Adopt a Rancher (Grade 10) to 5 classrooms, 104 students, 5 teachers and 5 ranchers. Taking Action for Prairie (Grade 6-8) was delivered to 12 classes, 295 students and 12 teachers. We also delivered the Pipits and Plovers gameshow to 357 students and hosted about 4300 students at the PCAP Agri-Ed booth. Finally, we improved the visibility of SK PCAP in through our social media channels, increasing the number of Facebook and Instagram followers, YouTube Channel subscribers 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 Shirley Bartz (Education Coordinator). Contract staff were hired to review the Multi-Species at Risk Habitat Attributes Guide (Sue Michalsky and Heather Peat Hamm) and write the Range Health Assessment Update (Tara Mulhern Davidson).

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1. 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.

Measuring success

- Produced and distributed twelve **electronic newsletters** to around 2,500 PCAP subscribers.
 - Newsletter open rate is almost 46%, compared to the industry average of 11% (according to Constant Contact).
- Prepared and distributed four **news releases**
 - Native Prairie Appreciation Week Proclaimed in SK (Media Release by MOA and MOE)
 - Grassland Restoration Workshop Set to Share Insights and Make Connections (January 2024)
 - The Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan Provides Grant to Restore Land in Saskatchewan (March 2024)
 - SK PCAP Announces Investment from TC Energy for Environmental Education Programs for Youth in Saskatchewan (March 2024)
- Curated web content on our **website** www.pcap-sk.org

- 22,558 page views, representing an average of 90% new visitors and 10% returning visitors. About 87% of our website users are from Canada, compared to 65% of users in 2022-2023. 10% of our website users are from USA. Top Pages were: NPRRW, PCAP Homepage, Prairie's Got the Goods Week
- Communications on Social Media:
 - The SK PCAP **Facebook** page currently has 5,262 followers compared to 4,844 at the end of the 2022-23 fiscal year. A total of 4646 'likes' is an increase from 4332 'likes' from the previous year. SK PCAP produced about 43 posts per month on average during 2023-24, compared to 54 in 2022-23. The Facebook page had a total reach of 604,234 of which 417,635 are "organic" impressions (i.e. not paid), while 188,150 are "paid" or sponsored impressions.
 - The SK PCAP **X (Twitter)** account currently has 1,700 followers, which has decreased by 50 followers since April 2023. SK PCAP currently posts an average of 16 tweets per month. This is lower than last year's average of 33 tweets per month. We averaged approximately 2750 monthly impressions, which is about half of the impressions compared to last year.
 - The SK PCAP **Instagram** averaged 33.5 posts per month, and most were Native Prairie Speaker Series webinar promotions or the #SARSweetTweet Campaigns. Total followers to date are 1330, up from about 1204 at this time last year. On average, there are 68 profile visits per month and each month we reach an average of 1397 users and receive 613 likes from our followers.
 - SK PCAP posted 21 new videos on **YouTube** in 2023-24, including 12 from the Native Prairie Speaker Series (webinars), 4 in-person presentations, as well as 5 from the Ecological Goods & Services Week. On average there are 718 views per month, which is similar to the number of views compared to this time last year. Over 119 hours of our YouTube videos are watched per month with an average watching time of about 10 minutes (www.youtube.com/user/SKPCAP). There are currently 920 subscribers to the SK PCAP YouTube Channel.
- SK PCAP hosted displays at three urban venues in 2023-24, including during the Native Prairie Appreciation Week at the Regina Farmer's Market (estimated 2000 attendees); Moose Jaw Farmer's Market (estimated 150 attendees); the Swift Current Farmer's Market (estimated 500 attendees); reaching an estimated total of 2,650 members of the urban public over 3 days.
- SK PCAP hosted displays at two landowner and producer locations in 2023-24, the South of the Divide Conservation Action Plan Annual General Meeting in Consul (22 attendees), and Agribition in Regina (2,000 estimated

producer/landowner attendees over six days in the Family Ag Pavilion), reaching an estimated total of 2,022 people over 7 days.

- Provided five Native Prairie Speaker Series presentations through a public forum and twelve webinars across the province for a total of **17** Native Prairie Speaker Series presentations.
 - Impacted a total impact of **2000 people** through live webinar attendance. The YouTube videos of these presentations have been viewed by **2175** more people to date.
 - The in-person presentations reached **82 people** at the live presentation and the YouTube recordings of these presentations have been viewed by **365** more people to date.
- Provided 5 Ecological Goods and Services Week webinars.
 - Impacted a total of **728 people** through webinar live attendance. The YouTube videos of these presentations have been viewed by **180** more people to date.
- Provided **five** articles in *Beef Business* magazine
 - Articles included:
 1. Finding and Keeping Conservation Common Ground (May 2023)
 2. Plant Species at Risk Found in Sandy Soil (September 2023)
 3. Blossoming Biodiversity: Pollinators Thriving in Native Plant Gardens (November 2023)
 4. Enemy or Ecosystem Engineers? Why It's Good to Have Badgers on Your Land (January 2024)
 5. Saskatchewan's Rangeland Health Assessment Gets a Reboot (March 2024)
- Organized annual Native Prairie Appreciation Week (NPAW) 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, Weyburn and Moose Jaw.
 - SK PCAP held a Youth Poster contest for children up to 16 years old, which received **210** 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 **80** 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 three categories: Best Native Prairie Wildflower, Prairie Wildlife in Action and Native Prairie Landscape.

- SK PCAP had booths at **three** urban farmers' markets in Regina, Moose Jaw and Swift Current during NPAW.

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, Shirley Bartz, 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 and advertising on social media. No education/science forums were attended this year.

- Planned and delivered *Adopt a Rancher* Grade 10 curriculum-supported program.
 - In 2023-24, *Adopt a Rancher* was delivered fully (with a field trip) to **5** classes reaching **104** students and **10** adults (teachers, ranchers).
- Delivered *Taking Action for Prairie* programming
 - *Taking Action for Prairie* was offered in 2023-24 to **twelve** classes with **295** students and **12** teachers.
 - Results of the pre- and post-presentation questionnaire showed that, 74% of 6th Graders, 92% of 7th Graders and 89% of 8th Graders improved their scores on the questionnaire. On average, students taking the post-program questionnaire corrected incorrect answers on at least two questions, with 33% of students averaging 3 or more corrected questions after participating in the TAFP program.
- Provided Canadian Western Agribition with Agri-Ed programming at the Family Ag Pavilion with five days of class-specific programming and one interactive booth display.
 - Provided class-specific Pitch it for Pipits and Plovers programming to **17** classes, impacting **357 students and ~50 adults**.
 - Provided an interactive booth display featuring example nests of Burrowing Owl, Piping Plover and Barn Swallow. Plush animals (Burrowing Owl, Prairie Dog, Bison and various songbirds) were a great draw for the kids. The booth also had an attractive Ecological Ranch Display that demonstrated how species at risk use the same

habitat as cattle. Booth traffic was estimated at **4,300** registered students, impacting an additional estimated 5,000 members of the public.

Strategy

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

Measuring success

- SK PCAP hosted **two** PCAP Steering Committee meeting.
- SK PCAP hosted **two** PCAP Executive Committee meeting.
- SK PCAP is continuing to look for ways to improve virtual meetings and the partnership, including new ways to actively engage partners, we started focus groups as part of the Framework Renewal that was well received. We are also continually looking for new partners to join the PCAP partnership.
- SK PCAP gathered PCAP partner updates for the Spring 2023 Steering Committee meeting (April 2023) and the Fall 2023 Steering Committee meeting (October 2023), where partners shared information related to their own activities and initiatives, increasing comprehension of overall SK PCAP partner efforts towards species at risk and grassland conservation.
- Every month, a PCAP Partner is highlighted in the monthly newsletter, where they can share about upcoming objectives or provide details about a particular initiative, or whatever else they would like to highlight.
- SK PCAP participated in **six** native prairie stakeholder meetings and workshops, including the Transboundary Grasslands Partnership Core Team and Workshop, the South of the Divide Conservation Action Program AGM.
- SK PCAP also participated in the Central Grasslands Roadmap Canada Working Group, in a steering committee to update the SK Range Health Assessment Protocol and on a committee to plan the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in Saskatchewan.

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 at NPRRW called Ground Truth Data Collection for National Grassland Inventory: Challenges and Opportunities

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.

Measuring success

- Co-hosted two workshops for landowners and land managers with SODCAP, Nature Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Foundation. The landowner workshops titled: “Badgers and Pastures” in Val Marie and Eastend were attended by 34 individuals, which were mostly landowners and managers.
- Helped plan the Transboundary Grassland Partnership Workshop in Swift Current, December 6 and 7, 2023.
- Provided event participants with at least **20** formal opportunities to share feedback through an evaluation of PCAP informational events, including Native Prairie Speaker Series and in-person workshops.

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 with SODCAP, Nature Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Foundation. The landowner workshops titled: “Badgers and Pastures: A Landowner Workshop” in Val Marie and Eastend were attended by 34 individuals, which were mostly landowners and managers. There were

presentations on species at risk, beneficial management practices and hands-on activities on ranch planning and the Guide to Habitat Attributes by Ecosite for Multiple Species At Risk (or Multi-Species at Risk Guide).

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.

Measuring success

- SK PCAP hosted the 8th Annual Ecological Goods & Services Week – “**Prairie’s Got the Goods!**” on March 18th –22nd, 2024.
 - **5** webinars were organized to highlight the wide range of ecological goods & services that native prairie provides. Topics included ecosystem services and biodiversity preservation in suburban areas, pollinators, tracking grassland changes in North America, grazing effects on carbon storage and bridging the gap between biodiversity conservation and food security.
 - **728** people watched the webinars in real time and other **180** 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.

Strategy

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.

Measuring success

- There were several presentations by the Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange at the Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation Workshop, including a half-day workshop on prescribed fire.
- SK PCAP helped plan the Transboundary Grassland Partnership Workshop in Swift Current, that included a session on grazing.
- SK PCAP hosted Ecological Goods & Services Week – “**Prairie’s Got the Goods!**” on March 18th – 22nd. Through 5 webinars, the relationship between healthy prairie ecosystems and economic returns was highlighted.
 - **Over 700 people** were reached through webinar live attendance. The YouTube videos of these presentations have reached other **180** views by March 31, 2024 and will continue to increase.
 - There was a webinar about how grazing boost grassland carbon storage by Dr. Bork from the University of Alberta

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 finalized and printed the 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 12 monthly newsletters included links to online resources, links to grassland news articles, and events that were either training opportunities or balanced, evidence-based information.
- The five articles in Beef Business contained evidence-based information.
- Six social media campaigns about Species At Risk: #SARSweetTweet
 - Covered 8 species at risk: Sprague’s Pipit, Burrowing Owls, Yellow-bellied Racers, Big Mouth Buffalo, Lake Sturgeon and Mountain Sucker, Swift Fox, Whooping Crane

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).

Measuring success

- SK PCAP is involved in updated the SK Range Health Assessment with a group of partners.
- Through the Native Prairie Speaker Series, participants had the opportunity to learn about various species at risk and methods of collecting data from the SK Conservation Data Centre as well as throughout other presentations about monitoring.
- SK PCAP gathered PCAP partner updates for the Spring 2023 and Fall 2023 Steering Committee meetings, 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 completed and printed the 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.
- Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation Workshop had at least 4 presentations on managing various invasive species
- 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: Spotted Knapweed, Yellow Toadflax, Orange Hawkweed, Ox-Eye Daisy, and Leafy Spurge

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 Grazing boosts grassland carbon storage: An undervalued ecosystem service
- SK PCAP is on the Knowledge and Tech Transfer Committee for the Living Labs – Central Prairies project. One of the key items of the project is to report on the carbon sequestered or GHG mitigated every year for all BMPs and research efforts of the project.
- SK PCAP helped plan the Transboundary Grassland Partnership Workshop in Swift Current included a session on carbon.

Appendix 1: 2023-24 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 Region (RLBR)
- Saskatchewan Aboriginal Land Technicians (SALT)
- 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 Stock Growers Foundation (SSGF)
- 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: 2023-24 Financial & In-Kind Support

SK PCAP gratefully acknowledges financial support in 2023-2024 from:

Ducks Unlimited Canada, North American Helium, Nutrien, Parks Canada – Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan Cattlemen’s Association, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment - Fish and Wildlife Development Fund, SaskEnergy, SaskPower, SaskTel, 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 2023-24 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, 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 Aboriginal Land Technicians, 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 Stock Growers Foundation, 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.