

Symposium Abstracts

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

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Priming a North American approach to grassland conservation. Jürgen Hoth
Trinational Grassland conservation. Jürgen Hoth

Approach to grassland conservation. J. Hoth

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

HOTH, JÜRGEN. Priming a North American approach to grassland conservation. Program for the Conservation of Biological Diversity, North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation, 393 rue St-Jacques Ouest, Bureau 200, Montreal, Quebec, CANADA H2Y 1N9

Since 2000, the three federal Wildlife Services of Canada, Mexico and the United States, assisted by the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), agreed to work together to protect 17 species of wild birds and mammals considered “Species of Common Conservation Concern”. Given that the majority of these species are associated with grasslands—one of the most threatened environments in North America—and that their main threat is habitat disturbance and loss, the Biodiversity Conservation program of the CEC facilitated a process to guide conservation efforts for these species from an ecosystem perspective. As part of CEC’s grasslands initiative, since 2001 several activities have been carried out to build a strategy to inform and guide cooperation efforts related to grasslands conservation throughout the three North American countries. The various elements to build a trinational grassland conservation strategy are currently well underway. Towards the end of 2001 a multi-stakeholder meeting was organized in Mexico to assist this country in developing its own perspectives regarding the conservation of grasslands. Additionally, a grasslands map is being built, aimed at integrating all relevant conservation planning units available for this ecosystem (e.g., Important Bird Areas, First Nations/Native American reservations, priority watersheds, etc). With this input and other information, the draft strategy is expected to be available towards the end of March, 2002 and will serve as a basis for designing joint action plans on specific themes indicated therein. The CEC was established under the North American Agreement for Environmental Cooperation

(NAAEC) to address environmental issues in North America from a continental perspective, with a particular focus on those arising in the context of liberalized trade. The CEC Council, the organization's governing body, is composed of the environment ministers (or equivalent) of Canada, Mexico and the United States.

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Understanding biodiversity patterns and losses in North American grasslands. Fred Samson, Fritz Knopf, and Wayne Ostlie

Biodiversity patterns and losses. F. Samson

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

SAMSON, FRED, FRITZ KNOPF, AND WAYNE OSTLIE. Understanding biodiversity patterns and losses in North American grasslands. US Forest Service, Missoula, MT 59812 (FS); US Geological Survey Midcontinental Ecological Sciences Center, Ft. Collins, CO, 80525 (FK); The Nature Conservancy, 2060 Broadway, Suite 230, Boulder, CO, 80302 (WO).

The ecological consequences of biodiversity loss have aroused considerable interest and controversy among conservationists during the past few decades. Much of the controversy arises from the lack of national or international priorities, agency and conservation organization commitments, and strategies based both in the sciences of management and ecology that permit the development and implementation of conservation actions. Both conceptual and practical obstacles exist in the conservation of arguably North America's most endangered biotic province. Unmistakably, the grasslands comprising the "true prairie" on the east and the "Great Plains" to the west extending from Canada south into Mexico were the largest vegetation type in North America. According to ecological theory, these grasslands should contain a high level of biodiversity—a conceptual problem given some ecologists considers grasslands, in general, to be biological "depauperate." Only recently has meaningful interest among agencies and conservation organizations emerged to preserve grasslands, despite warnings of impending declines by Audubon in 1846, Sheldon in the 1920s, and Weaver in the 1950s. Here, we (1) review the status and trends in North American grasslands; (2) summarize and offer suggestions to improve the ecological understanding originating from recent work highlighting the underground nature of grasslands to trophic cascades; and (3) discuss insights from the science of management to aid agencies and conservation organizations in the development of strategies to conserve native grasslands.

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Changing Farm Demographics and Land Use Practices: Greater Risks to Native Prairie Patches. Kenneth F. Higgins, David E. Naugle, and Kurt J. Forman

Risks to native prairie. K. F. Higgins

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

HIGGINS, KENNETH F., DAVID E. NAUGLE, AND KURT J. FORMAN. Changing Farm Demographics and Land Use Practices: Greater Risks to Native Prairie Patches. South Dakota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Biological Resource Division, U. S. Geological Survey, South Dakota State University, Box 2140B, Brookings, SD 57007; College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, 1900 Franklin Street, Stevens Point, WI 54481; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Brookings Wildlife Habitat Office, P.O. Box 247, Brookings, SD 57006

Bigger and faster farm equipment, fewer farmers, larger farms, less diversity in cropping systems, and larger-sized livestock are among the factors contributing to the destruction or conversion of remaining native prairie remnants in the northern Great Plains. Although conservationists have been aware of the negative effects of intensified farming practices in the northern Great Plains on wildlife and their habitats for several decades, most are not aware of some fairly recent changes in farming and crop processing practices that perpetuate even greater risk to natural resources. Using socio-economic, agricultural statistics and human resource data sources, we will demonstrate how recent changes in traditional land use practices and farm demographics are resulting in greater acreages of unsuitable habitats for prairie wildlife. We will also demonstrate how well natural resource agencies and institutions have been doing at preserving native prairie upland habitats in this region in the past. Our summary will emphasize the need for accelerated preservation efforts relative to remnant native prairie grasslands in the northern Great Plains during this decade and beyond.

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Understanding the landscapes for conserving North America's Grasslands . Ed B. Wiken, H. Moore and M. Padilla

Understanding status and trends of prairie landscapes. E. B. Wiken

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

WIKEN, E. B., H. MOORE AND M. PADILLA. Understanding the landscape for conserving North America's Grasslands. Wildlife Habitat Canada Corporation, 7 Hinton Avenue North, Suite 200, Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4P1, Canada (EBW); Harold Moore, GeoInsight Corporation, 106 Huntley Manor Drive, Carp, Ontario KOA 1L0, Canada (HM); Moreno Padilla, 28 Winnisic Road, Chelsea, Quebec J9B 2L5, Canada (MP).

From the perspective of natural ecosystems and habitats, the grassland landscapes are often thought of in the past tense. These landscapes are often qualified as: the places that use to be; the regions that have lost most of their inherent species and ecosystem types; and the areas that represent how past land management practices in particular have not accounted for multiple uses and values. For conservationists and resource managers today, the resulting status of grassland landscapes across North America has acted as beacons to shape more forward looking ecosystem management measures in other less modified landscapes such as the arctic. As well, the current state and past trends associated with grasslands have fostered many recent and innovative approaches land management that are helping now to sustain and rescue native grassland species and habitats. Ecosystem management and integrity, whether for grassland conservation purposes or basic resource planning, must be founded upon fairly comprehensive and spatially based landscape information covering biological, physical and socio-economic characteristics.

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Canada: Lessons on grasslands conservation through a multi-stakeholder approach.

Gregory E. Riemer, Kayrn L. Scalise, and Allan E. Patkau

Grassland conservation lessons. G. E. Riemer

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

RIEMER, GREG E., KARYN L. SCALISE, AND ALLAN E. PATKAU. Canada: Lessons on grasslands conservation through a multi-stakeholder approach. SERM Fish and Wildlife Branch, Regina, SK. Canada. S4S 5W6 (GER); Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan, Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, Canada Centre Building, Box 4752, Regina, SK. Canada S4P 3Y4 (KLS, AEP)

The authors review trends in land use in Saskatchewan and the government policies affecting land use. Recent stewardship successes and failed planning attempts to conserve remaining native prairie are reviewed. By the early 1990s it was recognised that a coordinated approach to conserving the remaining native prairie was required. In 1997 a new, action-oriented Prairie Conservation Action Plan (PCAP) was developed for Saskatchewan through a partnership of industry, federal and provincial government agencies, non-government organizations and academic institutions. The processes that led to the creation of this partnership are highlighted. The partnership's vision is to sustain the native prairie in a healthy state in which natural and human values are respected. Its 5 goals are: (1) to sustain a healthy native prairie grazing resource; (2) to conserve the remaining prairie resource; (3) to maintain native prairie biological diversity; (4) to promote the sustainable use of native prairie to enhance the quality of life; and (5) to promote education and develop communication programs. Relative to those goals, the SK PCAP partners developed 29 objectives and 85 action items whose progress is tracked annually through the production of Partner Updates.

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The High Plains Partnership - Restoring Habitat and Trust on Private Lands. Stephanie A. Harmon

Restoring habitat on private lands. S.A. Harmon

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

HARMON, STEPHANIE A. The High Plains Partnership - Restoring Habitat and Trust on Private Lands. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 222. S. Houston Suite A., Tulsa, OK 74127

The High Plains Partnership (HPP) is a public-private initiative to conserve declining and candidate species in the High Plains eco-region while maintaining traditional lifestyles and sustainable use of private lands. The HPP is a collaborative effort between public and private natural resource groups, local landowners, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The goals of the HPP are to 1) conserve and restore key short and mixed grassland habitats; 2) improve the status of High Plains candidate species and species at-risk; and 3) reduce or remove the need for protection of these species under the Endangered Species Act. Because the High Plains eco-region has experienced a relatively low number of species listings and related conflicts, a unique opportunity exists to build grassroots partnerships before crises occur, and to develop strategies based on flexibility and innovation that meet the needs of both landowners and species at-risk. The strategies to accomplish the goals of the HPP include 1) building positive relationships with landowners, conservation organizations, and political representatives; 2) increasing communication and involvement among stakeholders early in the conservation process; 3) improving the public perception of the Service regarding ESA and regulatory issues; and 4) implementing landscape-level restoration projects that benefit multiple species and prevent listings through the use of Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances and Private Land Agreements.

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Mexico's grasslands: growing recognition for a shared ecosystem. Alberto Lafón.

Grassland conservation in Mexico. A. Lafón

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

LAFÓN, ALBERTO. Mexico's grasslands: growing recognition for a shared ecosystem.
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There is increasing awareness that problems affecting grasslands in Mexico may well have continental consequences; e.g., habitat needs of transboundary and migratory species shared between the three North American countries. Misuse of natural resources in Mexico goes back to

pre-contact times and was already reported by newly settled Europeans, when referring to the surroundings of the mightiest city of the time, Tenochtitlán, now Mexico City. In a relatively short period of time, the onset of cattle-growing activities by Europeans had a devastating effect on wildlife, especially ungulates and predators. Towards 1600's several regions already showed the signs of overgrazing, a situation exacerbated within the last century with the increase of human population. Current estimates suggest that 70% of the 114 million hectares of grasslands used in Mexico as rangelands are seriously damaged as manifested, among other, by the spread of invasive shrubs, loss of soil, habitat fragmentation, loss of species and increasingly limited capacity of soils to retain water. Recognition of this situation as part of a whole in terms of species shared throughout the continent has led to the need of establishing new strategies conducive to the conservation of biological diversity at a hemispheric and continental scale. These circumstances led the Commission for Environmental Cooperation to support the design of the North American strategy for the Conservation of the grasslands". The basic premise for such an initiative dealing with shared natural resources is that international projects will more likely succeed if carried out through organized collaboration.

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Ecology and conservation of the prairie dog ecosystem in Chihuahua, Mexico. Gerardo Ceballos, Rurik List, and Jesús Pacheco

Ecology and conservation of prairie dogs. G. Ceballos

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

GERARDO CEBALLOS, RURIK LIST, AND JESÚS PACHECO. Ecology and conservation of the prairie dog ecosystem in Chihuahua, Mexico. Instituto de Ecología-UNAM, 3er Circuito Exterior Ciudad Universitaria, Coyoacán, 04510 México, D. F. México

We have studied the grasslands of northwestern Chihuahua, Mexico for the past 10 years. The area maintains the largest prairie dog town in North America, and the southern or northern boundary of the North American range of many vertebrates occurs here. It is an important wintering site for grassland birds. Populations of many threatened species of Mexico or North America are found in the area, including the only wild bison herd south of Yellowstone. We have documented that prairie dogs have an important influence in the maintenance of regional biodiversity by preventing the expansion of mesquite and other woody plants, thus maintaining the grassland as a defined habitat. Many vertebrates prey on the prairie dogs and many more use

their burrows for shelter. Threats to the grassland and prairie dog towns include the expansion of agriculture, overgrazing and prairie dog poisoning, while inadequate utility lines are a population sink for birds of prey. The information produced is helping other studies in Mexico and is of interest to a broad range of conservation projects in other parts of North America. It is also allowing us to build a solid conservation strategy for the area. The critical sites where to focus the conservation efforts have been identified, and long-term leases and purchase will be used to give permanent protection to them, through the creation of a reserve. We are working to reduce the impact of grazing and to recover the grassland, and conducting environmental education work with the local communities. The recovery efforts include the reintroduction of extirpated species; the black-footed ferret being the first reintroduced. The protection in Janos of many other species like the burrowing owl and mountain plover are vital for recovery efforts of these species in Canada and the United States.

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Getting the scale right in grassland conservation. John A. Wiens

Scale in grassland conservation. John A. Wiens

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

WIENS, JOHN A. Getting the scale right in grassland conservation. The Nature Conservancy, 4245 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203

Grasslands cover a broad latitudinal sweep in North America, and increasing attention is being given to conservation issues that encompass this broad spatial scale. Wide-ranging species, such as migratory birds, link places together, and maintaining such species requires more than a local perspective. At the same time, many conservation issues, such as grazing impacts, changing land use and residential development, or prairie fragmentation, require local strategies and solutions. Developing effective conservation strategies therefore requires a *multiscale* approach that considers the scale(s) relevant to target species or systems, the scales(s) on which threats are

most evident, and the scale(s) on which conservation action is most likely to produce lasting results. I illustrate the multiscale nature of conservation challenges using empirical data from studies of birds and insects in shortgrass to tallgrass prairies, and develop a “top-down” approach to prioritizing conservation strategies.

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Framework for developing a trinational grassland strategy. David Gauthier, Alberto Lafón,
and Ted Toombs.

Framework for a trinational grassland strategy. D.A. Gauthier

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

GAUTHIER, D.A., ALBERTO LAFÓN, AND TED TOOMBS. Framework for developing a trinational grassland strategy. Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada S4S 0A2 (DAG); Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua, Periférico Francisco L. Almada, Km 1, Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico 31031 (AL); Prairie Partners Coordinator, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 1510 S. College Ave., Suite 300, Fort Collins, CO 80524 (TT)

We describe the progress being made toward the development of a trinational conservation strategy for the grasslands of the Great Plains of North America. Facilitated by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, numerous organizations are working towards the development of such a strategy. Initially driven by a focus on species of common conservation concern, the conservation focus has broadened to a consideration of habitats, ecosystems and socio-economic factors affecting grasslands. We review the results of workshops and meetings held throughout North America to define the geographic scope, process, vision, guiding principles, structure and content of the framework. Reviews of the issues and needs for grassland conservation that are relevant at the trinational scale as well as for each of Mexico, the United States and Canada are also presented along with example of current successful grassland conservation programs. We identify the characteristics of potential trinational grassland conservation projects and conclude with a discussion of the future plans for further development of the strategy.

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Evaluation of conservation planning in Mexico: A stakeholder analysis approach. Juan C. Guzman-Aranda, James A. Parkhurst, and Steve L. McMullin.

Environmental Planning and stakeholder analysis. J. C. Guzman-Aranda

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

GUZMAN-ARANDA, JUAN C., JAMES A. PARKHURST, AND STEVE L. McMULLIN. Conservation planning, opportunities and limitations for successful conservation in Mexico; Insights gained from combining field and printed data. Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 149 Cheatham Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0321

We developed a comprehensive protocol for the evaluation of conservation planning in Mexico following a stakeholder analysis approach and through the identification and incorporation of successful components from other conservation planning experiences. We evaluated different case studies both from Modified Rural Landscapes and from Natural Protected Areas from 5 different states in Mexico (i.e., Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Oaxaca, Veracruz). The protocol includes critically essential components of sound planning, including inventory, goals/objectives, stakeholder analysis, operational planning, and evaluation (based on established performance measures). A major obstacle found in nearly all case studies examined was the reliance on a top-down, centralized approach, where issues were poorly defined, and stakeholder participation was negligible to non-existent. Most conservation planning efforts concentrate on strategic planning (i.e., setting goals and objectives), but often lack direct connection back to the issues (e.g., no specificity in terms of geographic location, impacts, urgency, importance). As a consequence, key stakeholders are not identified or involved. In many cases, stakeholder participation in the early stages of planning was restricted only to providing basic information rather than sharing in decision-making. Those projects that successfully involved stakeholders early (i.e., during issue definition) and where conflicting interests and values could be identified and dealt with early on were more likely to reach full implementation in the near future. Cases with successful participatory processes included shared decision-making and achieved the development of a common framework of understanding (e.g., terms, definitions, goals, issues and objectives) among all stakeholders. Given that stakeholders are issue-specific, the success of future conservation strategies in Mexico will be dependent upon a hierarchical analysis of the issues that will lead to a thorough identification of key constituency groups.

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Private sector contributions to grassland conservation and management. Bennett A. Brown.

Private sector contributions to grassland conservation. B. A. Brown

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

BROWN, BENNETT A. Private sector contributions to grassland conservation and management. The Animas Foundation, HC 65 Box 179-B, Animas, NM 88020.

Grasslands throughout the world are structured by climate and modified by anthropogenic factors. Chihuahuan Desert grasslands are no exception. In the last 150 years, many grassland communities in the southwestern United States have been converted to communities dominated by woody shrubs. Shrub invasion and shrub increases are occurring in many existing grasslands. Climatic changes (primarily increased winter rainfall) favors the germination and growth of woody plants at the expense of native warm-season perennial grasses. Overgrazing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century combined with decreases in the frequency and intensity of natural fires have contributed to the rate and extent of grassland conversion. In response to concerns about the loss of productive native grasslands and their natural biological diversity, a group of ranchers and environmentalists joined together to work with federal and state agencies in landscape scale planning and ecosystem management. This effort is focused on grassland restoration and maintenance over approximately one million acres in southeastern Arizona, southwestern New Mexico and northern Sonora. The Malpai Borderlands initiative is led by the Malpai Borderlands Group, a private sector 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose board consists of ranchers, environmentalists and scientists. Using the best science available, the group is committed to maintaining the integrity of the landscape and protecting against landscape fragmentation. It employs prescribed fire as a key management tool to restore degraded grasslands and to maintain productive grasslands. Other tools such as grassbanking and acquiring and holding conservation easements are also employed to preserve the integrity of the landscape and ensure the long-term security of compatible economic activities. Similar efforts are in various phases of start-up and operation in other locations in the western United States and Canada.

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Native American perspective on grassland conservation. Michael D. Fox

Native American perspective on grassland conservation. M. D. Fox

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

Fox, Michael D. Native American perspective on grassland conservation. Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, 750 Burbank Street, Broomfield, CO 80020

Indian lands in the United States comprise more than 50 million acres. Much of that acreage remains relatively wild and unspoiled, especially in the western United States and Alaska. There are over 500 tribes and native villages that occupy these lands. These lands continue to provide the tribes with spiritual and physical sustenance, cultural identity and the means for economic self-sufficiency. These lands also provide open space and habitat for a growing number of federally listed and proposed threatened and endangered species. As with other land managers, tribes struggle to balance their needs for economic development and self-sufficiency with the needs of wildlife particularly the over 500 threatened and endangered species found on tribal lands. As little as twenty years ago wildlife conservation and wildlife management was unheard of on many Indian reservations. Prior to Self Determination, an act that gave tribal governments a great deal more latitude in managing their own affairs, there was a general sentiment among the various federal agencies and private conservation groups that tribes did not place a high priority on these issues. Today many tribes have well established wildlife conservation programs, but there are still some tribes that are struggling to initiate even the basic management programs. Some tribes are cooperating with federal agencies and private conservation groups to manage and enhance these grassland habitats that are crucial to many threatened and endangered prairie species.

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North American bird conservation initiative (NABCI) as a model of trinational cooperation. Humberto Berlanga, Art Martell and David Pashley

Trinational Cooperation Model. H. Berlanga

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

BERLANGA, HUMBERTO ART MARTELL, AND DAVID PASHLEY. North American bird conservation initiative (NABCI) as a model of trinational cooperation. NABCI-Mexico National Coordinator c/o CONABIO, Liga Periférico Insurgentes Sur 4903, Col. Parques del Pedregal, Mexico, D.F 14010, MEXICO (HB); NABCI Canada, 13370 - 78th Avenue, Unit 511, Surrey, British Columbia V3W 0H6 CANADA (AM); NABCI-USA National Coordinator, P.O. Box 249, 4249 Loudoun Avenue, The Plains, Va 20198, USA (DP)

For the past few years NABCI has evolved towards an integrated view for bird and habitat conservation in a continental scale, providing an appropriate framework for all sectors, programs and initiatives in all three countries to build up a common strategy and conservation synergies. This presentation is focused on the lessons this promising and ambitious process has to offer to other emerging trinational conservation initiatives, such as the one building up on the grasslands. NABCI has now an implementation structure represented by three National Committees /Councils, three National Coordinators and a Trinational Steering Committee. This structure is working on the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed at the ministry level in all three countries. This agreement is aimed at strengthening the institutional framework of NABCI within each country. Currently a NABCI trinational communication strategy has been developed, a set of clear Terms of Reference for the Trinational Committee is in place, and a set of trinational criteria and a mechanism for the implementation of trinational demonstration projects has been adopted. NABCI is now about to begin with its "on the ground " implementation phase. Starting in Mexico's IBA (Important Bird Areas) Network, a group of high priority sites will be selected as a first step. Secondly, NABCI structures in the US and Canada will work nationally to identify and promote links with related partners in order to develop a trinational effort that would operate specific projects. These projects will be carried out by local organizations and will be used to promote the principles and the benefits of NABCI. It is expected that during the course of 2002 the first group of demonstration projects supported by partners in the three countries will be operating throughout North America.

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Prairie Wings: An initiative to protect habitat for grassland birds in the Great Plains. Bob McCready

Grassland bird conservation. B. McCready

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

McCready, Bob. Identifying and protecting habitat for thirteen bird species selected according to conservation status and their role as indicators of overall prairie health. Prairie Wings, The Nature Conservancy, 4889 Eagle Drive, Bainbridge, WA 98110

Prairie Wings is an initiative of The Nature Conservancy. Its mission is the conservation of the grassland birds of the western Great Plains through the selection and protection of an international network of sites critical to the long-term viability of the “unlucky” thirteen. The unlucky thirteen are, Baird’s sparrow, burrowing owl, Cassin’s sparrow, chestnut-collared longspur, ferruginous hawk, greater prairie chicken, lesser prairie chicken, long-billed curlew, McGown’s longspur, mountain plover, scaled quail, and Sprague’s pipit. The Prairie Wings’ project area reaches from south central Canada, across the central U.S. to northern Mexico. Key habitat sites are being identified and prioritized by reviewing existing scientific data, gathering new data and using Geographical Information Systems mapping. Strategies are being developed for the protection and management of these sites. Conservation actions will be implemented on the ground. Success will be measured and changes or adaptations will be implemented as needed. The long-term goal is to establish an international network of protected sites managed for the unlucky thirteen and other migratory birds.

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Northern Great Plains Joint Venture: A new approach to all bird and all habitat conservation under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Andrew H. Schollett

Northern Great Plains Joint Venture. A.H. Schollett

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

SCHOLLETT, ANDREW H. Northern Great Plains Joint Venture: A new approach to all bird and all habitat conservation under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The

Nature Conservancy, Dakota Prairie Grasslands, 240 West Century Avenue, Bismarck, ND 58503

The goal of the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture (NGPJV) is to sustain and enhance populations of migratory and resident birds and their habitats, consistent with current and future formal bird conservation objectives as expressed in regional, national and international plans. NGPJV conservation strategies will focus on conservation and enhancement of grasslands, wetlands, and other components of prairie ecosystems through a network of partnerships to deliver bird conservation. The NGPJV includes southwestern North Dakota, western South Dakota, southeastern Montana, northeastern Wyoming, and two counties in northwestern Nebraska. The landscape is largely dominated by expanses of rolling grasslands dissected by distinct drainages. While much of the landscape remains in grass a large portion has been altered in species composition and diversity by agricultural production, livestock grazing, fire suppression, and energy development. Large un-fragmented tracts of grasslands in the NGPJV provide some of the best remaining breeding habitat for a variety of migratory song birds. The landscape is vital for several species of shore birds, raptors and resident game birds. The NGPJV is an important duck production area with the potential for high recruitment rates. Maintaining a balance between the needs of bird conservation and the cultural, social and economic needs of the region will help further guide the direction of the NGPJV.

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Planning grassland conservation programs to restore ecological function for waterfowl and other wildlife. Pat Kehoe and James K. Ringelman.

Grasslands conservation for waterfowl and other wildlife. P. Kehoe and J. K. Ringelman

N/A

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

KEHOE, PAT AND JAMES K. RINGELMAN. Planning grassland conservation programs to restore ecological function for waterfowl and other wildlife. Ducks Unlimited Canada, Box 818, Brooks, Alberta, Canada, R1N 2B7, (PK). Ducks Unlimited, Inc., 2525 River Road, Bismarck, ND 58503 USA (JKR).

The grasslands of the southern Canadian prairies and northern Great Plains of the United States are priority areas for Ducks Unlimited's conservation programs. This region is particularly important for Northern Pintail, a species of special concern that has experienced historic

population declines and has not responded to recent, favorable water conditions. GIS based planning tools have been developed to identify critical areas within the grasslands, and to quantify changes in important landscape features. These spatial analyses provide a foundation for management actions that will restore habitat function and increase waterfowl populations to levels of the 1970's, thereby achieving the population goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The Missouri Coteau has been the focus of initial planning efforts that led to the establishment of goals to conserve existing native habitat and to restore habitat function within working agricultural landscapes. Conservation actions will be designed to promote ecological and economic sustainability and to provide benefits to a wide array of grassland-dependant species. Grassland conservation will only succeed through solid, science-based planning and the establishment of strong partnerships to implement conservation programs.

Rosario Alvarez

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Natural Protected Areas: An alternative for conservation of the prairie dog ecosystems in Nuevo León, Mexico. Rosario Alvarez, Miguel Angel Cruz, and Enrique Guadarrama.

Protected Areas and prairie dog conservation. R.Alvarez, M.A. Cruz, and E.Guadarrama

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

ALVAREZ, ROSARIO, MIGUEL ANGEL CRUZ, AND ENRIQUE GUADARRAMA.

Natural Protected Areas: An alternative for conservation of the prairie dog ecosystems in Nuevo León, Mexico Pronatura Noreste, AC TORRE GIA Av. Morones Prieto 2805 pte. 2° piso Col. Lomas de San Francisco Monterrey, NL 64710 México

Conservation efforts for in the “El Tokio” grasslands started in the late 1980 as a result of controversial investigations generated by grassland managers who experimented with the use of venoms for the control of this species. Further studies from the Narro University and the Nuevo León State University established the importance of the conservation of this ecosystem. The “El Tokio” is currently considered one of the 155 CONABIO’s (Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad) national official priority conservation sites, an important area for AICA’s bird conservation. Pronatura Noreste, Profauna, The Nature Conservancy and World Wildlife Fund established a strategy for protecting this site starting with the development of an ecorregional conservation plan. In response to the demand of the environmental community the Mexican Federal Government formed the Technical Advisory Committee for the Protection, Conservation and Recovery of the Mexican Prairie Dog. In

December 2002 Pronatura Noreste submitted a proposal to the environmental government agencies for the creation of a State Protected Area, the proposal echoed in the agency and the decree was officially signed in January 2002.

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A conservation vision for America's Great Plains prairies: Conservation goals for 2030.
Stephen C. Torbit and Richard R. Bachand

30-year prairie conservation vision. S.C. Torbit

N.A.

Symposium

North American Grasslands: Building a Trinational Conservation Strategy

TORBIT, STEPHEN C. AND RICHARD R. BACHAND. A conservation vision for America's Great Plains prairies: Conservation goals for 2030. National Wildlife Federation, Boulder, CO, 80302 (SCT), 5312 Lighthouse Pt., Loveland, CO, 80537 (RRB)

In September 2001, we convened a panel of recognized experts in grassland conservation, research and management to identify threats to prairie conservation and establish conservation goals for America's prairies for 2030. Threats identified were groundwater depletion and reduced groundwater supply to surface streams and wetlands, degraded water quality from non-point nutrient discharge and decreased seral and structural grassland diversity. Continued and accelerated fragmentation of habitat caused by cultivation, roads, and urbanization and invasive plants was also identified. Conservation goals established for 2030 were to develop and maintain a network of large, ecologically functioning prairie landscapes comprising 10 – 20% of the prairie landscape and to restore wild, free-roaming native ungulate grazers including bison, pronghorn and small grazers to public lands. Free-roaming large ungulates and small grazers provide a mosaic of early seral grassland structure. Experts established additional goals of removing unnecessary fencing, limiting utility lines and reducing roads to reduce habitat fragmentation and facilitate seasonal migrations. The most widely supported goal was to avoid tilling native prairie with the resultant disruption aboveground (forage for wildlife, soil stabilization) and belowground (nutrient cycling, water movement, carbon storage, biomass accumulation, soil biota activity). Management goals for public lands emphasized seral diversity and reduction in livestock grazing in wetlands, riparian areas and other special plant communities to encourage floral diversity and increase grassland structure. Achieving these goals will require new conservation policies developed through advocacy, public education and the support of private landowners. Conservation incentives to encourage participation of private

landowners must be developed to ensure ecosystem-wide conservation of grasslands and grasslands wildlife.