

**Grassland Species of Common Conservation Concern
Especies de los pastizales de Interés Común para la
Conservación**

**Report on the first Trinational Workshop
Nuevo Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, Mexico
March 21-23, 2001**



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Program for the Conservation of Biological Diversity
Commission for Environmental Cooperation**

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Table of Contents

Abstract and acknowledgments	2
<i>Resumen y agradecimientos</i>	3
List of Acronyms/Acrónimos	5
1. Introduction: A plight for grasslands, by Jürgen Hoth, CEC	6
2. Objectives of the SCCC-G Workshop	7
3. Results	7
3.1. Project profiles	7
3.2. Key note presentations: Current context of grasslands in North America	8
Canada by Troy Wellicome, Environment Canada	8
United States by Erich Langer, USFWS, and Kenny Knowles, Farm owner	9
Mexico by Gerardo Ceballos and Francisco González Medrano, UNAM	11
IUCN by Bill Henwood, IUCN/WCPA	12
NABCI by Humberto Berlanga, NABCI-Mexico and David Pashley, NABCI-USA	13
3.3. Workshop results	14
Shared vision	15
Current needs for grassland conservation	15
Approaches and challenges:	16
Information needs	17
Selection of projects and sites	17
Players	17
Planning	17
Mechanisms and Tools	17
Political will	18
Financing	18
Outreach and the media	18
Next steps	18
Grassland Definition/ <i>Definición de Pastizales</i>	21
4. Discussion	23
5. Potential role of the CEC	23
Annexes	26

Annex 1. Chihuahua Workshop: List of participants (attached).

Annex 2. Project profiles: Summary matrix and complete project profiles (attached)

Annex 3 Vision statement

Annex 4 Potential additional players for Canada and the USA

Annex 5 A Sister City proposal (USFWS)

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Abstract

Grasslands are considered one of the most threatened environment in North America. Many conservation initiatives have been carried out to protect this ecosystem at a national and binational level, especially within and between Canada and the United States. Mexico's potential importance, however, cannot be overstated; this country hosts the largest black tailed prairie dog colony remaining in North America. Since 2000, the three federal Wildlife Services of North America have agreed to work together to protect 17 species of wild birds and mammals considered "Species of Common Conservation Concern" (SCCC). Given that the majority of these species are associated with grasslands, the CEC organized a workshop, with the assistance of the three governments, to establish the foundations of a conservation strategy for these species. The workshop took place in Nuevo Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, Mexico in late March 2001, and involved government representatives from Canada, USA and Mexico, as well as representatives from NGOs, academia and landowners. The keynote presentations provided an overview of the current situation of grasslands in each country. In all cases dramatic losses of grasslands have taken place fairly recently and ongoing habitat fragmentation is perceived as the main threat. One of the key results of this workshop was the elaboration of a shared vision. This vision emphasizes the need to protect grassland species through the conservation of their habitat. To achieve this vision, it will require an enhanced understanding of the current status and trends of grasslands throughout North America; the identification of areas of conservation and protection priority; addressing current grassland use practices, and the development of outreach efforts. Achieving success will require the participation of diverse stakeholders, especially the engagement of landowners. As part of the future steps it is needed to coordinate efforts with other grassland related conservation initiatives, such as Partners in Flight. Recently, in April 2001, the CEC presented the results of the workshop to the Canada/Mexico/United States Trilateral Committee For Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management, and its Executive Table endorsed that the CEC working group devise a strategy for achieving the vision established by the Chihuahua grasslands workshop.

Acknowledgements

In addition to workshop participants, the support of several other people and institutions was also key to the success of this workshop. Special mention is owed to: Mr. **Jorge Ruiz**, Director, and the staff of the Chamizal Tourism Center, Ciudad Juárez, for their hospitality, logistic support and link to the media; Ms. **Imelda Dávila Torres**, Manager, Hotel Hacienda Nuevo Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, and her staff, for their hospitality and support; Mr. **José Luis Punzo**, Director, Paquime Archaeological Museum and staff, for their hospitality and fine attentions received during the visit to the Museum; Mr. **Leonel Molina García**, Municipal President of Janos, Chihuahua, for welcoming us to visit the prairie dog colony in Janos; and **Karen Schmidt** for solving all the logistic problems. This report benefitted greatly from the feedback provided by **Darcy Henderson** (University of Alberta), **Michael Green** (FWS) and **Rhian Christie** (University of Manitoba). The final responsibility of this report remains with the editor.

Grassland Species of Common Conservation Concern

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Resumen

Los **pastizales** son considerados el ambiente más amenazado de América del Norte. A la fecha se han llevado a cabo muchas iniciativas nacionales y binacionales para proteger este ecosistema, especialmente en y entre Canadá y EUA. La importancia potencial de México no puede ser pasada por alto; entre otras razones, por albergar la mayor colonia remanente de perritos de las praderas. **Desde el 2000** los tres servicios federales de vida silvestre de América del Norte han acordado trabajar juntos para proteger 17 especies de aves y mamíferos silvestres consideradas como “Especies de Interés Común para la Conservación” (SCCC, por sus siglas en inglés). Debido a que la mayoría de estas especies están asociadas con los pastizales, la CCA organizó un taller, con el apoyo de los tres gobiernos, para establecer las bases de una estrategia para la conservación de dichas especies. El taller se realizó en Nuevo Casas Grandes, Chihuahua a fines de marzo, 2001, con la participación de representantes gubernamentales, de ONGs, academia y propietarios de tierras de Canadá, EUA y México. Las **presentaciones magistrales** proporcionaron una visión actualizada de la situación de los pastizales en cada país. En los tres países la dramática pérdida de los pastizales se ha llevado a cabo recientemente y la continua fragmentación de hábitat es considerada como la mayor amenaza. Uno de los **principales resultados** del taller fue la elaboración de una **visión compartida**. Esta visión enfatiza la necesidad de proteger a las especies silvestres de los pastizales a través de la conservación de su hábitat. Para alcanzar esta visión se requerirá un mejor entendimiento de la situación actual y tendencias de los pastizales en toda América del Norte; la identificación de áreas prioritarias para su conservación y protección; abordar las prácticas actuales de uso de los pastizales y realizar trabajos de extensión y educación. Para lograr estos objetivos se requerirá de la participación de los diversos grupos de interés, especialmente los propietarios de las tierras. **A futuro** será fundamental coordinar esfuerzos con iniciativas similares para la conservación de los pastizales, tales como “Compañeros en vuelo” (PIF, por sus siglas en inglés). En abril, 2001, la CCA presentó los resultados del taller ante el **Comité Trilateral Canadá/México/EUA para la Conservación y el Manejo de Vida Silvestre y Ecosistemas**, y su Mesa Ejecutiva avaló al grupo de trabajo de la CCA para desarrollar una estrategia con el fin de alcanzar la visión del taller realizado en Chihuahua.

Agradecimientos

Además de los participantes al taller, varias otras personas e instituciones también contribuyeron de manera generosa a la exitosa realización del mismo. Merece especial mención **Jorge Ruiz**, Director, del Centro de Información Turística de Chamizal, Ciudad Juárez, y su personal, por su hospitalidad, apoyo logístico y enlace con los medios de Información; **Imelda Dávila Torres**, Gerente, y al personal del Hotel Hacienda Nuevo Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, por su hospitalidad y apoyo; **José Luis Punzo**, Director, del Museo Arqueológico de Paquime, y su personal, por su hospitalidad y atenciones recibidas durante la visita al museo; C. **Leonel Molina García**, Presidente Municipal, de Janos, por recibirnos en el recorrido a la colonia de los perritos de las praderas; y **Karen Schmidt** por resolver los problemas de logística. Este reporte se benefició enormemente de los comentarios realizados por **Darcy Henderson** (Universidad de Alberta),

Michael Green (FWS) y **Rhian Christie** (Universidad de Manitoba). La responsabilidad final de este informe es del editor.

List of Acronyms

BCR	Bird Conservation Region
CEC	Commission for Environmental Cooperation
CONABIO	Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad
COTECOCA	Comisión Técnico-Consultivo de Coeficientes de Agostaderos (SAGARPA)
DGVS	Dirección General de Vida Silvestre (SEMARNAT)
ENGO	Environmental Non Governmental Organization
IBA	Important Bird Area
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature, currently World Conservation Union
MCPA	Manitoba Cattle Producers Association
NABCI	North American Bird Conservation Initiative
NAFEC	North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)
NAWCP	North American Waterbird Conservation Plan
NAWMP	North American Wetlands Management Plan
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PCAP	Prairie Conservation Action Plan
PFRA	Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Program (Agriculture Canada)
PIF	Partners in Flight
SAGARPA	Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación
SCCC	Species of Common Conservation Concern
SCCC-G	Grassland Species of Common Conservation Concern
SEMARNAT	Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
UNAM	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
UNAM-IE	Instituto de Ecología (UNAM)
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP)
WCPA	World Commission of Protected Areas (IUCN)
WHSRN	Western Hemisphere Shorebird reserve Network
WWF-C	World Wildlife Fund-Canada

Grassland Species of Common Conservation Concern

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1. Introduction: A plight for grasslands, by Jürgen Hoth, CEC

Grasslands comprise about one fourth of the world's vegetation cover. In North America, grasslands are the largest vegetative province covering around one sixth of the region, comprising 16% of the United States, 10% of the surface of Mexico and 5% of Canada. Within the last 150 years sweeping changes have taken place in these communities considered one of the most biologically productive of the continent. Tall grass prairie has been reduced to 1%, and mixed prairie and short grass prairie to 20 to 30% of their former extent; jointly exceeding losses reported for any other major ecological community in North America. The decline of grassland landscapes has been caused primarily by agriculture expansion, urbanization and mineral exploitation, accompanied by the spread of invasive species and, increasingly, by growing urbanization and water extraction, to the point of making this one of the continent's most threatened ecosystems.^{1,2,3,4,5,6.}

Ongoing disturbances have markedly affected wildlife: grassland birds, for instance, have declined more than birds of any other ecological region in North America and around the world. Moreover, several species have been brought to near extinction, most notably the bison, while others have been markedly decimated. A notable example of the latter is the prairie dog, which may currently occupy between 2 and 0.5% of its original range and is known to play a determinant role in the wellbeing of more than 150 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects.^{7,8,9}

The challenges of grassland conservation are relevant to the three North American countries. This is true not simply because this is the only contiguous terrestrial ecosystem through Canada, the United States, and Mexico, but also because many grassland species migrate or extend their ranges through all three countries. Therefore, effective conservation efforts need to benefit from concerted work carried out throughout the species' distribution.

Protecting species entails protecting their habitat. Several studies have been carried out aimed at studying the grasslands throughout North America, most notably with regards to other types of

¹ Cruz, 1969 y Flores 1971, In Rzedowski, 1981. Vegetación de Mexico. LIMUSA, Mexico: 216; Valdés, J. and I. Cabral, 1993. Chorology of Mexican Grasses (pp 439-446). In T.P. Ramamoorthy, R. Bye, A. Lot and J. Fa. Biological Diversity of Mexico: origins and distribution. New York: Oxford University Press.

² Government of Canada, 1996. The State of Canada's Environment.

³ Samson, F.B. F.L. Knopf and W.R. Ostle. 1998. Grasslands (pp 437-472). In USGS 1998. Status and Trends of the Nation's Biological Resources. Vol. 2 US Dept. of the Interior, US Geological Survey.

⁴ Mosquin, T. 2000. Status and Trends in Canadian Biodiversity (pp. 59-79) In S. Bocking (ed.) Biodiversity in Canada: Ecology, Ideas and Action. Broadview Press.

⁵ Samson F. and F. Knopf. 1994. Prairie Conservation in North America. Bioscience 44(6): 418-421.

⁶ CEC, 1997. Ecological Regions of North America: Toward a Common Perspective. Commission for Environmental Cooperation. Montreal, Canada. 71 pp.

⁷ Miller, B. G. Ceballos and R. Reading. 1994. The Prairie Dog and Biotic Diversity. Conservation Biology 8(3): 677-681.

⁸ Samson et al. *ibid.*

⁹ Robinson, S. 1999. The Most Threatened Birds of Continental North America. Essay 11 (pp.69-70) In T. Ricketts et al. Terrestrial Ecoregions of North America: a conservation assessment. World Wildlife Fund. Island Press. USA.485 pp.

ecological regions (see CEC, 1997) and protected areas¹⁰ throughout North America, and through grasslands conservation assessments especially for Canada and United States¹¹. From these studies, Mexico stands out as the country without a protected area in the grasslands, although currently efforts are underway to establish one in Janos, Chihuahua for its hemispheric importance by hosting the largest black tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) colony of North America.

Aware of the need to establish the basis for a common agenda for the conservation of shared species, the wildlife agencies of Canada, United States and Mexico, assisted by the CEC, created a list of Species of Common Conservation Concern (SCCC)¹². In February 2000, the three countries endorsed the resulting list of 17 species of birds and mammals through the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management.

Given that a majority of these species were associated with grasslands, the parties and the CEC organized a workshop with the goal of developing a framework of bi- and trinational cooperation to conserve migratory and transboundary grassland Species of Common Conservation Concern (SCCC-G).

From March 21 to 23, 2001, a group of 40 people including government officials, NGO representatives, academics, and landowners met in Nuevo Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, Mexico (see agenda and the complete list of participants in Annex 1).

2. Objectives of the SCCC-G Workshop

The **objectives** of the workshop were:

- 1) To bring together key players engaged in the conservation of grasslands species, to determine what is needed to conserve these species, especially (but not exclusively) those on the SCCC list;
- 2) To identify trinational cooperation opportunities among players interested in the conservation of grassland species; and
- 3) To develop an action plan(s) to conserve migratory and transboundary grassland species of common conservation concern.

3. Results

The main results of the workshop were an initial database of projects related to existing research and conservation of grassland species; a comparative overview of grasslands throughout North America; a vision statement; shared information on the status and threats; a shared commitment for action to prevent additional loss and to restore the ecosystem; and a rich discussion on next steps.

3.1. Project profiles

¹⁰ Gauthier, D. and E. Wiken, 1998. The Great Plains of North America. Parks, IUCN

¹¹ Ricketts, T, E. Dinerstein, D. Olson, Colby Loucks, et al. 1999. Terrestrial Ecoregions of North America: a conservation assessment. World Wildlife Fund. Island Press. USA. 485 pp.

¹² To consult the latest version of the report on the Species of Common Conservation Concern please see http://www.cec.org/files/PDF/BIODIVERSITY/SCCC-Web-e_EN.PDF

In preparation of the workshop potential participants were invited to submit a profile of their ongoing projects related to the conservation of grassland species. The goal of this list of projects was to serve as a foundation to build a grassland projects database and to assist in the identification of collaboration opportunities among groups interested in grassland conservation.

In total, profiles of 44 ongoing trinational grassland projects were received prior to the meeting. The main characteristics of these projects are the following (the frequency is shown by the parenthesis).

The most frequent project *interests* were:

- A. Research on populations and ecology (13)
- B. Land use & management (7)
- C. Habitat Conservation (7)
- D. Species surveys (7)

The grassland *species* with highest occurrence were:

- A. Black tailed prairie dog (8)
- B. Burrowing owl (6)
- C. Ferruginous hawk (3)
- D. Black footed ferret (3)

The most frequent project *needs* were:

- A. Funding (6)
- B. Research (6)
- C. Capacity building (3)
- D. Increase involvement of stakeholders (3)

The most frequent project *locations* were:

- A. Chihuahua (10)
- B. Alberta (7)
- C. New Mexico (4)
- D. Northern Mexico as a whole (4)

Please find in annex 2, the summary matrix and the complete description of the projects.

3.2. Key note presentations: Current context of grasslands in North America

Unless otherwise indicated the following is a summary of the presentations made by Troy Wellicome, for Canada; Erich Langer and Kenny Knowles for the USA; and Gerardo Ceballos and Francisco González Medrano for Mexico. Bill Henwood, Humberto Berlanga and David Pashley presented the international initiatives (please see details in Agenda, Annex 1).

Canada by Troy Wellicome, *Environment Canada*

Status and threats

About 20% of Canada prairies remain in good condition. Currently one of the main threats, or external governing factors, is pressure on agriculture to compete in the global market.

Initiatives

There are several ongoing initiatives to protect the prairies, like the Prairie Conservation Action Plan (PCAP)¹³, released in 1989 by WWF-Canada in consultation with representatives of federal and provincial governments and conservation groups¹⁴. Among the main goals of this Action Plan are to identify remaining prairie, protect threatened species representative areas and encourage land stewardship and governments to incorporate grasslands conservation in their programs. Currently this initiative is still underway in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.¹⁵

¹³ Prairie Conservation Action Plan (PCAP) <http://www.mb.ec.gc.ca/nature/whp/en/pcap.htm>

¹⁴ WWF-Canada, 1989. Prairie Conservation Action Plan 1989-1994.

¹⁵ See <http://www.mb.ec.gc.ca/nature/whp/en/pcap.htm>

PCAP owes its success to several aspects: it has developed multi-agency and multidisciplinary partnerships, has government funding, consists of a stewardship program, conservation easements and operates by working face to face

Several Canadian bird conservation programs have been very closely associated to the conservation of grassland species, such as the *Prairie Shorebird Conservation Plan* and *Prairie Partners in Flight* and *Prairie Waterbird Conservation Plan*.¹⁶

Other binational programs include the Missouri Couteau Initiative¹⁷, between southwest Saskatchewan and Montana, which among other promotes land easements, public policy and work with species at risk, among others.

Species

Several threatened grassland species have received special attention, including the Burrowing owl through “Operation Burrowing Owl”¹⁸, aimed at habitat conservation. Other efforts include scientific-technical events such as the recently held “2nd International Burrowing Owl Symposium”. More recently, exciting news about this species was the finding by the Canadian Wildlife Service, early in 2001, of the first two Canadian radio-tracked Burrowing Owls in Mexico.

Challenges

Some of the main challenges and threats for grasslands conservation are related to the need to improve grazing management and the shrinking rural population, and the increasing prevalence of corporate farms. The announcement made by the Canadian Agrifood Market Council of Canada striving to increase its production to provide 4% of global market share may result in increasing the stress on the Canadian prairies. Other potential threats include the emergence of genetically modified produce and global warming.

The involvement of First Nations in conservation initiatives remains another key challenge, especially because the lack of trust and differences in worldview. Other challenges involve the effective participation of landowners (Lynda Maltby)

Additional information:

- Environment Canada’s Prairie and Northern Region - <http://www.pnr-rpn.ec.gc.ca/info/publications/ap-pa/ce01s08.en.html>

United States by *Erich Langer, USFWS, and Kenny Knowles, Farm owner*

Status

The demise of the prairies started in 1837 with the arrival of John Deere steel plow. Since then until now the impact on prairie species has been dramatic: the 60 million Plain bison population crashed as well as 98% reduction of the estimated five billion prairie dogs.

¹⁶ See <http://www.nacwcp.org/workshops/prairpotwksum.htm>

¹⁷ See http://www.ibacanada.com/legacy/new_nl2b3.html

¹⁸ See <http://www.unibase.com/~naturesk/obo.htm>

Threats

The main threats for the prairies in the United States are:

- ◆ habitat fragmentation
- ◆ exploitation of aquifers (an emerging reason for purchase of lands in the high plains)
- ◆ Invasive species, like Tamarisk (*Tamarix* spp.)¹⁹
- ◆ Pollution due to animal feeding operations
- ◆ Removal of fire
- ◆ Oil and gas exploitation (including road building)
- ◆ Mechanical removal of native vegetation

Effective approaches

Farmers have experienced in their lifetime the decline of valued prairie wildlife. The high plains once covered 90 million hectares of short and mixed grass ecosystem over 10 states, currently however, most of it has been converted into agriculture. As a federal response to conserve the cultural and natural heritage of this region, the High Plains Partnership was developed comprising public entities and private individuals. This ongoing collaboration project has successfully brought together landowners and governments in ten states, including tribal organizations. The partnership originated, in part, to reverse the decline of species and to work towards preventing the need to listing of species under the Endangered Species Act.²⁰

One of the innovations brought by this project to bridge the gap between government and farmer at the community level, is the “ranch conversation” approach. This neighbor-friendly approach consists of direct meetings between landowners and agencies, and has been supported by a landowner incentive program. Currently this initiative includes 24 projects and its success—but limited financial resources—has resulted in a waiting list of 450 landowners.

From the farmer’s perspective pilot projects are seen as win-win-win situations—as they help protect candidates species from needing to be listed as endangered. An example of this approach is the work carried out with the Lesser Prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*), they also benefit all wildlife and his/her cattle operations.

Changes of practices at the farm level include: fencing to allow grass to obtain optimum cover for nesting; planting native grasses with forbes and legumes and food plots for wildlife; leaving 10% of the ranch with grass cover from last years growth for nesting habitat; and mowing to establish new booming grounds for Prairie Chicken.

Species

Additional reasons for having chosen Lesser Prairie Chicken is that they are non-controversial, diurnal, non-threatening, and is considered a keystone species.

Challenges

Lack of knowledge of how large viable wildlife populations need to be. Knowing this would be useful for undertaking a more proactive role in species conservation. The states are proposing to increase by 250 % the size of several targeted populations (Pete Gober)

¹⁹ See <http://www.abi.org/publications/leastwanted/tamarisk.html>

²⁰ See <http://www.r6.fws.gov/pfw/r6pfw6.htm>

Additional Comments

Canada has also a landowner communication network, with scientific and technical support, and is in the position to participate in monitoring wildlife populations (Rick Baydack).

Additional Information

- U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Northern Plains/Prairie Potholes Regional Shorebird Conservation Plan <http://www.manomet.org/USSCP/files.htm>
- Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/info.htm#whoweare>
- Project Prairie Bird, Texas Park and Wildlife http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/birding/prairie_birds/

Mexico by Gerardo Ceballos and Francisco González Medrano, UNAM

Status

Mexican grasslands cover from 10 to 13 % of the land's surface. This ecosystem has a relatively high biological diversity, with few endemic species but a high number of transboundary and threatened species. Mexican grasslands host around 1000 species of grasses, 25% of which are endemic, 65% are native and 15% are cultivated species.

Grasslands occurrence depends on the type of climate and type of soil. They occur in semiarid and cold climates and the latter in soils with high content of salt. They flourish in a substratum rich in gypsum.

Threats

- ◆ Land use change: fragmentation
- ◆ Agricultural activities
- ◆ Habitat loss due to urbanization (especially in the State of Aguascalientes)

Challenges within the North American Context

The long term survival of many species requires a regional (continental) approach.

Opportunities

Conservation efforts in Mexico are key for conservation efforts for migratory or transboundary of species shared with Canada and the United States.

Priorities for grassland conservation in Mexico

- ◆ Recognize the relevance of grasslands and develop an action plan for the conservation of prairies
- ◆ Determine the current distribution of grasslands
- ◆ Determine conservation priorities
- ◆ Identify key species
- ◆ Sound management of species and ecosystems
- ◆ Involve communities
- ◆ Protected areas in the Mexican grasslands (none of the 114 protected areas are in grasslands).

- ◆ Promote the valuing of grasslands through an education program

Species

Among the taxa that require immediate attention through trinational cooperation are:

- ◆ Black-tailed Prairie dogs, *Cynomys ludovicianus*
- ◆ Black footed ferrets, *Mustela nigripes*
- ◆ Pronghorn, *Antilocapra americana sonoriensis*
- ◆ Grassland and migratory birds

Some ongoing successful projects include the work with the following species:

- ◆ Walker manioc, *Manihot walkerae* Croizat (Euphorbiaceae),
- ◆ Black bear (Big Bend), *Ursus americanus*
- ◆ Prairie dogs, *Cynomys ludovicianus*
- ◆ Pronghorn, *Antilocapra americana sonoriensis*
- ◆ Monarch butterfly, *Danaus plexippus*

Ecosystem

The overriding objective should be to conserve the ecosystem as a whole

IUCN by Bill Henwood, IUCN/WCPA

Status

Grasslands cover 40% of the terrestrial surface and yet are the least protected of the 14 biomes of the world. Currently only 1% of grasslands is under any conservation regime. Grasslands are considered the most endangered ecosystem in most regions.

The goal of IUCN is to protect 10% of the world's temperate grasslands.

Constraints

Some of the main constraints to increasing protection include:

- ◆ Little remains in a natural state making restoration difficult;
- ◆ Low level of awareness of the values of grasslands;
- ◆ High level of private land ownership;
- ◆ Long standing traditional patterns of use and strong cultural ties to grasslands;
- ◆ Lack of effective economic and tax incentives; and
- ◆ Strong political pressure to retain existing situation.

Proposal

- ◆ CEC to partner with IUCN's Grassland Protected Areas Task Force (GPTAF) to design a network of grassland protected areas for North America. This partnership could potentially provide access to additional resources such as the World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC)²¹, expertise in IUCN's World Commission of Protected Areas (WCPA) and eventually strengthen WCPA's global network.
- ◆ To develop target region-specific action plans for the World Parks Congress in 2003

²¹ See <http://www.wcmc.org.uk/>

- ◆ To assess existing protection levels for grasslands, including an inventory of existing protected areas according to an ecological classification; continue CEC's profile of grassland region to levels III and IV; and identify gaps identified on the basis of ecological representation, critical habitats and species of common conservation concern.

NABCI by Humberto Berlanga, NABCI-Mexico and David Pashley, NABCI-USA

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI)²² is a joint Mexico, Canada and United States undertaking aimed at protecting, restoring and enhancing all North American bird populations and their habitats through regionally based, biologically driven, landscape oriented partnerships.

This multi-stakeholder initiative began in 1995-96 as it became part of the agenda of CEC and the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife Conservation. Since then it has been adopted—as a promising means to support bird conservation—by NGO's, local groups, academia, the three governments, funding agencies, and other, including the major ongoing bird conservation initiatives (NAWMP²³, NAWCP²⁴, PIF²⁵ and WHSRN²⁶).

NABCI can be considered a pioneer partnership and a prototype of trilateral cooperation for species' conservation. Some of the key elements from this collaboration framework are the following:

- *Participative*, seeks input from all stakeholders at all planning stages
- *All encompassing*, includes all major bird conservation initiatives
- *Synergic*, builds upon existing conservation initiatives
- *Wide endorsement*, has a shared agenda reflected by international agreements, as per CEC's Council resolution 96-02 and 99-03
- Has a national and *international organizational body*, currently represented by the National Committees and by the CEC
- *National coordinators*, one per country, contracted for supporting the National Committees and building NABCI on a day-to-day basis, providing the glue for NABCI
- *Builds on national priorities*, ensured through the National Committees, which are integrated members representing various stakeholder groups per country. National priorities are mirrored at the trilateral level and, conversely, trilateral perspectives inform national planning.

²² See <http://www.nabci.org/cec/>

²³ North American Wetlands Management Plan (NAWMP), see <http://www.ducks.ca/habitat/nawmp.html> and <http://northamerican.fws.gov/NAWMP/nawmphp.htm>

²⁴ North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (NAWCP), see <http://www.nacwcp.org/> and <http://www.im.nbs.gov/cwb/cwb.html>

²⁵ Partners in Flight (PIF), see <http://www.partnersinflight.org/>

²⁶ Western Hemisphere Shorebird reserve Network (WHSRN), see <http://www.manomet.org/WHSRN.htm>

Planning tools

The main land use and conservation planning tools developed by NABCI partners include the identification of *important bird areas* (IBA's) and *bird conservation regions* (BCR's), both of which will provide the basis for project delivery.

Next steps

Chief among NABCI's main next steps is moving from national strategies to action plans, and providing guidance for international demonstration projects that emphasize broad partnerships and landscape ecology principles, while maintaining NABCI's multi-partner spirit.

Based upon NABCI's experience, the following are some items that the SCCC-G may need to consider:

- Will SCCC-G be a habitat or a species approach, or both?
- How to move to a common (multi-initiative) trinational process?
- What is the time frame?
- Both initiatives have a common concern (birds), can criteria and priorities be shared?
- What type of mechanisms, commitments and agreements are needed?
- How to build on existing efforts?
- Who should lead?
- Which are the roles of the different stakeholders?
- How much money is needed to start and where?

Discussion

During the question session the opportunity was highlighted for the Grassland SCCC effort to include NABCI's planning tools, such as the IBAs and BCRs mentioned above (see additional information, this section). Moreover, one of the key challenges indicated was to identify existing efforts related to grasslands, "*connect them all*" and recognize what is missing. As a way to build the SCCC-G initiative the recommended building blocks to be considered were: 1) determine the biological gaps (at a continental scale); 2) establish a shared vision for the entire ecosystem; 3) garner resources; and 4) promote partnerships. The importance of including socio-economic considerations was also recognized, and hence the need to involve sociologists.

Additional information

- Bird Conservation Regions in Canada <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/international/bcrmain.html>
- Bird Conservation Regions in Canada, USA and part of Mexico http://www.dodpif.org/nabci/nabci/nabci_index.htm
- Important bird Areas: in Canada: <http://www.ibacanada.com/>
- Important Bird Areas in Mexico: http://conabio_web.conabio.gob.mx/aicas/aica.html
- Important Bird Areas in the USA: <http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/pdf/iba.pdf>

3.3. Workshop results

To obtain the main elements needed to establishing the foundations for a conservation strategy and associated action plans, the group of participants was divided into smaller work groups, which were each asked to address the following questions:

- What is a realistic vision about the grasslands?
- How can the vision be achieved?
- Who is already doing it? Who should do it?
- What is missing?

Among the key results from this workshop were the elaboration of a shared vision and initial agreements for developing a trinational grassland strategy, as follows:

Shared vision

a. The vision developed by the workshop participants is:

“To develop and maintain a network of ecologically functioning, social and economically viable, grassland landscapes in North America, through the application of principles and practices of maintenance, prevention and recovery of habitats and wildlife, including the species of common conservation concern, and through multilevel collaboration” (please see complete statement in Annex 3).

The vision is to provide guidance 1) for the continental conservation of grasslands and 2) to promote trinational efforts such as a continental gap analysis and actions for the recovery of species

“Visions don’t have price tags”
David Pashley, SCCC-G meeting, Chihuahua

The following section presents the main discussion items generated by the work groups while addressing the fore mentioned four questions

Current needs for grassland conservation

- Ensure an adequate representation of the biological diversity of all grasslands:
- Restore wildlife populations
- Recovery of endangered species
- Promote public awareness
- Promote the establishment of large and continuous protected areas/habitats
- Promote net gain of grasslands (see table 1)
- Minimize the impact of human activities
- Create a joint grasslands data base or (data network), available to all parties
- Restore natural processes to prevent extirpations, reverse declines and prevent exotic plant invasions

Table 1. Future vision of desired percentage of historical grassland in functional condition

	10 yrs	50 yrs	100 yrs
Desert Grasslands	10%	20%	40%
Short Grasslands	50	60	60

Mixed Grasslands	30	40	40
Tall Grasslands	3	10	10

Approaches and challenges:

- Include all types of grasslands (including those outside the Great Plains) and ensure an adequate representation of their biodiversity
- Carry out complete ecoregional planning across the Great Plains. Although planning should be based upon a biological approach, socio-economic and political factors need also be acknowledged
- Identify areas as conservation priorities and promote connectivity among well preserved sites and protected areas
- Minimize human disturbance
- Avoid net loss of grasslands and promote ecosystem restoration
- Identify threats at different levels: by species, by ecosystem, by sites and by regions
- Define species assemblages (suites) associated to target/focal species (e.g. groups of sympatric species of birds and mammals).
- Help coordinate international, federal, state/provincial and municipal policies
- Develop a common terminology related to grassland ecology
- Initiate positive grassland management regimes: reduce chronic overgrazing
- Improve management through incentives to landowners and assistance to natural resources agencies in achieving objectives. The former could include demonstration projects to locally influence management improvements
- Strengthen the implementation capacity of the diverse sectors (see table 2):

Table No. 2 Vision implementation capacity of diverse sectors in North America

Who	Mexico	Canada	USA
Government			
Federal	Limited	Good*	Good
State/Provincial	Limited	Fair*	Fair
Municipal	Fair	Limited*	Limited
NGOs	Very Limited	Good*	Good
Industry	Fair to good	Limited to Fair*	Fair to Good
Landowners	Very Limited	Limited	Fair to Good
General Public	Very Limited	Limited*	Fair to Good
First Nations	Poor	Poor	Poor
	Poor	Limited to Fair	Fair to Good

* N.B. In Canada, in terms of government, it is the provinces that have jurisdiction over the land base and all wildlife except for migratory birds. The provinces have been the leaders, in association with NGOs, to conserve grasslands in the three prairie provinces. The federal government has little jurisdiction (although much expertise), and therefore, little control over most factors affecting the conservation of grassland ecosystems and species. Unless there is a major change in jurisdiction once the final version of the **Species At Risk Act** is passed in parliament, the implementation capacity of sectors could be reclassified as *Federal - Limited-Fair, Provincial - Fair-Good, and Municipal - Limited, NGOs Fair, and Landowners Fair* (note by Darcy Henderson).

Information needs

- Need to jointly assess the status, distribution and trends of existing functional grasslands in all three countries; special consideration should be granted to transboundary grasslands
- Develop a grasslands data base
- Assess economic value of healthy grasslands
- Enhance public awareness

Selection of projects and sites

Criteria for project and site selection would have to be developed, some may include:

- Choose projects with high visibility and probability of success
- Choose cross-boundary grasslands and then work to protect them
- Highlight international linkages through "sister grasslands" tied by migratory or transboundary species (see Annex 5).
- In Mexico: Focus on the priority areas identified by CONABIO²⁷ and on areas with habitat for SCCC. Several areas have already been identified in NW Chihuahua and NE Sonora.

Players

- Work with landowners, through landowner forums geographically spaced over the areas
- Establish relations between ranchers and landowners (e.g. First Nations) from Mexico, United States and Canada, based on shared species ranch conversations, such as done in the United States Prairie Partners (see keynote presentations).

Planning

- Provide governments with clear input regarding policies and program, starting with short term practices.

Mechanisms and Tools

- Assess whether a new initiative is needed or if an already existing trilateral initiative could serve to focus joint efforts
- Expand the network of protected grassland areas throughout North America
- Use flagship species to emphasize ecosystem conservation
- Promote stewardship incentives
- Foster community participation (local, academic, sectorial, etc.)
- Establish training opportunities: prepare future managers to work within this vision and across international borders
- Support landowner collaboration
- Improve communications among those working in grasslands in the three countries including links with The Great Plains initiative²⁸; and improve communications with agricultural agencies, producers and first nations.

²⁷ See http://www.conabio.gob.mx/rtp/regiones_terrestres_prioritarias.html

²⁸ The Great Plains initiative was established in 1991 and joins Canada, USA and Mexico with the mission of catalyzing and empowering the people of the Great Plains to define and create their own generationally

- Influence NABCI to make grasslands a high priority

Political will

- Develop a Trinational agreement with a shared concept of resources and considerations for resources to be allocated where most needed.

Financing

- Explore the potential of carbon sequestration as an economic incentive for restoration. A promising suggestion made by Darcy Henderson is to invite organizers for the USA (USDA) Conservation Reserve Program, Canadian (PFRA)²⁹ Permanent Cover Program, and Ducks Unlimited who are currently the big players in reclaiming cultivated land and returning it to grasslands - and the fossil-fuel industry representatives involved in purchasing carbon credits - and sell them all on the SCCC vision)

CEC involvement

- Focus CEC Invasives program on grasslands (see section 5, below).

Outreach and the media

National and regional media were invited as part of the workshop to promote awareness of the continental significance of local and regional grasslands. Interviews were broadcasted through the national media and the regional media published the following two newspaper articles:

- Castañón, A. *Buscan Rescatar Especies en Peligro*. El Diario, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, 21 de Marzo, 2001
- Terrazas Saenz, R. *Buscan Preservar los Perritos de las Preaderas: Janos tiene la población mas grande de este animal en toda Nortaaérica*. El Diario, Ciudad Juárez, 22 de Marzo, 2001

Next steps

Q2 How do we get there? (Including targets)

P2 ¿Como lograremos alcanzar la vision ? (incluyendo metas)

1. Devise a **strategy** for achieving the vision/*Desarrollar una estrategia para lograr la vision*

a. Who (does it\needs to do it):

sustainable future. Their focus is to strengthen and improve biological diversity and ecosystem health, in ways that also strengthen and improve the economic, social and cultural foundations of the region. See <http://www.greatplains.org/index.htm>

²⁹ See <http://www.agr.ca/pfra/>

- ◆ Each of the representatives of the three countries to designate representatives (more than 3, less than 10)

	Facilitator	Player ³⁰
Canada	Lynda Maltby CWS Eleanor Zurbrigg CWS	Rick Baydack, UoM Pat Fargey, Parks Can Bill Henwood, IUCN-WCPA Bob Mclean CWS Carrie Spencer, AFC Ed Wiken, Habitat Canada
USA	Sue Jewell, USFWS	Rick Bachand, NWF Martha Desmond, NMSU Fritz Knopf, USGS Kenny Knowles Sonia Najera TNC John Sidle,USFS
Mexico	Ariel Rojo, DGVS Alejandro Quiroz, CONABIO	Mauricio Cotera, PNE Alberto Lafon, UACH Rurik List, UNAM-IE Alicia Melgoza, Rafaela Paredes, IMADES Jesus Valdes Reyna,

New Steering Committee:

Editorial Group: Rick Baydack, Rick Bachand, Martha Desmond, Sonia Najera, Ariel Rojo, Eric Langer, Jurgen Hoth, Rafaela Paredes, Rhian Christie and Kenny Knowles

b. By when:

List of players: April 6

Update: [List of players is pending](#)

Strategy: 2001, September 1st (Vision document to sell the grasslands concept)

c. Next steps:

- ◆ Position paper
- ◆ Mexican diagnosis of grasslands, strategy
- ◆ Submit by Sept 2001 trinational grasslands position for September 2002, (The Wildlife Society Annual Conference: Martha Desmond, Rick Bachand and Rick Baydack, Ariel Rojo)

d. CEC role: **Brochure**, help support (including \$) building of strategy

Darcy Henderson proposed the following idea, discussed with one group while in NCG, Chihuahua regarding a brochure.

To sell the idea to the public, and subsequently politically, it might be useful to craft a story. For example, a profile of three landowners (1 in each country) whose land is used by an individual burrowing owl (feel free to anthropomorphize with a name or just a leg band #) during the course of its migration. Have a map showing the migratory route across the three countries, photographs of and testimonials from the three landowners, and a profile of the burrowing owl. In that profile

³⁰ Please see annex 4 for Potential additional players for Canada and the USA

we could include the potential perils facing this individual owl - habitat loss and fragmentation, pesticides, grazing management, etc. We could also discuss what concerns the landowners have in common (agricultural markets, costs of production, land use decisions, government programs that work and do not work, etc.), and what is unique about each piece of habitat. Then lead into the NACEC strategy and role.

2. Establish **priorities for species and habitats** at a North American scale/ *Establecer prioridades para especies y habitats de America del Norte.*

- a. Who (does it\needs to do it): T.B.D by strategy
- b. By when:
- c. Next steps:
- e. CEC role:

3. Establish **targets, goals and objectives** for wild grassland species/ *Establecer objetivos y metas con especies silvestres de los pastizales*

(Plan de accion\Action plan)

- a. Who (does it\needs to do it):
- b. By when: Start September 1, 2001
- c. Next steps:
- d. CEC role:

4. That the governments support the establishment of a trinational multistakeholder **grassland working group** to achieve the vision./ *Que los gobiernos apoyen la continuacion de las labores de este grupo trinacional de trabajo con participaci3n amplia de los diversos grupos de interes para alcanzar la vision.*

- a. Who (does it\needs to do it): The three governments, Trilateral
- b. By when: Abril 22, 2001
- c. Next steps: Instruct CEC to support in FY 2001
- d. **Update: DONE.** The CEC presented to three wildlife services the main results from the SCCC-G and the Executive Table expressed support, recommending that the CEC working group devise a strategy for achieving the vision established by the Chihuahua grasslands workshop.to continue their collaboration with grasslands SCCC.³¹

5. Encourage the use of **MOUs, LOI** and other instruments, as appropriate, for achieving the vision/*Promover el uso de Memoranda de Entendimiento, cartas de intencion, como sea apropiado, para alcanzar la vision*

- a. Who (does it\needs to do it): t.b.d. by Strategy & Action plan
- b. By when:

³¹ See Minutes of the 6th Annual Meeting of the Canada/Mexico/United States Trilateral Committee For Wildlife And Ecosystem Conservation and Management, April 24-27, 2001, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

- c. Next steps: Ask to the offices of International affairs in each country which would be the most convenient mechanisms, identify
 - d. CEC role: t.b.d.
6. Actively solicit the input and involvement in planning and implementation from **landowners and indigenous people** / *Buscar la aportación y participación activa (planeación e instrumentación) de los dueños de la tierra, incluyendo grupos indígenas.*
- a. Who (does it\needs to do it): t.b.d. by Strategy & Action plan, must be part of planning cycle. A ser determinado por estrategia y Plan de acción.
 - b. By when:
 - c. Next steps:
 - d. CEC role:
7. Assess current distribution, status, trends, regionalization of **priorities of prairies** and grasslands and share it with the other countries for its use in national programming. / *Conocer la distribución actual, estado, tendencias, regionalización de las prioridades de los pastizales y compartirlo con los otros países para que sea usado en su programación a nivel nacional*
- a. Who (does it\needs to do it): Action plan
 - b. By when:
 - c. Next steps:
 - USGS: Fritz Knopf; Ducks Unlimited Jeff Nelson
 - Wildlife habitat Canada Ed Wiken, NRCan
 - Mexico: CONABIO, INEGI + UNAM-IG, COTECOCA (SAGARPA)
- Mexico: organize a workshop
- a. CEC role:
 - Facilitate higher resolution of mapping efforts related to grasslands. Facilitar mayor resolución en mapeo de pastizales
 - Clearinghouse. Nodo de información

8. What are grasslands? (working definition); *¿Qué son los pastizales? (definición de trabajo).*

a. Who: Mauricio Cotera, Darcy Henderson, Rick Bachand. Bill Henwood, Francisco Gonzalez Medrano

a. By when: April 30

b. Update: Pending

First approximation:

Grassland Definition/Definición de Pastizales

Various definitions have been put forward and a final working definition is still pending. The main challenge has been to find a definition applicable to the prairie ecosystem and beyond.

So far the definitions considered are:

- Comunidad de gramíneas que se establece naturalmente por efecto del clima, tipo de suelo y biota en general./Community of naturally occurring grasses, established as a result of climate, soil type and biota in general (CONABIO, 2000).³²
- Comunidades vegetales en que el papel preponderante corresponde a las gramíneas. Son comunes en las regiones semiáridas y en zonas planas./Vegetation community in which the main role corresponds to the grasses found therein. Commonly found in subhumid to semi arid climate in areas with relatively little topographic relief (Rzedowski³³, 1988:215-216; CEC³⁴, 1997:26).
- Relatively low relief landscapes with upland vegetation dominated by perennial grasses as a result of natural drought, grazing and/or fire regimes. Commonly found in regions with subhumid to semi arid climate within temperate and sub-tropical zones./ Paisajes con relieve relativamente bajo y con vegetación dominada por pastos perennes, como resultado de sequías naturales, pastoreo, y/o regímenes de fuego Son comunes dentro de las zonas templadas y subtropicales en regiones con clima subhúmedo a semiárido (Darcy Henderson, University of Alberta, pers. comm.).
- In their natural state, Grasslands are those landscapes that were largely dominated by xeric types of flora and fauna, light to dark brown chernozemic soils, and dry warm summers (generally occurring in relatively flat to gently rolling areas). Today, grasslands would more commonly be called farmlands and ranch lands, and be characterized by farming and ranching practices./En su estado natural, los pastizales son aquellos paisajes que fueron dominados por tipos xericos de fauna y flora, con suelos chernozem color café claro y veranos cálidos y secos (generalmente presentes en áreas desde relativamente planas hasta lomeríos someros). Actualmente, los pastizales serían llamados áreas de cultivo y se caracterizarían por actividades agrícolas y ganaderas (Ed Wiken, Wildlife Habitat Canada).

9. Create and maintain a **SCCC-G work group** and communication network./ Crear y mantener un grupo de trabajo y red de comunicación SCCC-G

CEC: to create list serve CEC by April 7.

Status: **DONE** List serve is done, to be activated with release of report

10 . Other

Action Plan: Suggested names:

Grasslands Initiative of North America (GINA)

North American Grasslands Action plan (NAGACT)

North American Prairie Conservation Vision (NAPCV)

North American Grasslands Recovery Action Team (NAGRAT)

North American Grasslands Action Group (NAGAG)

³² CONABIO, 2000. Regiones Terrestres Prioritarias de México. L. Arriaga Cabrera, et al. (Coordinadores). Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad. México. 609 pp.

³³ Rzedowski, J. 1988. Vegetación de México. LIMUSA. México. 432 pp.

³⁴ CEC, 1997. Ecological Regions of North America: Toward a Common Perspective. Commission for Environmental Cooperation. Montreal, Canada. 71 pp

Actions:

- ◆ Carry out an inventory of key players and existing mechanisms related to the conservation of grasslands
- ◆ Identify biological gaps
- ◆ Establish a shared vision for entire grassland ecosystem
- ◆ Promote the establishment of partnerships
- ◆ Provide leverage to garner resources

4. Discussion

The vision developed in the workshop conveys the need to stop further loss of grassland habitat and prevent further fragmentation. Moreover, this vision emphasizes the need to protect grassland species through the conservation of habitat. Achievement of this vision will require better understanding and stronger outreach efforts about grassland status, identify areas as conservation priorities, address current grassland use practices, and will need the participation of diverse stakeholders, especially the engagement of landowners.

As indicated by Michael Green, a reviewer of this report with the FWS, special attention needs to be given to the strides in bird conservation made by Partners in Flight in the last 15 years, and efforts by PIF in the west to reverse declines of grassland species. These efforts include setting habitat and population goals of grassland birds in Bird Conservation Plans for the grasslands region. Reaching out to these and other similar initiatives will indeed be much favored by the CEC.

It is the hope of the CEC that this information provides useful elements to all groups interested in grassland conservation. Clearly not all elements can, or should, be developed by the CEC. The CEC offered the conditions to build a shared framework, which shall allow interested parties to agree on the whole and select the portions that can be carried out by each organization.

5. Potential role of the CEC

Based upon the strengths of the CEC and previous and ongoing biodiversity-related efforts carried out by this institution, and acknowledging the suite of recommendations resulting from the SCCC-G workshop, the following are potential roles the CEC could play:

a. Develop a draft strategy for grassland SCCC for North America

Context: Several government and NGO led strategies have been developed in the last 20 years in Canada and the US. The presence of shared migratory and non-migratory species throughout North America calls for a concerted effort based upon existing efforts.

Process: Assess the status, needs and opportunities for grassland conservation in each country and to produce a preliminary strategy for the conservation of grassland species of common conservation concern for North America.

Schedule (tentative): 3 months, expected product end of October 2001.

b. Assist Mexico to produce an assessment of grasslands.

Context: The importance of Mexican grasslands in the North American context is illustrated by having the largest remaining colony of prairie dogs (Janos, Chihuahua), which is scheduled to be a site for introduction of the endangered Black Footed Ferret (October, 2001). Grasslands cover 10% of Mexico's surface, however at a national scale they are not perceived as important. This could be a result of lack of information and lack of an assessment of the importance at a national and continental scale. Mexico does not currently have protected areas in this ecosystem.

Process: Assist Mexico government officials and general public in assessing the importance of grasslands at a national scale and determine its role at a continental scale. NABCI Mexico is envisioned as a key participant in this exercise.

Schedule (tentative): expected product end of November 2001.

c. Produce a map of grasslands in North America.

Context: An updated land use map for all grasslands is required which would allow the integration of conservation planning units, including regions of distribution of all SCCC species, NABCI's Important Bird Areas, Bird Conservation Regions, natural protected areas, Indian reservations, demographic changes, etc. Through the integration of information this map will play a key role as a communication vehicle. It is also expected that this map could become a convergence tool with the information other conservation initiatives, especially NABCI.

Process: Building upon CEC's previous ecoregion mapping efforts, initial contacts have been made with key governmental officials who participated in the level I and II mapping exercises. To the extent possible the mapping update will be based upon existing information. It is envisioned to count on the involvement of the USGS, Environment Canada, INEGI and other who have already participated in previous mapping exercises with the CEC. The goal is to have a map that will be available to the public-at-large in a Geographical Information System format

Schedule (tentative): end of November, 2001

d. Grassland Conservation workshop: strategy and action plans

Context: With the draft North American Strategy (point 1, above) and the grassland status map (point 2 above). The goal of this meeting would be to determine the action plans and players to address the conservation of Grassland Species of Common Conservation Concern.

Process: participants to the workshop will help the CEC to identify partners willing to implement actions, for the short middle and long term. It is expected that the result would provide direction to any organization interested in the conservation of grasslands in North America with or without the support of the CEC.

Schedule (tentative): end of February 2002

e. Issues and Opportunities

- ◆ NABCI and SCCC. The grasslands initiative can assist in NABCI's process for identifying pilot projects in an ecosystem.
- ◆ Protected areas. CEC's support could be instrumental in raising support for establishing a grassland-protected area in Mexico, especially in Janos, Chihuahua, associated to the largest remaining prairie dog colony of North America.

f. Potential CEC Financial support for 2002 through NAFEC

NAFEC is North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation (NAFEC) created by the CEC in 1995 as a means to fund community-based projects in Canada, Mexico and the United States that promote the goals and objectives of the CEC. In 2001 NAFEC had US \$400,000 for grants³⁵. In 2002 SCCC could be considered as one of the two potential themes to receive funding. This will be confirmed toward the end of 2001.

During the last Trilateral Meeting (April, 2001), the Executive Committee noted the suggestion of the **Shared Species Table** to consider the Species of Common Conservation Concern as a funding theme for NAFEC (North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation) funding. The Executive noted the importance of species issues from both Migratory Birds and the Shared Species table and will bring these into consideration as each country follows its own process for determining recommendations to the CEC.

³⁵ For more information about NAFEC please visit <http://www.cec.org/grants/index.cfm?varlan=english>

Annexes

Annex 3. VISION Statement

DEBIDO a que la mayoría de los pastizales [naturales] en América del Norte están deteriorados o transformados; y

WHEREAS most grasslands in North America are degraded or transformed; and

DEBIDO a que la integridad de los pastizales es importante para la sobrevivencia de la diversidad biológica de los pastizales [naturales], en particular las especies silvestres de interés común para la conservación; y

WHEREAS the integrity of grasslands are important for the survival of all grassland biological diversity and in particular wildlife species of common conservation concern; and

DEBIDO a que los pastizales [naturales] están asociados a la viabilidad económica y social de las comunidades ganaderas y agrícolas; y

WHEREAS grasslands are linked to economic and social viability of ranching and agricultural communities; and

DEBIDO a que reconocemos el beneficio humano derivado del manejo apropiado de la ganadería y la agricultura dependiente del estado saludable de los pastizales [naturales].

WHEREAS we recognize the direct, human benefits of ranching and agricultural wise stewardship, all that rely on healthy grasslands;

DEBIDO a que reconocemos los beneficios del mantenimiento y restauración de los pastizales [naturales] en su papel de fijación del carbón y mitigación de los potenciales cambios climáticos; y

WHEREAS we recognize the benefits of maintaining and restoring North American grasslands to sequester carbon, and mitigate potential climate change; and

DEBIDO a que reconocemos la necesidad de reestablecer la integridad de los pastizales [naturales] de América del Norte

WHEREAS we recognize the need to reestablish the integrity of grasslands in North America;

DEFINIMOS COMO NUESTRA VISIÓN,

THEREFORE WE RESOLVE AS OUR VISION

Desarrollar y mantener un sistema de paisajes de pastizales [naturales] en América del Norte que sean ecológicamente funcionales y social y económicamente viables, mediante la aplicación de principios y prácticas de mantenimiento, prevención y recuperación de hábitats y especies silvestres, incluyendo las especies de interés común para su conservación, y mediante la colaboración a todos niveles .

To develop and maintain a network of ecologically functioning, social and economically viable, grassland landscapes in North America, through the application of principles and practices of maintenance, prevention and recovery of habitats and wildlife, including the species of common

conservation concern, and through multilevel collaboration.

Annex 4. Potential additional players for Canada and the USA (as proposed by Darcy Henderson and Rhian Christie, and Michael Green, respectively)

Potential Additional Players for Canada:

Federal Agencies:

- Brenda Dale, Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatchewan
- Brant Kirychuk, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) (RC)
- Dan Neiman, Prairie Breeding Bird Surveys, CWS, Saskatoon
- Dean Nernberg, Grassland Ecologist, CWS, Saskatoon
- Chris Nykoluk, Ecologist, AAFC, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, Regina
- Brent Smith, Range & Wildlife Ecologist, Canadian Forces Base, Suffield, AB.
- Garry Trottier, Loney Dickson or Geoff Holroyd, Research Scientists, CWS, Edmonton
- John Wilmshurst, Grassland Ecology Research Scientist, Parks Canada, Winnipeg

NGOs:

- ?President?, Alberta Cattlemen's Association, Calgary
- Ian Dyson, Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum, Lethbridge
- Wanda MacFayden Manitoba Cattle Producers Association (MCPA) (RC)
- Sue Michalsky, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Eastend (DH)
- Daryl Nazar or Don Sexton from Ducks Unlimited (RC)
- Karen Scalise, Saskatchewan Stockgrower's Association, Regina
- Joseph Schmutz, Nature Saskatchewan, Saskatoon
- Peggy Strankman, Canadian Cattle Commission, Calgary
- ?President?, Alberta Conservation Association, Edmonton

Alberta Provincial Agencies:

- Barry Adams, Public Lands, AB. Agriculture Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge
- Lorne Fitch, Wildlife Biologist, Alberta Environment, Lethbridge
- David Gummer, Mammalogist, Alberta Provincial Museum, Edmonton
- Darcy Henderson, Grassland Ecologist, UofA, Edmonton

Saskatchewan Provincial Agencies:

- ? , Crown Lands and Community Pastures, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, Regina
- Tom Harrison, Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation (RC)
- Paul James, Ornithologist, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History and UofR, Regina
- Marlon Killaby, Director, Saskatchewan Conservation Data Center, Regina

DH= proposed by Darcy Henderson

MG= proposed by Michael Green

RC= proposed by Rhian Christie

Potential Additional Players for USA:

Federal Agencies

- Stephanie Jones, FWS Region 6, non-game bird coordinator (MG)
- Robert Murphy, FWS Region 6, Wildlife Biologist Souris River Complex (MG)

NGOs

- Mike Carter, Playa Lakes Joint Venture Coordinator (MG)

The Sister City Concept for Grasslands Outreach and Education
A draft proposal by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the
North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation's
Grasslands Working Group

Introduction

At the Grasslands Workshop field trip to Janos in March 2001, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) informally proposed the concept of a partnering project among the three countries. Because of the positive reaction, the FWS is submitting this draft proposal for consideration by the wildlife agencies of the three countries and the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (NACEC).

FWS proposes that the Grasslands Working Group, through NACEC, form "sister cities" which are related by the grassland ecosystem. That is, one city each from the grasslands area of Canada, the United States, and Mexico would participate in the project. The principle is that each country has its own black-tailed prairie dog towns and the similarities and differences would be educational and biologically useful to compare. The cities could benefit from the increased focus by federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations and from facilitated communication with other cities. The project would be overseen by NACEC, and the three countries would have equal access to the services provided by NACEC.

Suggested Project Name

"Prairie Dog Towns"

Potential activities performed by the Sister Cities

Participating cities or towns could be known as Prairie Dog Towns. Participation would be strictly voluntary and could include (but not be limited to):

- Exchange of information about the grassland habitat, plants, animals, cultures, climate, agriculture, and industries in that city¹. This could be prepared by:
 - local biologists from national parks, Federal and State wildlife offices, universities, NGOs, indigenous people
 - chambers of commerce
 - the mayors
- Student exchange during summer field trips by bus (during this time, excess computers can be traded)
- Satellite linkages for distance learning (for example, video field trips to prairie dog towns)
- Linkages between web sites from the three cities, with photos posted (of habitat, plants, animals), lists of species present, other information as gathered above relating to other aspects of the cities, including the people who live there. Could also include video clips of prairie dogs, interviews with indigenous elders, and other subjects
- Bulletin board or chat line so people can communicate (with help for translation)
- Contact local wildlife rehabilitators to assist with helping prairie species

¹Information that will be printed on paper and posted on the web should be in the three official languages.

- Work with landowners to protect burrows
- Projects that could be undertaken by school groups:
 - Chose an accessible area of grassland and (with permission) remove invasive plants, pick up litter, monitor when burrowing owls and mountain plovers return from migration, watch for banded/radio'd birds, post interpretive signs, create artificial burrows
 - paint murals of their grassland on a prominent local building (like in Janos) to draw attention.
 - Create a poster with photos/illustrations of the three cities
 - learn about past and present grasslands through curricula provided by the SCCC-G Working Group.
 - Read journals of Lewis and Clark and other explorers and compare present to pre-European contact conditions
 - Plant native grasses and forbs in parks, school yards, neighborhoods
 - Locate burrowing owl pellets and identify what the owls ate
 - Interview long-time resident elders

Benefits to the participating Sister Cities

- Increased income from ecotourism, such as from tour bus stops for short programs on the grasslands by local groups and by providing minimally intrusive ways to view the wildlife
- Assistance with classroom curricula and educational materials for children
- Assistance (technical and potentially fiscal) from government agencies and nongovernment organizations for conservation activities.

Selection of Sister Cities

There is no minimum or maximum size limit, nor a limit to how many municipalities can participate. There is a suggestion from the FWS to ask the town of Wall, South Dakota to become the U.S.'s sister city. This town is adjacent to a national park, a national grassland, and several native American reservations. Many tourists pass through here. The town of Janos, Chihuahua would be an excellent one for Mexico. The mayor and residents are already becoming informed about the benefits of conserving their grasslands and are assisting with the intended release of black-footed ferrets in their town in October. Canada could select a town near a national park or other publicly-owned grassland that would be willing to assist with the projects. There could eventually be more than one municipality from each country. If there were a string of Sister Cities from north to south, they could track the migration of bird species and monarch butterflies during the spring and fall and note the progression of the seasons (emergence of butterflies and flowers, animal activity).