PROJECT NAME: Grasslands Preservation and Migratory Birds

1. **Project duration:** from July 2021 to June 2024 (36 months)

2. **Budget:** C$450,000

3. **Short statement of the issue(s) under this topic, need/gap identified; the project objective(s) and activities to address the issue; and expected outcomes and benefits/beneficiaries:**
   The central grasslands of the Great Plains are a shared ecosystem stretching from southern Canada, through the United States, to northern Mexico. These grasslands are one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America, home to many endemic grassland-dependent species that are at-risk, threatened, or endangered. The central grasslands also provide other valuable environmental services (e.g., carbon sequestration, water, and erosion regulation), and play a crucial role in agricultural sustainability for rural communities and economies.

   In this context and recognizing the need to achieve adequate ecosystem representation for grasslands under the Campaign for Nature, in which each country has committed to protecting to 30% of the planet by 2030 ("30 X 30"), North American collaboration is required to address conservation at the ecosystem scale.

   Building on its past work on grasslands conservation, the CEC is well placed to leverage ongoing efforts, such as the Central Grasslands Roadmap and JV8 conservation strategy, two complementary international partnerships engaging diverse partners and communities to conserve grasslands and ensure thriving human and wildlife communities. In particular, the project will contribute by filling three recognized gaps in central grasslands conservation: First, the project will produce the first human dimensions study of central grasslands conservation, to support more effective conservation actions. This has been identified as a key priority, based on the improvement in conservation outcomes observed by practitioners who include both biological and social sciences knowledge in conservation planning, design and implementation. Second, the project will develop a standardized framework to support data-based, comparable monitoring of grasslands change. Finally, collaboration for conservation will be strengthened and expanded through more inclusive engagement and messaging aimed at underrepresented and new partners.

   As a result, the CEC will support central grasslands cross-sector, mainstreamed management, restoration, and conservation in Canada, Mexico, and the United States by raising awareness on the importance of grasslands, providing new knowledge for decision-making, and strengthening collaboration, through inclusive network-building and strategic planning.

4. **Select the strategic pillar(s) from the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan that the project addresses:**
   ☐ Clean Air, Land and Water
   ☐ Preventing and Reducing Pollution in the Marine Environment
   ☐ Circular Economy and Sustainable Materials Management
   ☒ Shared Ecosystems and Species
   ☒ Resilient Economies and Communities
   ☐ Effective Enforcement of Environmental Laws

5. **Describe how the project uses strategic cross-cutting approaches in its implementation: Innovative and Effective Solutions and/or Diverse and Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation (including gender and diversity effects and opportunities, and youth):**
   The project will produce social science knowledge to integrate in conservation decision-making, an innovative and effective solution in conservation practice, which traditionally has been informed mainly by biological sciences. The approach has demonstrated its effectiveness, as recognized notably by the creation of HDgov, a US interagency initiative to inform decision-making on environmental issues with human dimensions consideration. More generally, the project collaborates with efforts that promote the use of Innovative and Effective Solutions (such as regenerative ranching) for ecosystem conservation, biodiversity protection, carbon sequestration and the sustainable management of natural resources. It also focuses on Diverse and Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement to strengthen trinational collaboration for the continued advancement and implementation of the Central Grasslands Roadmap and JV8 conservation strategy, supporting intentional engagement of those traditionally less represented in grasslands conservation processes and using communications targeted at expanding collaboration to new stakeholders.

6. **Explain how the project can achieve more impact through trinational cooperation:**
   The central grasslands of the Great Plains are a shared ecosystem stretching continuously across international borders from southern Canada, through the United States, to northern Mexico, providing habitat to many migratory species and livelihoods to many local communities. As a natural system, it will greatly benefit from being managed at the correct scale with recognition of the different social, economic, and legal contexts that affect its management. This is best achieved through trinational cooperation, which helps ensures that knowledge is shared and collaborative actions are aligned to increase efficiency, efficacy, and complementarity, delivering stronger outcomes that also help protect national investments in conservation.

7. **Describe how the project complements, or avoids duplication with, other national or international work:**

Ongoing initiatives to build collaboration on grasslands conservation include commitment from the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation (TCWEC), and the JV8 Central Grasslands Initiative and its Central Grasslands Roadmap (CGR), which offers a shared vision and priorities identified with input from several sectors and the three countries, providing a solid foundation for trinational collaborative action. The project will work directly with the CGR team to identify opportunities to complement and leverage their work, informed by the TCWEC's priorities to be presented at their May 2021 meeting.

8. **Describe how the project engages traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) experts or Tribal/First Nations/Indigenous communities, if applicable:**
The project includes activities specifically focused on engaging Indigenous communities, in support of an inclusive, representative approach to grasslands conservation.

9. **Describe how the project engages new audiences or partners, if applicable:**
The project includes activities specifically focused on intentional engagement of new partners and audiences in grasslands conservation processes (including private and communal landowners in Mexico, Indigenous communities).

10. **Identify the designated partner agencies or organizations committed to implementing this project, as well as other organizations that could be involved, or benefit from it, including through outreach efforts, collaborations or partnerships (e.g., federal agencies, other levels of government, academia, NGOs, the private sector, civil society, and youth):**

Lead agencies or organizations	Country
Federal: ECCC/CWS, Natural Resources Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	Canada
Federal: Semarnat, Conanp, Sader, Conagua, Conabio, Profepa, Bienestar	Mexico
Federal: USFWS, other agencies	United States
NGOs: JV8 Grassland Initiative (partnership of 8 Habitat Joint Ventures throughout the Great Plains from southern Canada to northern Mexico)	Trinational
NGOs: Bird Conservancy of the Rockies	United States
P3: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)	United States (NA scope)
Other organizations/individuals (if applicable)	**Country**
Local land cooperatives: Winnett Agricultural Community Enhancement and Sustainability (ACES), Ranchers Stewardship Alliance, South Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition, Thunder Basin Grasslands	United States

Indigenous organizations and governments	Canada, Mexico, United States
Locally engaged NGOs (TBD): WWF	Canada, Mexico, United States
Provincial and State agencies	Canada, Mexico, United States
Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever "Call of the Uplands" campaign	United States
Academic experts	Canada, Mexico, United States

11. **In the following table, describe: the project objective(s) and the activities and subtasks planned to achieve the objective(s), the corresponding outputs, expected results and how they will be measured (performance measures), baselines (if known), and targets by end of the project, and the timeline and budget:**

OBJECTIVE 1	**Produce knowledge to inform decision-making and actions that stop and prevent loss of central grasslands and support sustainable grasslands, wildlife, and human communities.**
Activity 1 **Budget C$170,000**	Produce a social science analysis of challenges, constraints, and drivers for grasslands conservation, analyzing socio-economic factors and human dimensions (motivations, values, economics, needs of communities and barriers) to inform grasslands conservation strategies.
Output(s)	A social science study that identifies the challenges, constraints, and drivers to grasslands conservation in the three countries, that can support mainstreaming biodiversity and identify opportunities to improve cross-sectional coordination
Expected results, performance measures	Decision-makers and conservation practitioners that understand the values, needs and barriers to address to increase participation in grassland conservation programs and implement successful conservation actions
Baseline (current status), if known	No comprehensive social science investigations on central grasslands conservation, to date
Target (by project end)	A social science analysis including: - a conceptual model representing a baseline assessment that identifies the threats to central grasslands and the social, economic, cultural, and political factors that drive them (the social-ecological system)

	- a set of strategies, and related theories of change, designed to mitigate/address threats - a plan for evaluating strategies	
Subtask 1.1	Develop a social science study analyzing the social, economic, and political context of central grasslands conservation.	**Fall 2021–Summer 2022**
Subtask 1.2	Support integration of local stakeholder input (through surveys, facilitated discussions).	**Winter 2022–Spring 2022**
Subtask 1.3	Hold an internal workshop to present findings.	**Fall 2022**
Subtask 1.4	Develop messaging on the importance of grasslands to local communities (informed by input from the social science study).	**Winter 2023–Fall 2023**
Activity 2 **Budget C$140,000**	Identify a standardized, annually updated trinational framework for monitoring grasslands change, indicator species and methodology to track loss/gain in native grasslands.	
Output(s)	Recommended standardized metrics for measuring grasslands change	
Expected results, performance measures	A common system to measure grasslands loss will be available for use across the entire central grasslands.	
Baseline (current status), if known	Several systems for monitoring grassland loss exist (e.g., WWF Plowprint), but no common system.	
Target (by project end)	Needs/requirements document and recommendation on platform & metrics	
Subtask 2.1	Establish an ad hoc scientific group on measuring grasslands change to scope needs.	**Fall 2021**
Subtask 2.2	Task consultant with analysing current monitoring approaches, identifying needs and identifying approach.	**Winter 2022–Winter 2023**
Subtask 2.3	Task ad hoc scientific group with recommending standardized approach.	**Winter 2023–Winter 2024**

OBJECTIVE 2	Strengthen trinational collaboration for the continued advancement and implementation of the Central Grasslands Roadmap and JV8 conservation strategy.	
Activity 3 **Budget C$140,000**	Create and support (virtual) events and materials focused on intentional engagement of those less represented in or absent from the Central Grasslands Roadmap and JV8 conservation strategy (such as private and communal landowners (*ejidos*) in Mexico, Central Grasslands Indigenous communities and other potential partners).	
Output(s)	- Agreement for support of the Central Grasslands Roadmap as the main platform for coordination, communication and tracking of progress with convenors (focus on increasing participation of key groups, facilitation, and communication support among participants) - Agreement to support development of the JV8 Central Grasslands Initiative conservation strategy (with increased participation of key groups from Central Grasslands Roadmap work), including support for facilitation, translation, and communication around the strategy - Communications material to increase support on grasslands conservation	
Expected results, performance measures	Develop a more inclusive network for wide adoption of conservation measures through intentional engagement of a more diverse and representative group of stakeholders.	
Baseline (current status), if known	- The first Central Grasslands Roadmap Summit was held in July 2020; organizers plan to host a second Summit in Winter 2021 or early 2022 (virtual or in-person meeting, depending on COVID-19 status). - A coordinator was hired for the JV8 and started in November 2020. The strategy is currently in development and will be ready for review in spring 2021. - The first Central Grasslands Roadmap Summit included limited participation from Indigenous communities and some communities in Mexico, resulting in their limited representation in the Roadmap. After the Roadmap Summit, additional efforts were made to engage underrepresented communities from Mexico.	
Target (by project end)	- Websites for Central Grasslands Roadmap and JV8 are updated, and relevant materials are available in multiple languages (English, French, Spanish). - Second Central Grasslands Roadmap Summit is held with more inclusive participation	
Subtask 3.1	Support intentional engagement for underrepresented groups.	**Fall 2021–TBD (dependent on Summit date)**

Subtask 3.2	Support inclusive trinational engagement at the second Central Grasslands Roadmap Summit through coordination, facilitation, and translation support.	**TBD (dependent on Summit date)**
Subtask 3.3	Support continued focus for on-the-ground conservation delivery of grasslands conservation through the development of the JV8 Strategy.	**Fall 2021–TBD (dependent on JV8 timeline)**
Subtask 3.4	Develop communications material to increase support for grasslands, complementing and leveraging existing efforts (e.g., material focused on economic value, carbon sequestration value, story from Indigenous communities to private landowners, connectivity and trinational cooperation across the three countries).	**Winter 2022–Winter 2024**

12. Describe <u>post-project</u> expected impacts:

Expected impact (by when: month, year)	SMART performance measure(s)
By June 2024, a large, diverse, representative array of stakeholders will be participating in central grasslands conservation.	Evidence that the group of engaged stakeholders has expanded to be more diverse and inclusive.
By June 2024, a shared system for measuring grasslands loss across three countries will create common understanding and supporting shared goals.	Knowledge gaps have been identified and recommendations have been implemented by stakeholders (governments, producers, etc.) to support pollinator conservation.
By June 2024, social scientists and communication specialists will have been engaged to promote grasslands conservation to key audiences.	Evidence that knowledge on the human dimensions of grasslands conservation has been integrated into decision-making and outreach.

| By December 2025, key mechanisms causing the conversion of grasslands to other land-use types will be better understood. | Evidence that strategies to decrease the rate of conversion of grasslands to other land-use are under implementation. |