



Grasslands

National Park of Canada

Management Plan

2010



Parks Canada's Strategic Outcome

Canadians have a strong sense of connection through meaningful experiences, to their national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas and these protected places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations.

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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Parks Canada

Grasslands National Park of Canada management plan 2010 [electronic resource].

Electronic monograph in PDF format.

Issued also in French under title: Parc national des Prairies du Canada, plan directeur 2010 [ressource électronique].

Issued also in printed form and on CD-ROM.

ISBN 978-1-100-15723-8

Cat. no.: R61-38/2010E-PDF

1. Grasslands National Park of Canada (Sask.)--Management. 2. National parks and reserves--Canada--Management. 3. National parks and reserves--Saskatchewan--Management. I. Title.

FC3514 G7 G72 2010

333.78097124321

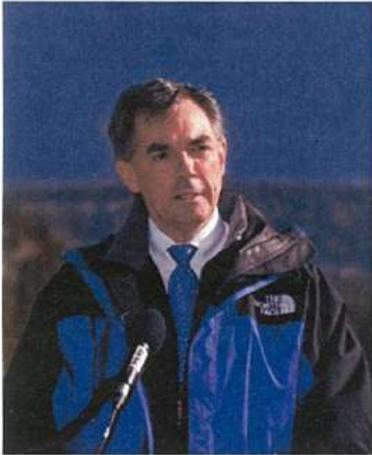
Aussi disponible en français

Grasslands
National Park of Canada

Management Plan

June 2010

Foreword



Canada's national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas offer Canadians from coast-to-coast-to-coast unique opportunities to experience and understand our wonderful country. They are places of learning, recreation and inspiration where Canadians can connect with our past and appreciate the natural, cultural and social forces that shaped Canada.

From our smallest national park to our most visited national historic site to our largest national marine conservation area, each of these places offers Canadians and visitors several experiential opportunities to enjoy Canada's historic and natural heritage. These places of beauty, wonder and learning are valued by Canadians - they are part of our past, our present and our future.

Our Government's goal is to ensure that Canadians form a lasting connection to this heritage and that our protected places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations.

We see a future in which these special places will further Canadians' appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of Canada, the economic well-being of communities, and the vitality of our society.

Our Government's vision is to build a culture of heritage conservation in Canada by offering Canadians exceptional opportunities to experience our natural and cultural heritage.

These values form the foundation of the new management plan for Grasslands National Park of Canada. I offer my appreciation to the many thoughtful Canadians who helped to develop this plan, particularly to our dedicated team from Parks Canada, and to all those local organizations and individuals who have demonstrated their good will, hard work, spirit of co-operation and extraordinary sense of stewardship.

In this same spirit of partnership and responsibility, I am pleased to approve the Grasslands National Park of Canada Management Plan.

Jim Prentice
Minister of the Environment

RECOMMENDATION STATEMENT

Grasslands National Park of Canada Management Plan

Recommended for approval by:



Alan Latourelle
Chief Executive Officer
Parks Canada



Katherine Patterson
Field Unit Superintendent, Saskatchewan South
Parks Canada

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parks Canada is responsible for administering a world-renowned system of national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas. Parks Canada's goal is to ensure that Canadians have a strong sense of connection through meaningful experiences to these protected places and that these places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations. This management plan provides strategic direction for achieving that goal for Grasslands National Park of Canada. This national park was established in the 1980s to conserve, protect and present to Canadians a portion of this country's mixed-grass prairie. The management plan was developed with staff, stakeholder and public involvement. It will be the primary reference document for decision-making and accountability in Parks Canada management of the park.

This management plan builds on the successful implementation of the park's 2002 management plan, as reported in the *2007 Grasslands National Parks of Canada State of the Park Report*. It integrates the three elements of the Parks Canada's mandate -- the protection of heritage resources, the facilitation of visitor experiences and the provision of public outreach education -- into a new park vision, four key strategies and three area management approaches. The management plan also provides direction for partnering, public engagement and environmental stewardship as well as information on park zoning. More than twenty objectives and one hundred twenty five actions in this management plan are designed to improve and monitor the state of Grasslands National Park, achieve the park vision and contribute to Parks Canada corporate performance expectations.

The following summarizes the four key strategies of the management plan. These strategies address the needs and opportunities of the park and focus efforts and resources towards achieving the park vision.

Providing the Grasslands Experience

Visitor experience opportunities centre on the enjoyment of being in a special place -- Grasslands National Park. A visit to the park and region -- with its scenic vistas of prairie, valleys and badlands, wildlife and plants, endangered species, Aboriginal and ranching heritage, and dark night skies can offer a life-changing experience. People will come to the park to witness these for many reasons - to explore, recreate, learn, and/or relax. Through this strategy, which is founded on knowing more about the park's current and potential visiting public and providing for their interests and needs, people will feel welcomed, oriented and informed. As a result, they will feel very positive about visiting this unique and unfamiliar landscape.

Grasslands Restored – The Prairie Persists

Sites and events that were once familiar on the prairie, like grazing herds of bison, prairie wildfires, soil erosion and flooding, were some of the strongest influences on the ecological health and character of the prairies. In this strategy, active management projects to imitate some of these natural disturbances and to remove invasive species, will come together with public outreach education and opportunities for visitor experiences. The ecological integrity of Grasslands National Park will be maintained and restored to a state in which active management can be minimized. Restoration adjacent

to trails, roads and campgrounds will connect visitors to this special place as they witness and learn about a healthy and diverse grasslands.

History Abounds: Recognizing Grasslands' Cultural and Palaeontological Heritage

The stories of many traditions are evident in historic places, such as tipi rings and the remains of old homesteads and ranch yards. Through these places and stories, Canadians will be able to discover and enjoy the rich cultural heritage of the park and understand how past stewardship of this distinctive landscape contributed to the creation of a grasslands park. The geological and palaeontological history of Grasslands National Park is one of fascinating landforms and fossils of terrestrial and marine ecosystems far different from the prairie of today. It is still an integral part of the park's heritage that strongly merits protection and presentation. This strategy for protecting and presenting the cultural and palaeontological resources in the park will involve the participation of Aboriginal and other partners, community interests and experts. Public education programs and park experience opportunities will be connected to these resources and their care.

Grasslands Conservation Partnering

Some endangered grasslands species will once again thrive in Grasslands National Park, but not without the willing cooperation of neighbours and other partners. This strategy incorporates cooperation with government agencies, landowners and managers, non-government organizations and researchers to achieve grasslands conservation. Public outreach education programs and varied park experience opportunities, such as the citizen scientist program, will engage Canadians in advancing these trans-boundary conservation activities.

To support the key strategies, the management plan includes three area management approaches: one for the Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road and the 70Mile Butte and Two Trees Trails; one for the McGowan Ranch Yard, Zahursky Point Trail and Dawson Viewpoints; and one for the Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area.

This management plan includes targets that will be used to measure and report progress in achieving the objectives and ultimately the vision. In accordance with the *Canada National Parks Act*, this plan and its implementation will be formally reviewed five years after its tabling to ensure that it remains relevant and effective for the management of Grasslands National Park.

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The National Parks of Canada are hereby dedicated...

... to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment and shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for future generations".
(Canada National Parks Act 2000)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 An Updated Management Plan for Grasslands National Park of Canada

Parks Canada is responsible to the people and Parliament of Canada for administering a world-renowned system of national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas. Canada’s national parks are established to protect, for all time, special places representative of Canada’s natural regions, and to connect Canadians with the enduring natural and cultural legacy of these places. The *Parks Canada Agency Act*, the *Canada National Parks Act* and the *Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies* set the context for this responsibility.

Grasslands National Park of Canada (Figure 1), located in southwestern Saskatchewan, is Canada’s first national park established to represent the mixed-grass prairie. To many, the Canadian Prairie evokes images of boundless fields of grain. Few have seen a native mixed-grass prairie ecosystem. Only a small portion of this ecosystem remains, making Grasslands National Park and surrounding lands the most significant representation of the Prairie Grasslands Natural Region. Grasslands National Park is also one of the few places in Canada where people are welcomed to discover in person, or from the home or school, the land and biodiversity of the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem – rich in its

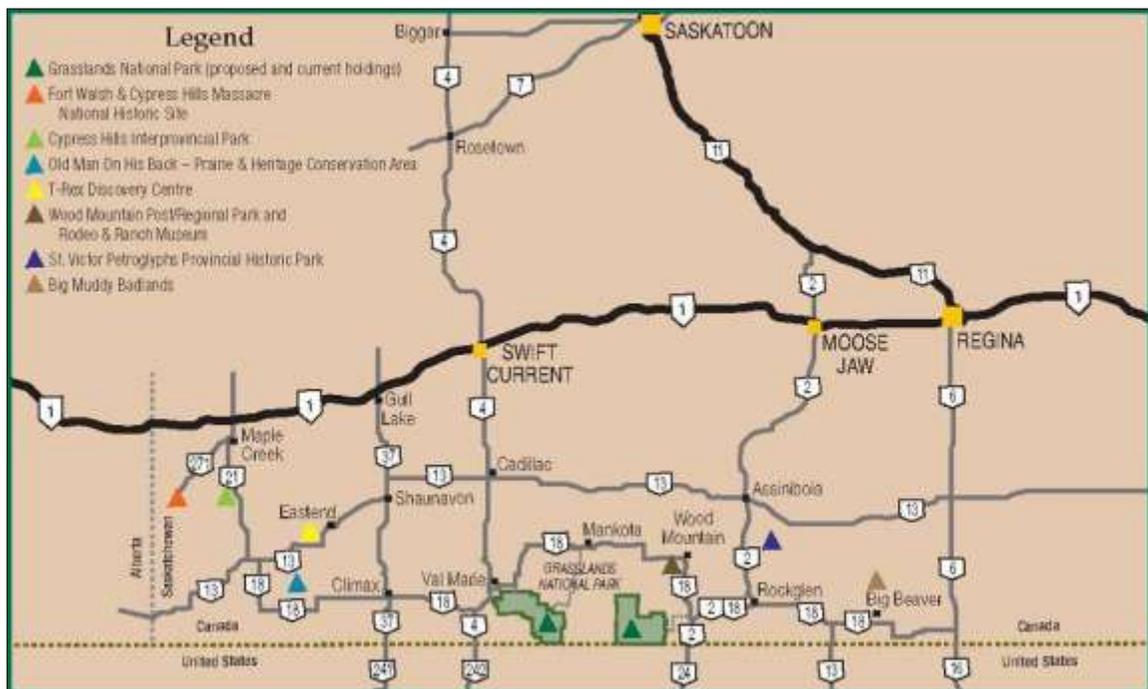


Figure 1. Regional Setting - Grasslands National Park of Canada

natural, cultural and palaeontological heritage. Park-based activities are restoring and reintroducing ecological processes and some species that were once part of this ecosystem. Testimonies to the character of this timeless grassland and developing national park can be seen in the bison trampling the earth and raising dust, families viewing the colonies of prairie dog by the park's Ecotour Road, swift fox pups playing in coulees, or hikers encountering tipi rings and old homesteads of those who once lived there.

A park management plan is the key reference document that guides Parks Canada decisions and actions in protecting, managing and operating a national park. As per the *Canada National Parks Act*, management plans are a legal requirement for all national parks. They are developed with the involvement of the Canadian public and are formally reviewed every five years to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

The first Grasslands National Park management plan, completed in 2002, provided the initial framework for the protection of the park's natural and cultural resources, adaptive management approaches to restoring ecological integrity, and the introduction of basic services and interpretive programs for the park's visitors.

This management plan builds on the successes of the 2002 management plan and aims to fulfill Parks Canada's goal, that *Canadians have a strong sense of connection through meaningful experiences, to their national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas and these protected places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations*. It integrates the three elements of the Parks Canada's mandate -- the protection of heritage resources, the facilitation of visitor experiences and the provision of public outreach education -- into a new park vision, four key strategies and three area management approaches. The management plan also provides direction for partnering, public engagement and environmental stewardship as well as information on park zoning. More than twenty objectives and one hundred twenty five actions in this management plan are designed to improve and monitor the state of Grasslands National Park, achieve the park vision and contribute to Parks Canada corporate performance expectations. To summarize, the focus of this park management plan is to:

- improve the basic visitor service offer in both the East and West blocks of Grasslands National Park;
- explore new market segments for the park, and their needs and expectations in order to guide development of visitor experience opportunities;
- continue ecological restoration and species reintroduction programs in the park and engage Canadians in these programs through education and participation; and
- take renewed steps in protecting and presenting the cultural and paleontological heritage of the park in collaboration with partners.

1.2. The Management Plan Review Process and Public Participation

The public and park stakeholders have been informed of and had opportunities to contribute to the implementation of the 2002 *Grasslands National Park of Canada Management Plan*. This has been achieved by a number of means including, for example, newsletters, community open houses and focus groups. The Park Advisory Committee,

a working group of individuals representing various stakeholder interests, advises the park's superintendent on broad and specific park management questions.

The review of the 2002 management plan started in spring 2007 with an assessment of its implementation by a multi-disciplinary panel of experts external to the park. The review included interviews with some stakeholders and a discussion of the panel's preliminary findings with the Park Advisory Committee. About the same time, Parks Canada began preparing the *State of the Park Report* on the ecological integrity, cultural and palaeontological resources, and people's connection to the park. Together, these reports identified that the 2002 management plan was, with a few exceptions, being implemented and continued to be largely relevant and effective for guiding park management.

Starting in late 2007, a planning team of Grasslands National Park staff, led by the Saskatchewan South Field Unit Superintendent, began conceptualizing changes to the 2002 management plan, taking into account the external review, the *2007 Grasslands National Park of Canada State of the Park Report*, *2007 Grasslands National Park Visitor Experience Assessment* and the new *Parks Canada Guide to Management Planning*. The management planning also considered Parks Canada's renewal initiative to connect Canadians to their protected heritage places, with attention to the young and old, urban populations and new Canadians. At several stages in 2008 and 2009, proposals for the management plan were discussed with the Park Advisory Committee, presented at community open houses, and made available for stakeholder and public review by way of the information available at the park's Visitor Centre in Val Marie, in mail-outs, on the Parks Canada Grasslands National Park website, and by other means. The management plan was completed considering results from these consultations.

2. GRASSLANDS : A PLACE OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Grasslands National Park was established in 1981 with the Federal-Provincial agreement to conserve, protect and present a portion of the Prairie Grasslands, one of the thirty-nine Natural Regions of Canada in the National Park System Plan. The first major land purchase of Grasslands National Park was in 1984. The 1981 Federal-Provincial agreement was renewed in 1988.

In the dry hills, badlands and eroded river valleys in and around Grasslands National Park, a diversity of wildlife, including pronghorns, greater sage-grouse, prairie rattlesnakes and the only remaining



Frenchman River Valley, West Block (Tourism Saskatchewan)

black-tailed prairie dog colonies in Canada, can still be found. Cool and warm season grasses cover the upland prairie areas and some of the broad valley lowlands that are

also vegetated with sagebrush, greasewood and prickly pear cactus. The treeless, windswept plains evolved with grazing, drought, periodic fire and a variable continental climate. This region is a haven for prairie endemic species that have had their habitat destroyed elsewhere. As a result, there are numerous species at risk associated with Grasslands National Park. The park exhibits much evidence of northern plains First Nations' history, dating as far back as ten thousand years, and the ranching and homesteading heritage unique to southwestern Saskatchewan. Fossils of *Triceratops* and



Badlands, East Block (Parks Canada)

Tyrannosaurus rex have been discovered here as part of some of the earliest palaeontological research done in Canada. Park visitors make a special choice to venture off the beaten path to this open expanse to witness and experience Grasslands National Park's unique natural, cultural and palaeontological heritage. It is estimated that from 6000 to 7000 individuals have visited Grasslands National Park each year for the past five years. Grasslands National Park not only lies on the border of our country, it is also on the margins of our collective awareness. A main thrust of the next five years will be heightening awareness of and connection to the park through branding and marketing, visitation, and outreach. Once discovered, Grasslands National Park inspires fascination for its unique species and ecosystems, awesome viewsapes and the amazing adaptations of plants, animals and people to its challenging environment.

2.1. Park Themes

The storyline that embodies the national significance of Grasslands National Park is organized as five themes that serve to guide the park's interpretation and education programs.

Theme 1: Grasslands National Park's Part in Canada's Protected Heritage Area System

- Grasslands National Park represents the Prairie Grasslands Natural Region of Canada. It is the only national park that does so.
- The park is part of a worldwide network of protected areas involved in the conservation of native grasslands ecosystems. Globally, less than one percent of the temperate grasslands biome is included in formal protected areas.
- National parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas comprise a national system of protected heritage places. The goals are to protect representations of each of Canada's natural regions and to commemorate and present nationally significant places, peoples and events.

- Protecting the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem for its intrinsic value in a national system of protected areas is fundamental to Canadian identity and the stewardship values Canadians hold. Grasslands National Park provides an opportunity for present and future generations to enjoy and appreciate a representative portion of this ecosystem. Public awareness and understanding of the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem can inspire the Canadian public to protect their natural heritage and what remains of this once extensive ecosystem.
- The Canadian protected heritage area system plays an important role in global environmental protection and is an important element of Canada's participation in global strategies.
- Special emphasis is placed on meeting protected area goals by working with adjacent land managers, regional interests and other agencies.

Theme 2: The Mixed-Grass Prairie Ecosystem

- Water is one of the primary shapers of prairie ecosystems. Low precipitation in this area influences many of the conditions that create prairies. Waterways such as the Frenchman River and Rock Creek add significantly to biodiversity and are important habitats.
- Unique combinations of landscape and climate create niches for specifically adapted plants, animals and endangered species.

Three Examples of Working with Others in Conservation

Grasslands National Park is a part of the Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan, a diverse partnership of more than 25 groups representing industry, multi-sector federal and provincial agencies and non-government organizations, and Saskatchewan's two universities. The vision of the Prairie Conservation Action Plan is that the native prairie be sustained in a healthy state in which natural and human values are respected. The Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association chairs it and Grasslands National Park was a founding partner. Park staff have participated in writing all three five-year action plans.

The greater sage-grouse is critically imperilled in Canada, with populations having declined by 90% since the mid-1980s. Grasslands National Park shares a population of greater sage-grouse with Northern Montana and has been collaborating with the United States Bureau of Land Management and the University of Montana, in the first international sage-grouse study ever undertaken. This study was made possible by relationships among agencies that were developed as part of informal conservation planning initiatives like the Northern Mixed-Grass Trans-boundary Conservation Initiative and the Crossing the Medicine Line Network.

Grasslands National Park is an Important Bird Areas site under its nationally significant threatened species criteria. The Important Bird Areas program, an initiative of BirdLife International, is coordinated in Canada by Bird Studies Canada and the Canadian Nature Federation. The objective of the program is to identify a global network of sites that are of exceptional significance to birds, and to determine whether conservation measures are needed for these sites.

- Humans are part of the ecosystem, and have been for thousands of years. Evidence is visible on the landscape of how different cultural groups used the land and resources in different ways.
- The prairie grasslands are productive, and important economic values are derived from them.
- Park management will work to maintain or restore ecological integrity.
- A “pristine prairie” landscape including all of the natural elements and relationships, unaffected by modern day human presence, cannot be replicated. However, a primary objective for conserving Grasslands National Park is to complement the broader ecosystem. This will be achieved by representing within the park aspects of natural processes, such as grazing, that are underrepresented in rangelands managed for livestock production outside the park. For example, intense, infrequent, short duration grazing will be one aspect emphasized in the park. This type of grazing, when combined with the conventional grazing regime outside the park, will result in increased overall biodiversity in the broader ecosystem.
- Management of the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem for native biodiversity, ecological integrity and protection of cultural resources is difficult and cannot be achieved in isolation. Involvement of many people and land managers through the region is critical.

**Restoring Ecological Integrity –
the Mixed-Grass Prairie Ecosystem**

With respect to a national park, *ecological integrity* is a condition that is determined to be characteristic of its natural region and likely to persist, including abiotic components, the composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change, and processes.

Part of maintaining or restoring ecological integrity in Grasslands National Park entails bringing back an historic range of variation in natural disturbance. In mixed-grass prairie, droughts associated with the semiarid continental climate have been the most severe natural process, while floods, wildfires and grazing helped generate further heterogeneity in ecosystem structure, function and composition. Wildfires ignited by lightning and Aboriginal peoples were common where grass was not green or covered in snow, while sedentary and migratory herds of bison added variable patterns of grazing intensity, duration and frequency across the region.

Because of cultivation, species extirpations, wild fire suppression, alien species invasions, and grazing regimes of the past century and a half, the ecological integrity of the altered mixed-grass prairie ecosystem is threatened. To differing degrees, Grasslands National Park must monitor, manage and reverse these practices or effects to restore the park’s ecological integrity.

Theme 3: Endangered Spaces and Species

- Grasslands National Park's combination of landscape and climate provide important habitats for many rare and endangered species.
- Several species listed as endangered, threatened or species of special concern by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada inhabit the Prairie Grasslands Natural Region of Canada. Many species considered at risk are at the northern extent of their range. Historically, many of these species have not been found to occur further north.
- Grasslands National Park will collaborate with partners and neighbours to provide these species and others with the space and protection they need, beyond the park's borders. The park plans, invests in and builds partnerships to protect and recover species at risk.

Species at Risk in Grasslands National Park

The grasslands region around the park includes two provincial community pastures, three federal Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration community pastures and many large ranches that extend into northern Montana. To a large extent, this region has remained as unbroken native prairie and is a haven for prairie endemic species that have had their habitat destroyed elsewhere. There are numerous species at risk (under the *Species-at-Risk Act*) associated with Grasslands National Park, including six species as of 2008 -- black-tailed prairie dog, black-footed ferret, swift fox, greater sage-grouse, mormon metalmark, eastern yellow-bellied racer for which Parks Canada has the lead responsibility for recovery strategies and action. The stories of some of the species and their recovery are told not only in the park, but also in other venues, such as zoos and classrooms, through partners in education.

Theme 4: Human-Land Relationships

- Evidence of habitation attempts, both successful and unsuccessful, illustrate the adaptive strategies of First Nations peoples, explorers, boundary surveyors, fur traders, Métis, North-West Mounted Police, early ranchers, settlers, modern ranchers and farmers for living and working in this semi-arid region.
- Grasslands National Park has one of the largest samples of undisturbed pre-contact cultural resources in Canada. The sites represent many time periods, communities and activities.
- Over time, humans have increased their effects on the land and its resources.
- There are good representations of the history of ranching and of homesteading in the

Living on the Land Before the Park

Starting some 10,000 years ago, when the glaciers retreated from the area, and running to present times, the grasslands were home to a range of groups, including the First Peoples, Métis, ranchers and then farmers. Each group understood and used the land and its resources differently. In doing so each group left its mark on the land, providing for Canadians of today, glimpses and stories of people on the prairie past.

Palliser Triangle. The features these different groups left behind are valuable symbols of the cultures that have shaped this area, and their activities.

- The international boundary can serve as a focus for many relevant facts and stories, such as: land use differences between Canada and the United States; the history of the International Boundary Commission; and the sanctuary that Sitting Bull and other Lakota sought in Canada after conflict with American troops.

Theme 5: Geological and Palaeontological History

- The region's vast array of badlands embodies the youngest dinosaur bearing sediments (Frenchman Formation, 65 million years) and the Cretaceous-Tertiary boundary sedimentary layer in the East Block, as well as an extensive area of marine sediments (Bearpaw Formation, 68 - 71 million years) in the West Block.
- The fossils and palaeogeography of Grasslands National Park are significant in contributing information to understanding the events prior to the extinction of dinosaurs at the end of the Cretaceous period.
- The resulting landscape has provided niches for particular plants and animals.
- The palaeogeography of the park is a natural monument to the growth of palaeontological sciences, and a landmark of great significance in the development of life on earth.

Palaeontological Treasures

Major stages of the earth's evolutionary history are exceptionally well illustrated in the geology of Grasslands National Park, offering Canadians the opportunity to discover an environment, flora and fauna far different from the prairie of today.

The marine mudrocks and fossils of the Frenchman River valley reveal details of the Cretaceous-period seaway that went through the heart of North America 70 to 80 million years ago. Marine reptiles such as plesiosaurs and mosasaurs as well as fish, sharks, clams, hard-shelled squids and snails are just some of the creatures that thrived at this time.

The badlands of Rock Creek expose layers of geological history, including those when Triceratops and duckbilled dinosaurs dominated the landscape. One of the first recorded finds of dinosaur bones in Canada happened here in 1874.

3. PLANNING CONTEXT

This section summarizes the state of Grasslands National Park at the time planning was initiated (2007) with respect to Parks Canada's mandate. This mandate comprises three elements:

- protecting heritage resources, which includes all those activities related to the protection of natural and cultural resources and natural processes;
- facilitating opportunities for visitor experiences, which includes activities, services and facilities to enable a visitor's personal interaction with the park and heighten his or her sense of connection to place; and

- providing public education, which includes a wide range of activities from on-site interpretation programming and products to outreach education initiatives reaching Canadians at home, at leisure, at school, and in their communities.

3.1. The Park Lands

The proposed park area identified in the Federal-Provincial park establishment agreement is in two blocks (East and West) that covers more than 921 square kilometers. More than 60% of the proposed East Block and 63% of the proposed West Block has been purchased by Parks Canada in a patchwork of parcels ranging in size from three to 204 km². These lands offer rich visitor experience opportunities yet vary considerably in terms of accessibility and ecological restoration challenges. Some holdings are undisturbed native prairie once grazed by cattle. Others have been cultivated for annual crops. Still others have been invaded by exotic plants. Some areas are accessible by vehicle and offer opportunities for day-use, while others must be explored in solitude, on foot or by horse. Opportunities remain for additional lands to be acquired under the terms of the Federal-Provincial park establishment agreement.

The East and West blocks were identified in the 2002 management plan as offering different opportunities for visitors to appreciate, understand and enjoy Grasslands National Park. The East Block was considered an area more for primitive, self-reliant wilderness experience with minimal services and facilities. The West Block also offered a primitive, yet more accessible wilderness for the visitor who wanted a brief visit, reliable vehicle access and park-supported experience. This management plan provides for more similar visitor experience opportunities in both blocks.

Most of the lands that have been acquired are scheduled in the *Canada National Parks Act* and are managed according to the Act and its regulations. Lands that have yet to be scheduled, are not subject to the Act, but are managed in the spirit of the Act, using a variety of applicable legislation available to park managers.

The main watercourses (bed, banks and water) of the Frenchman River in the West Block and the Rock and seven other creeks in the East Block are not part of the park's jurisdiction; they remain with the Province of Saskatchewan. The excluded watercourses are designated Protected Areas under the Saskatchewan *Provincial Parks Act* to be managed in the spirit of the *Canada National Parks Act*. Jurisdictional issues aside, from a broad ecosystem management perspective, the streams are an integral part of Grasslands National Park and their health directly affects the ecological integrity of the park.

The Ecotour Road in the West Block, which provides access for both park neighbours and visitors, is under municipal jurisdiction, and its management can only be considered in cooperation with the responsible municipality.

The Grasslands National Park Visitor Centre, administration office and main operations complex are located outside the park in the Village of Val Marie. Across the street from the Visitor Centre is the museum, art gallery, gift store and coffee shop operated by Prairie Wind and Silver Sage, Friends of Grasslands, Inc., which greatly enhances the visitor reception and service offer to Grasslands National Park. A basic operations facility for the East Block has been established at Poverty Ridge, just outside the park boundary. In the summer months, visitor reception and orientation services for the East

Block are provided under contract by the Rodeo & Ranch Museum in Wood Mountain Regional Park.

3.2. Park Management Since 2002

Parks Canada and its partners have taken a number of steps to restoring ecological integrity in Grasslands National Park, protecting its heritage, improving the educational and experiential opportunities for those who visit the park, and engaging Canadians in park management (for a description and assessment of park management activities since 2002, refer to the *2007 Grasslands National Park of Canada State of the Park Report*). Among the more notable steps taken at Grasslands National Park since 2002 are:

- addition of about another 89 km² to the park;
- reintroduction of bison into the largest parcel of the West Block in May 2006 as part of restoring the native prairie and giving visitors the opportunity to discover bison as a powerful symbol of the prairie. Through this project a host of educational programs for youth are offered by the Prairie Learning Centre, an innovative educational partnership of Chinook School Division and Grasslands National Park;
- revitalization of the Grasslands National Park Visitor Centre and the Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road to provide an improved welcoming and orientation to the park;
- construction of primitive camping and day-use facilities at the McGowan Ranch Yard;
- approval of recovery strategies for the greater sage-grouse, mormon metalmark, swift fox and black-footed ferret, and the approval of the management plan for the black-tailed prairie dog;
- introduction of livestock grazing to approximately 90 km² of the East and West blocks. This and the bison reintroduction were designed with the involvement of the Park Advisory Committee, park neighbours, stock growers and other interests;
- reseeding of 162 hectares of previously cultivated land to native grasses and wildflowers;
- cooperation between the rural municipalities, park neighbours and Parks Canada in combating wildfires that can threaten lives, property, and income around the park;
- visitor surveys in 2003 and 2008 to report on the park's performance in creating enjoyable visitor experience opportunities and to help guide planning for the visitor;
- prescribed burning and intensive spring grazing in the West Block to reduce crested wheat grass seed production; and
- inventorying and monitoring archaeological sites and documenting ranch histories for newly acquired park lands.

3.3. Current Park Audiences

Current park audiences include visitors, students and teachers, park neighbours and communities, and virtual visitors. At the time of writing this management plan, Grasslands National Park did not have a marketing plan.

The Park Visitor

A park visitor survey conducted in 2008 provides some characteristics of people coming into the park for the purposes of recreation and heritage appreciation. The majority of visitors are from Canada. Over one-quarter of visitors are from Saskatchewan and almost one-half of visitors are aged 55 and over. Average visitor party size is 2.4.

The three top motives for planning a visit to the park are to see grasslands in their natural state, see wildlife in its natural environment and view scenery. Most visitors first learned about Grasslands National Park from family and friends. Maps, the Internet and news media also played a role.

Visitors can be characterized on the basis of their activities:

- **Park Sightseers** (67% of surveyed visitors): Visits are typified by driving through the park and looking at the attractions. Visits focus on some of the features (birds, landscape, and cultural) specific to the park. Some hiking and camping is possible, but viewing the features of the landscape appears to be a major draw.
- **Scenery Viewing** (17%): Like park sightseeing, visits largely involve driving through the park and looking around. No specific aspect of the environment or cultural history appears to be a focus; it is simply driving around and viewing. Least likely to participate in learning activities.
- **Park Experience Visits** (14%): Visits largely involve hiking (either with the Field Guide or on unmarked trails). The activities appear to be centred on the fauna and/or the cultural attractions available within the park. Most likely to camp and more likely to take part in learning activities in the park.
- **VRC-only visitors** (2%). Visits are to the Visitor Centre; visitors do not report any activities in either block.

Visitors overnighing in the Grasslands area usually stay at campgrounds, hotels or motels, or a bed and breakfast. While in the Grasslands area, visitors also plan to visit Cypress Hills Provincial Park, family and/or friends, the Red Coat Trail, Fort Walsh National Historic Site, other national parks or national historic sites, and some report being on a cross-Canada trip.

Students and Teachers

Grasslands National Park, along with its partners in education, provides an outdoor classroom for grade school to university students, whether they are in the park or beyond, for example, speaking via videoconference with park staff or researchers about species at risk or other subjects. Every year, hundreds of students participate in Grasslands National Park supported education programs. A prime example of one of these programs is the Prairie Learning Centre. It coordinates a full range of curriculum-based outdoor studies for secondary school students. The Prairie Learning Centre

provides Canadian and international students unique opportunities through place-based learning: exploring the native mixed-grass prairie, actively engaging in research occurring in Grasslands National Park, and participating in activities in surrounding communities. The outdoor studies immerse students and educators in the native prairie landscape and conservation. The Prairie Learning Centre, located in Val Marie, is the result of innovative partnerships. The founding partners were the Chinook School Division and Grasslands National Park.

Park Neighbours and Communities

Parks Canada routinely informs and involves park neighbours and communities of special events and activities in the park. One such event is the East Block Party, held each August. People from the surrounding area are invited for a picnic, hike and horseback ride in the East Block. It is an opportunity for park neighbours and staff to share in the celebration of the park's heritage.

Open houses, newsletters and presentations for the communities near the park inform and seek public input on park research and management activities.

Virtual Visitors

Virtual visitors are those individuals who discover and learn about Grasslands National Park through print, radio, television and other media, such as the Parks Canada website or the Prairie Wind and Silver Sage website.

3.4. State of the Park in 2007

The overall state of Grasslands National Park is described as Fair based on the following factors (described further in the *2007 Grasslands National Park of Canada State of the Park Report*):

- **Ecological Integrity – Fair:** The ecosystem is vulnerable and does not contain a completely healthy composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change and supporting processes. Active park management continues to restore the mixed-grass prairie structure and processes, and some of its extirpated species. Continuing challenges include exotic and invasive species, loss and fragmentation of habitat, and species at risk recovery.
- **Relevance to People (facilitating memorable visitor experiences) – Fair:** Improvements are needed to the visitor service offer, enabling people to learn from and experience the park, and to forge an emotional connection, whether through personal experiences or public outreach programs.
- **Cultural Resources – Fair:** While many of the resources are in good condition, the park needs to improve its management of cultural resources to ensure their long-term protection and interpretation to the public.
- **Palaeontological Resources – Poor:** Not enough is known of these resources in the park to develop a program to protect and present them.

- **Effectiveness of Management Actions – Fair:** The 2002 park management plan provides solid direction for park management and is being implemented. However, some actions still need to be implemented, and there are other areas where plan objectives, actions and targets need refinement.

Through this management plan, actions will be taken to improve these ratings.

Park Challenges

The 2007 *Grasslands National Park State of the Park Report* identifies challenges related to making the park meaningful to Canadians, facilitating visitor experiences, and protecting and presenting the park’s cultural and palaeontological heritage. Further, challenges to Grasslands National Park’s ecological integrity were identified in the 2002 park management plan and continue to be a focus for park management. These park challenges and emerging issues centre on:

- Providing a Basic Visitor Service Offer: As a relatively new national park, there are very few facilities and services to support visitor activities and enjoyment; this is validated by a recent visitor survey that indicated services and facilities require management attention because they do not meet Parks Canada satisfaction standards. Where and how visitor products are developed can benefit or impair visitors’ opportunities to positively experience the natural, cultural and palaeontological heritage of the park.
- Learning Opportunities and Visitor Experiences: There is an array of learning opportunities for visitors and through public outreach education. While a recent visitor survey indicates visitors are satisfied overall with their visit to Grasslands National Park, it also indicates that visitors are not very satisfied with activities related to learning and recreation. There are not ample learning opportunities and visitor experiences linked with the natural, cultural and palaeontological themes.
- Attracting New Audiences: Parks Canada has knowledge of the park’s current visitors, but does not know its potential and evolving target markets, their needs and expectations. Visitor attendance at the park is relatively low.
- Exotic and Invasive Species: More than fifty exotic plants currently found within the park, notably crested wheatgrass, smooth brome and yellow sweet clover, are of immediate concern to the restoration and sustainability of the native prairie ecosystem. Seventy-eight invasive plants not yet in the park have been identified in the region, including leafy spurge, which is a major concern to the regional economy and environment.
- Loss and Fragmentation of Habitat: Only 19% of Saskatchewan’s original mixed-grass prairie ecosystem remains and much is fragmented into small parcels. Portions of land within and neighbouring the proposed boundary of Grasslands National Park have been cultivated and more may be should economic conditions support increased crop production in the region. Increased land under cultivation, as well as increased oil, gas and gravel exploration and extraction, could decrease and fragment suitable habitat for many native species, increase the probability of undesirable exotics invading, and isolate the park populations of native species.

- Engagement of Aboriginal and Nearby Communities: Grasslands National Park strives to have a meaningful and positive influence on communities linked to the park by geography and history, and for the park to benefit from their engagement. Park management, largely through the office of the Field Unit Superintendent, has been working toward building relations with Aboriginal communities, but their possible involvement with the park has yet to be fully realized. Improvements are desired in Aboriginal involvement and rural regional community involvement.
- Cultural Resource Management: The park is without a Cultural Resource Values Statement for cultural heritage ranging from pre-contact Aboriginal sites to the recent ranching era, which is necessary to incorporate the inventory and evaluation of these resources and better consider them in park management decision-making and interpretation.
- Palaeontological Resources: The park has not taken adequate measures to protect and present the palaeontological resources.
- Modified Disturbance Regime: Modified disturbance regimes, particularly wildfire, large herbivore grazing and flooding, are important processes to the functioning and biodiversity of the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem. The park's role in reintroducing these disturbance regimes (for example, prescribed burning and grazing) and managing them in a manner that respects the concerns of park neighbours and regional interests is a major challenge for park management.
- Species at Risk: Challenges with species at risk include species reintroduction, reconciling need to identify and protect critical habitat for species at risk while still achieving broad ecosystem-management goals, such as restoring disturbance regimes, and harmonizing species at risk recovery with park management and monitoring programs.
- Climate Change: Climate change has wide ranging implications on this semi-arid ecosystem. Prairie climate, including drought and windstorms, is predicted to extend much further north over the next 50-100 years. A north-south system of refuges and corridors may be essential to conserving species during rapid habitat shift. The Great Plains are severely fragmented; many species may have trouble dispersing to new habitats as biome boundaries shift.

This management plan will begin to focus Parks Canada on improving visitor experiences opportunities, and the management of cultural and palaeontological resources. Parks Canada is addressing the park's ecological challenges, recognizing that restoration of native prairie habitat and species is a long-term venture requiring continued investment in active management, research and monitoring. This management plan will continue to provide direction on this front.

4. PARK PURPOSE AND VISION

Together, the park purpose and vision statements represent the paramount goal for Grasslands National Park. The vision gives expression to the purpose statement; it describes the desired and achievable future for Grasslands National Park. Together, the purpose and vision statements are the foundation giving focus to park management, from strategic planning to day-to-day operations. The park purpose and vision statements help foster common understanding and cooperation among those who use, care for, work in, and live near the park.

4.1. Grasslands National Park's Purpose Statement

In keeping with the Parks Canada mandate, Grasslands National Park's key purpose is to best represent Canada's Prairie Grassland Natural Region - a place to experience and learn about the protection and restoration of grasslands and to enjoy the park's unique natural, cultural and scenic values while leaving it unimpaired for future generations.

4.2. Grasslands National Park's Vision Statement



Grasslands National Park celebrates the prairie: bison raising dust in a wallow, swift fox pups playing in a coulee, a creek finding its way along an ancient glacial valley, you discovering a solitary ring of stones on a windy ridge... and much more.

The park welcomes you to an open wilderness – a diverse, resilient and evolving prairie ecosystem. You will marvel at unexpected encounters with animals and plants uniquely suited to this uncompromising land and often-harsh climate. Astonishing geological formations and rich fossils take you to ancient times. Reminders of human use and influence on the land, from survival to adaptation and stewardship, are yours to discover. Together with neighbours and nearby communities, the park contributes to the protection, restoration, knowledge and presentation of this natural and cultural landscape, and looks toward restoring ecological processes and species representative of the mixed-grass prairie.

You are invited to enter this grassland world -- experience it, learn from it, enjoy its uniqueness, and appreciate and support its conservation.

Grasslands National Park of Canada - a prairie restored, resilient, alluring.



(Top: R.Koktan, K. Lunn, K. Smith-Fargey, K. Lunn)
(Bottom: J. Page, J. Wilmshurst, Parks Canada, K. Smith-Fargey)

5. KEY STRATEGIES

Key strategies are paths to realizing a park vision. Each strategy focuses efforts and resources on a clear set of related objectives, needs and opportunities that can influence achieving the vision. Each key strategy integrates the delivery of the three mandate elements of protection, visitor experiences and education. There are four key strategies:

- *Providing the Grasslands Experience*, which gives focus to enjoying the uniqueness of Grasslands National Park and region;
- *Grasslands Restored –The Prairie Persists*, which focuses on restoring and experiencing the lands, ecological processes and species that are integral to the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem of the park;
- *History Abounds: Recognizing Grasslands' Cultural and Palaeontological Heritage*, which focuses on protecting the cultural and palaeontological heritage of the park and enabling visitors to both experience and learn from this heritage; and
- *Grasslands Conservation Partnering*, which focuses on trans-boundary initiatives important to the ecological integrity of Grasslands National Park and species at risk recovery programs led by the park.

Two strategies have a foundation in the 2002 management plan. *Grasslands Restored – The Prairie Persists* and *Grasslands Conservation Partnering* have been implemented through Parks Canada ecological integrity and species at risk funding programs and have achieved a number of successes to date.

The strategies are neither mutually exclusive, independent paths, nor are they ordered by priority. Under each strategy are objectives, targets, key actions and guiding principles for implementation. They provide measures of what is to be achieved in the coming years. Some of these objectives, targets and actions are based on other planning studies or should be used when updating them (see Appendix A). The implementation and effectiveness of these objectives and actions in achieving the park vision will be assessed and updated for the next *Grasslands National Park of Canada State of the Park Report* and management plan review.

Area Management Approaches in Relation to the Key Strategies

Associated with these strategies are three area management approaches described in section 6. While key strategies focus on management approaches that affect a park as a whole, there will be certain places within a park that merit a specific management focus for the time span covered by the management plan. Three areas in Grasslands National Park are identified for area management approaches (Figure 2).

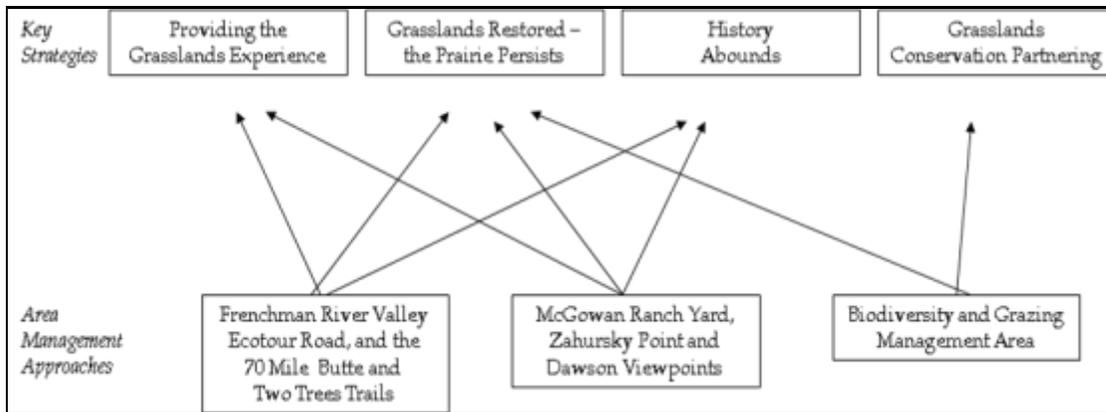


Figure 2. Links Between the four key strategies and three area management approaches of the management plan.

5.1 Providing the Grasslands Experience

Opportunities abound for all Canadians to learn about and experience the grasslands. Visitors will know, use and enjoy the amenities that the park and region have to offer. Staff, neighbours and local communities will take pride in caring for, promoting and benefiting from this prairie park. Those discovering the park through public outreach education will enjoy and appreciate what they find out about the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem.

Visitor experience opportunities, centred on the enjoyment of being in a unique and special place -- Grasslands National Park, are highlighted in this strategy. The key to this strategy is to know more about the park's current and potential visitors and

outreach audiences and provide for their interests and needs. People who connect to Grasslands National Park, whether through innovative outreach in non-traditional locations, the classroom, the website or in-person, will feel welcomed and will have knowledge and tools to engage with the places, spaces and stories. As a result, they will feel very positive and engaged about their interactions with this unique and unfamiliar landscape, the stage for the grasslands experience. There will be a higher likelihood than in the past, of visitors returning, recommending Grasslands National Park to others, and being ambassadors for the park and Parks Canada's mandate.



Hiking – just one way to experience Grasslands National Park (Tourism Saskatchewan)

The area management approaches for the Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road, and the 70 Mile Butte and Two Trees Trails (section 6.1) and the McGowan Ranch Yard, Zahursky Trail and Dawson Viewpoints (section 6.2) contribute to this strategy.

Objectives and Actions

There are four objectives to the *Providing the Grasslands Experience Strategy*:

- People come to Grasslands National Park knowing, using and being satisfied with the products and services that form the park’s basic visitor service offer and standards. The park is still in the development stage of providing a basic service offer, for example, welcoming and orientation signage, information about amenities, public safety information, trail and trail markers and sanitation within the park. In the course of this plan, visitor products and services will continue to be developed in both blocks;
- The communities and neighbours around the park are engaged in the facilitating of the visitor experience. What a visitor remembers of Grasslands National Park does not stop at the park’s boundary. In the course of this plan, the park will take steps to engage partners and stakeholders in providing the grasslands experience;
- Visitor experiences opportunities meet or exceed the needs and interests of key market segments that are attracted to the park, its mandate and messages. In the course of this plan, the park will take steps to identify new market segments for the park to increase awareness of, attendance at, and connection to the park; and

**One View of Coming to
Grasslands National Park and Region**

A visit to Grasslands National Park and region with its scenic vistas, wildlife, farms, ranches, rural lifestyle, prairie sunrises, sunsets and dark night skies can be a life-changing experience. People come to learn about the prairie and its restoration, wildlife, endangered species, over a century of ranching and farming lifestyle and ten millennia of Aboriginal history. Visitors want to hear the stories of the grasslands from the people who live and work here. People want to come and experience an open prairie with nothing to block the view, see the bison, take in small town hospitality, rodeos and pow wows, and spot rare birds, plants and animals. Visitors will be able to get all the Grasslands National Park information they need to feel welcomed, and oriented to the park for comfort, safety and enjoyment. Information will be available on the Internet, by telephone, in area towns and villages, and at park welcome kiosks and the Visitor Centre. Visitors will walk, drive or ride to awesome scenic views and places; camp in the East or West block or in a town or regional park; sleep in a tipi or back-country shelter; stay on a real working ranch, or at a friendly hotel in town where they can find out about events and activities. On leaving, they will have strong, positive memories and a great connection to this special place.

- Steps are taken to realizing a definitive long-term vision for facilitating visitor experiences in the park. This vision will guide development of visitor facilities, services and programs for the long run. This includes developing and refining the details of where the park will be in twenty years, including a value proposition for Canadians. While the first three objectives are focused on more immediate delivery of visitor opportunities, this objective involves planning for future opportunities. This visioning and planning will continue into the next management plan review and involve public and stakeholder consultation, the travel and tourism industry, and Aboriginal collaboration.

In the long-term (> five years), achievement of these objectives will be seen when Grasslands National Park is: one of the crown jewels for cross-country travellers; part of a regional grasslands destination; able to sustain an increased level in park attendance; and able to continually meets Parks Canada's standards for visitor satisfaction.

Although Grasslands National Park is largely enjoyed from spring through fall, from time to time the park has hosted winter activities such as The Christmas Bird Count and Prairie Little Christmas. Extending Grasslands National Park into a four-season park will be considered when and where opportunities permit.



School program in the park (S. Duquette Larson)

Providing the Grasslands Experience: Objective, Targets and Actions for the five-year period of the plan.	
Objective 1: <i>People come to Grasslands National Park knowing, using and being satisfied with the products and services that form the park's basic visitor service offer and standards.</i>	
Target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 85% of visitors are satisfied with activities, facilities and services provided by the park, as based on information from Visitor Information Program surveys. 	
Activities	Actions
Improve the Basic Service Offer for Visitors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Introduce or improve the welcome and orientation at key park entry points, day-use areas, campgrounds, and interpretive trails in the East and West blocks*. 1.2. Introduce or improve basic facilities for sanitation and garbage, rest areas and simple sun shade shelters. 1.3. Improve the basic visitor service offer for cyclists and equestrian riders*. 1.4. Develop and implement a revenue collection strategy for the park that contributes to maintaining and improving the park's visitor service offer. 1.5. Install directional, orientation and public safety signs identified in the park's signage plan, as opportunity permits. 1.6. Improve the Grasslands National Park website to better inform prospective visitors of the visitor services and the recreational, learning and other experiential opportunities available in and about the park. 1.7. Develop a comprehensive park-wide trail system plan for the park designed to facilitate and manage a variety of visitor experiences, recreational uses, and educational opportunities. <p>* For further details, see the Area Management Approaches for the Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road, and the 70 Mile Butte and Two Trees Trails, and the McGowan Ranch Yard, Zahursky Point Trail and Dawson Viewpoints. Appendix B lists current and new products and services for the park. Appendix C lists recreational and other activities that the park is currently able to support.</p>
Monitor Visitor Use and Satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.8. Develop and implement a reliable system to determine visitor attendance accurately and consistently. 1.9. Conduct a Parks Canada's Visitor Information Program survey prior to the next management plan review to rate people's use and satisfaction with the park's visitor products and services.

<p>Objective 2: <i>The communities and neighbours around the park are engaged in facilitating of the visitor experience.</i></p> <p>Target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is sustained participation in park programs, such as the familiarization tours and ambassador program that illustrate community support in facilitating visitor experiences associated with Grasslands National Park. 	
<p>Actions</p>	
<p>2.1. Build regional awareness of the park by partnering with local attractions (e.g., Swift Current Museum) and regional tourism associations.</p> <p>2.2. Annually offer park familiarization tours for regional tourism partners.</p> <p>2.3. Introduce a 'park ambassador' program.</p> <p>2.4. Continue to support the park-related work of the Prairie Wind and Silver Sage – Friends of Grasslands, Inc., and Wood Mountain Historical Society.</p> <p>2.5. Work with surrounding communities and businesses toward the park, and possibly the region, being designated a 'dark sky' preserve.</p> <p>2.6. Explore a branding of the Grasslands region as a tourism marketing approach and defining a core tourism offer with interested parties, particularly gateway towns.</p>	
<p>Objective 3: <i>Visitor experiences opportunities meet or exceed the needs and interests of key markets segments that are attracted to the park, its mandate and messages.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Design visitor experience opportunities for at least one new market segment. ▪ Develop a baseline attendance estimate over the course of two years; reach a target of 10% increase in attendance over the baseline estimate by the fifth year of the management planning cycle. ▪ Increase the outreach audiences that can experience facets of the park through the use of multimedia/film segments, and by gaining a spot in Saskatchewan curriculum. 	
Activities	Actions
<p>Tailor Visitor Experience Opportunities for Key Markets</p>	<p>3.1. Initiate a marketing approach to designing visitor experience opportunities, including:</p> <p>3.1.1. Research current and potential visitors to the park and their anticipated needs and expectations;</p> <p>3.1.2. Determine a few key market segments to be pursued with the unique features and qualities of the park and its visitor products and services;</p> <p>3.1.3. Identify the markets' values and motives in visiting and the benefits to be received;</p> <p>3.1.4. Tailor and evaluate the parks' products and services according to the identified benefits; and</p> <p>3.1.5. Develop a marketing plan.</p>

Tailor Outreach Experience Opportunities for the Virtual Visitor	<p>3.2. Improve the Grasslands National Park website as the portal from the home or school to the park, on its stories and images of nature, people, history and landscapes.</p> <p>3.3. Provide value-added news stories, film footage, documentary ‘shorts’ to national media and conservation interests at least once a year.</p> <p>3.4. Seek opportunities through various media and partners (e.g., theatre, DVDs, satellite conferencing with classrooms, story series) to do heritage presentations in schools, zoos and museums, and possibly children’s television.</p>
<p>Objective 4: <i>Steps are taken to realizing a definitive long-term vision for facilitating visitor experiences in the park that will guide development of visitor facilities, services and programs in the long run.</i></p> <p>Target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information is gathered for undertaking a master site plan for the next management plan review. 	
Activities	Actions
Visitor Experience Planning	4.1. Business plans are developed outlining funding requirements necessary to develop and consult on a master site plan for facilitating visitor experiences.

Guiding Principles

In implementing the *Providing the Grasslands Experience* strategy, Parks Canada will:

- Respect the park’s ecological integrity, species at risk, cultural and palaeontological resources, when planning, designing and providing visitor facilities, services and programs.
- Ensure that the quality of construction and appearance of facilities reflects the architectural and design standards of Grasslands National Park Facilities Appearance Guidelines.
- Assess proposed recreational activities in the park for significant opportunities and/or areas of concern by using the Parks Canada’s *Management Bulletin for Recreational Activity and Special Event Assessments*.
- Where possible, develop visitor services and facilities on previously disturbed areas.
- Continue to encourage dispersed backcountry hiking and camping.
- Continue to place a high priority on the prevention of public safety incidents through effective communication, and visitor reception and orientation services.

5.2 Grasslands Restored – The Prairie Persists

Visitors will pause to watch bison interact with prairie dogs, pronghorns ... the earth itself. In this vast and accessible prairie landscape, one can see natural prairie and prairie restored. Large and small grazers, fire, drought and flood will play critical roles in maintaining and restoring the prairie. Restoration within the park will enhance visitors' connections to this significant place as they witness and learn about a healthy, diverse grasslands.

Active management projects, public education and opportunities for visitor experiences come together in the restoration of ecological integrity of the native prairie of the park. The native mixed-grass prairie is conserved and restored to a state over time in which active management is minimized and the ecosystem recovers and maintains its characteristic functions, species, and ability to persist.

Grasslands National Park faces restoration challenges on a scale not typical for our national parks. Disturbances such as animal grazing, prairie wildfires, soil erosion, and flooding are some of the strongest influences on the health and character of the prairies. Some of the disturbances were from the bison herds that sporadically and intensely grazed this prairie. Similarly, wildfires consumed huge tracts of land. These are just two examples of disturbances affecting grasslands. While many disturbance effects can be beneficial, there is the potential for undesirable responses such as increased erosion, and the dispersal and establishment of exotic plant species. Efforts to understand the specific role of disturbances on the integrity of the prairie ecosystem is important. Several restoration strategies discussed here address these challenges. They chart a program of action that should ensure that restoration issues feature much less prominently in future management plans.

All three Area Management Approaches contribute to this strategy (see Section 6).

Objectives and Actions

There are four objectives to the *Grasslands Restored –The Prairie Persists Strategy*:

- Park lands will be restored using an integrated restoration approach for cultivated lands and areas dominated by exotic grasses. In the course of this plan, active management programs introduced in the 2002 management plan continue with defined targets toward restoring ecological integrity;
- People can witness, understand and support prairie restoration through learning-based experiences grounded in the prairie restoration programs in the park. Past investments have been made to create visitor experience and education opportunities associated with some ecological restoration activities,



A volunteer/"citizen scientist"
at work (Parks Canada)

including, for example, new exhibits at the Val Marie Visitor Centre. These opportunities will be further developed for the website, through alternative delivery channels, at the Visitor Centre, and at locations in the park where there are restoration programs;

- Missing species will be reintroduced and species at risk managed in the park. The park continues its responsibilities in regard to the *Species-at-Risk Act*; and
- Ecological processes will be restored at the landscape-level for ecological integrity that will complement surrounding land use and management practices. In addition to continuing the direction of the 2002 management plan, it is recognized that different areas in the park may have different target species or management issues, such as invasive plant species control. Consequently, an active management strategy that outlines the desired outcomes for target species (for example, grasslands songbirds or greater sage-grouse) and invasive species control (for example, crested wheat grass) will be developed for logical ecological management units of the park. Each unit strategy will outline how grazing, prescribed fire, and revegetation activities will be organized and integrated to achieve the desired outcomes.

In the long-term (> five years), achievement of these objectives will be seen when areas revegetated become similar to reference native prairie community; species at risk habitat are enhanced through increased silver sage and forb abundance; there is eighty percent probability of black-footed ferret survival for next 20 years as per approved recovery strategy; the distribution of crested wheatgrass is reduced by fifteen percent of the 2009 distribution in the park; the feasibility of the expanded role for fire as a landscape process to meet national twenty percent of historic natural fire regime target is investigated; opportunities to expand bison range in the park are explored; successful volunteerism is in place for a range of research and monitoring programs; and park audiences understand and support the park’s restoration programs.

Grasslands Restored – The Prairie Persists Strategy: Objectives, Targets and Actions for the five-year period of the plan.	
Objective 1: <i>Park lands will be restored using an integrated restoration approach for cultivated lands and areas dominated by exotic grasses.</i>	
Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All cultivated fields within the existing holdings (as of 2008) will be revegetated by 2013 (30-40 hectares/year). ▪ Crested wheatgrass dominated areas will be reduced by 5 to 12 hectares/year (crested wheatgrass will be less than 1% cover).
Activities	Actions
Cultivated Field Restoration	1.1. Implement active management restoration activities on the remaining cultivated lands by 2013 (30 to 40 hectares/year).

Crested Wheat Grass Control	<p>1.2. Implement crested wheatgrass control on 12 hectares/year, focussing on high visitor experience areas and looking for opportunities to enhance species at risk habitat (i.e., greater sage-grouse).</p> <p>1.3. Implement a park-wide survey of crested wheat grass to determine other priority areas for control, such as isolated patches of crested wheat grass located near large areas of crested wheat grass-free native prairie.</p>
Riparian Area Restoration	1.4. Target one or more reaches of the Frenchman River as pilot areas for sustained research on smooth brome grass control and shrub regeneration.
<p>Objective 2: <i>People can witness, understand and support prairie restoration through learning-based experiences grounded in the prairie restoration programs in the park.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A 25% increase in the number of volunteers. ▪ Visitors are using new products and services linked to ecological restoration. ▪ Establish a baseline understanding of public awareness of prairie restoration and species reintroduction programs in the park. 	
Activities	Actions
Link Restoration with Education and Visitor Experience Opportunities	<p>2.1. Develop new products and services that facilitate visitors' experiences with the grasslands ecology and foster understanding and support for restoration. Explore geocaching as one method of connecting people to the park's themes. (Some other products are identified in the Area Management Approaches).</p> <p>2.2. Develop and introduce by 2010 a comprehensive volunteer program enabling public participation in park research and monitoring.</p> <p>2.3. Use ecological restoration activities to support innovative learning and visitor experience opportunities (e.g., Prairie Learning Center, interpretive trails highlighting restoration and guided hikes).</p> <p>2.4. Develop and implement tools in 2010 to measure target audience understanding and appreciation of the ecology, natural processes and restoration programs in the park.</p> <p>2.5. Maintain and update website content on prairie restoration and species reintroduction programs in the park.</p> <p>2.6. Update regional and national media on prairie restoration and species reintroduction programs in the park.</p> <p>2.7. Inform park neighbours and communities in the area of prairie restoration species reintroduction through media and events.</p> <p>2.8. Develop 'cool tools' of presenting the prairie ecosystem that help young people understand the critical role of this ecosystem.</p> <p>2.9. Explore ways for the public to interact with the bison, for example, through webcams, tracking devices and/or guided hikes.</p>

<p>Objective 3: <i>Missing species will be reintroduced and species at risk managed in the park.</i></p>	
<p>Target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A fall population of 20-30 black-footed ferrets primarily composed of wild born kits by 2013. 	
Activities	Actions
Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction	<p>3.1. Reintroduce/release black-footed ferrets in 2009, 2010 and 2011 years to restore extirpated predator to the black-tailed prairie dog ecosystem.</p> <p>3.2. Conduct research and monitoring, and use information to determine ferret carrying capacity and population viability.</p> <p>3.3. Use the ferret reintroduction to connect Canadians and young people to conservation efforts and gains in Canada.</p>
Black-tailed Prairie Dog Management	<p>3.4. Approve and implement the black-tailed prairie dog management plan.</p>
Enhance Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat	<p>3.5. Explore opportunities to enhance habitat for species at risk (i.e., greater sage-grouse) as part of cultivated field restoration.</p>
<p>Objective 4: <i>Ecological processes will be restored at the landscape-level for ecological integrity that will complement surrounding land use and management practices.</i></p>	
<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An area burned target of at least 75 hectares/year averaged over 5 years will be achieved through prescribed burns. ▪ Identify ecosystem objectives (i.e., grazing stocking rate, grassland songbirds, species at risk, exotic vegetation management) for grazed and ungrazed parcels in the East and West blocks by 2014, and adapt management as required. ▪ A bison population within a target range of 300 to 350 animals within the fenced bison enclosure of the West Block will be achieved by 2014. ▪ 90% of the <i>Species-at-Risk Act</i> Schedule 1 species that are affected by restoration activities and for which Grasslands National Park plays a significant protection or recovery role, have a stable or improved condition by 2014. 	
Activities	Actions
Fire Use for Restoration and Fire Control	<p>4.1. Implement the park's Fire Management Plan with a focus on the use of prescribed fire to achieve ecosystem management objectives.</p>

Grazing Regime Restoration	<p>4.2. Develop grazing management objectives and a monitoring program for each management unit in the East and West Blocks by 2012.</p> <p>4.3. Gain knowledge and develop management recommendations from the operation of the Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area (see Section 6.3, <i>Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area</i>).</p>
Bison Population Management	<p>4.4. Keep the bison population securely fenced, monitored and disease-tested.</p> <p>4.5. Develop and implement a hyper-abundance plan with the capability to manage the bison population, while providing opportunities for First Nations and Métis engagement.</p>
Integrate Active Management Programs	<p>4.6. Pilot the development and implementation of an integrated ecological restoration and active management plan for the west side of the West Block that is not part of the Bison Containment Area.</p>
Monitoring	<p>4.7. Implement an effective and efficient integrated ecological monitoring program for the park. The integrated park ecological monitoring program will be used to report on ecological integrity and species at risk status by 2014.</p>

Guiding Principles

In implementing the *Grasslands Restored – The Prairie Persists* strategy, Parks Canada will:

- Continue to use bison as the preferred large herbivore species for grazing as an ecological process in the mixed-grass prairie of the park; domestic grazers will be used to achieve ecological objectives where bison are not suited.
- Continue to suppress all wildfires. As opportunities present themselves, wildfire burns will be studied to increase our understanding of the ecological effects of fire.
- Continue to invest in science in support of decision-making.
- Respect and consider the body of ecological knowledge of mixed-grass prairie held by ranchers, owners and managers of lands bordering or within the proposed park boundaries.



Prescribed fire in Grasslands National Park
(Parks Canada)

- Apply the *Principles and Guidelines for the Ecological Restoration in Canada's Protected Natural Areas*.
- Continue to allow earth dams to wash out naturally, unless the water is required for a specific operational purpose. Repairs or modifications to earth dams will follow necessary requirements of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and the *Federal Fisheries Act*.
- Be responsible for collecting population monitoring data and developing recovery strategies for species at risk where Parks Canada and the park have lead responsibility.
- When designing active management activities, consider their potential effects on other valued ecosystem components, visitor experience opportunities and neighboring stakeholders.

5.3 History Abounds: Recognizing Grasslands' Cultural and Palaeontological Heritage

The stories of many traditions will be evident in Grasslands National Park's many historic places and as told by many different people – a First Nations Elder, a rancher, a researcher, or a Parks Canada guide. Stories from past times are visible in tipi rings and remains of old homesteads and ranches. Through them, Canadians will be able to see and come to appreciate the rich cultural heritage of the park and how past stewardship of this distinctive landscape contributed to the creation of a grasslands park.

The geological and palaeontological story of Grasslands National Park is one of fascinating landforms and fossils of terrestrial and marine ecosystems far different from the prairie of today, but will be an integral part of the park's heritage deserving both protection and presentation.

Active management centred on cultural and palaeontological resources in Grasslands National Park involving the participation of partners, community interests and experts are highlighted. Public education programs and park experience opportunities are directly connected to these resources and their care. Palaeontological and cultural resources have been combined under this one strategy as they share similar Parks Canada principles and practices in their management, protection and presentation.



Tipi ring archaeological site (S. Thomson)

Objectives and Actions

There are two objectives to the *History Abounds* Strategy:

- The cultural resources in the park are protected and presented to the public in a manner consistent with their heritage value. The human history associated with the park is an interesting story in itself and can also help communicate concepts of ecological integrity, including adaptation and survival, changes to the landscape, and lessons learned in prairie conservation and restoration. As the park continues to inventory the cultural resources associated with this human history, it is necessary to identify the values that represents their heritage and will shape their management and presentation. The Cultural Resource Values Statement and Cultural Resource Management strategy will be important building blocks for managing the use and protection of cultural resources, interpreting them, and reporting on their state; and
- The palaeontological resources of the park are protected in a way that ensures maximum continuous scientific, education and visitor experience value to all Canadians. This strategy renews interest in this important facet of the park's heritage. The Palaeontological Protection and Presentation Plan will define actions on how to manage the palaeontological resources of the East and West blocks by considering eight areas of activities: partnerships, data management, inventory, collecting, protection, monitoring, research and permitting, and education and visitor experiences.

In the long-term (> five years), achievement of these objectives will be seen when: palaeontological and cultural resources in the park are effectively managed using processes that are knowledge-based, policy-based and supported by partners and stakeholders; and the cultural and palaeontological heritage is fully part of facilitating visitor experiences.



Inoceramus – fossilized clam (Colette Schmidt)

History Abounds Strategy: Objectives, Targets and Actions for the five-year period of the plan.	
<p>Objective 1: <i>The cultural resources in the park are protected and presented to the public in a manner consistent with their heritage value.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate improvement in the inventory and evaluation of buildings and structures. ▪ Develop a baseline estimate of targeted audience awareness, understanding and appreciation of the park’s cultural heritage and its management. 	
Activities	Actions
Enhance the Park’s Cultural Resource Management Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Complete a Cultural Resource Values Statement by 2011 for buildings and structures, landscapes and landscapes features (including identification of appropriate place names) and objects that are associated with, government surveying and policing, ranching and homesteading activities of the 19th and 20th centuries. 1.2. Engage Aboriginal communities with historic connections to the park lands in the protection and presentation of Aboriginal heritage, including the development of a Cultural Resource Values Statement (see also Objective 1 in Section 7 -<i>Partnering and Public Engagement</i>). 1.3. Undertake a Cultural Resource Management Strategy for the park, based on the above, by 2013 and begin implementation. 1.4. Inventory archaeological sites on existing park lands that have yet to be inventoried and monitor those sites that have been identified as threatened.
Link Cultural Resource Management to Visitor Experience Opportunities and Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.5. Use cultural resource management activities to support innovative learning and visitor experience opportunities (e.g., public archaeology, human history interpretation at the Larson Ranch Yard to the extent possible) (see <i>Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road, and the 70 Mile Butte and Two Trees Trail</i>, Action 1.6). 1.6. Incorporate cultural resource management opportunities in the park’s volunteer program (see <i>Grasslands Restored – The Prairie Persists</i> Action 2.2).

<p>Objective 2: <i>The palaeontological resources of the park are protected in a way that ensures maximum continuous scientific, education and visitor experience value to all Canadians.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate improvements in the inventory and management of palaeontological resources. ▪ Develop a baseline estimate of targeted audience awareness, understanding and appreciation of the park’s palaeontological heritage and its management. 	
Activities	Actions
Enhance the Park’s Palaeontological Resource Management Program	<p>2.1. Establish a Grasslands National Park Palaeontological Team to provide recommendations to the park’s management.</p> <p>2.2. Implement the Grasslands National Park Palaeontological Protection and Presentation Plan.</p>
Link Palaeontological Resource Management to Visitor Experience Opportunities and Education	<p>2.3. Use palaeontological resource management activities to support innovative learning and visitor experience opportunities (e.g., use the McGowan Ranch Yard facility as a venue for interpreting badlands palaeontology, possible guided hikes, and use the research in public outreach education).</p> <p>2.4. Incorporate palaeontological resource management opportunities in the park’s volunteer program (see <i>Grasslands Restored – The Prairie Persists</i> Action 2.2).</p>

Guiding Principles

In implementing the *History Abounds* strategy, Parks Canada will:

- Work with Aboriginal interests, neighbouring communities and specialists to protect and present the cultural heritage in the park with respect, particularly those places and things that may be considered sacred.
- Apply the principles and practice of *The Parks Canada Cultural Resource Management (CRM) Policy*, the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* and the *Federal Heritage Buildings Policy*.
- Be receptive to pursuing a national historic site designation for the park through the recommendation of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, contingent upon active support of First Nation proponents.

5.4 Grasslands Conservation Partnering

Some endangered grasslands species will once again thrive in Grasslands National Park, but not without the willing cooperation of neighbours and others. Watching swift fox pups playing in coulees, greater sage-grouse courting on leks and colonies of black-tailed prairie dogs on alert for black-footed ferrets, neighbours, visitors and staff can together enjoy and learn about how they are contributing to a healthy environment for grasslands species.

Cooperation for grasslands conservation with other government agencies, landowners and managers, non-government organizations and researchers are fundamental to this strategy. Grasslands National Park conservation goals, while focused in the park, often require working with partners at spatial scales much larger than the park. For example, species at risk populations in the park are typically linked to populations managed by other jurisdictions. Parks Canada seeks to cooperate with other jurisdictions in recovery planning and ensuring that implementation activities are coordinated with and complement activities being undertaken by other agencies.



Swift fox (B. Gurr)

Public education programs (within and beyond the park) and park experience opportunities are directly connected to these trans-boundary conservation activities. The *Grasslands Conservation Partnering* strategy

will focus on: engaging regional stakeholders and communities in grasslands conservation on both sides of the international boundary; creating opportunities for park visitors (and those accessing the park via public outreach education) to be engaged in the regional recovery of species at risk and grasslands conservation; and developing collaborative forums in which local knowledge can be accessed and local interests incorporated into conservation program delivery.

The Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area is a key part of this strategy (see Section 6.2), although elements are also found in the other area management approaches.

Objectives and Actions

There are two objectives to the *Grasslands Conservation Partnering* Strategy:

- Shared ecosystems, ecological processes and species are cooperatively managed and the ecological integrity in Grasslands National Park is maintained; and
- Canadians appreciate the significance of Grasslands National Park in contributing to prairie conservation and species at risk recovery.

In the long-term (> five years), achievement of these objectives will be seen when: native ecosystems are better managed and protected through good relationships and partnering; the Multi-Species Action Plan is being implemented; and Canadians are aware of, appreciate and support prairie conservation and species at risk.

Grasslands Conservation Partnering Strategy: Objectives, Targets and Actions for the five-year period of the plan.	
<p>Objective 1: <i>Shared ecosystems, ecological processes and species are cooperatively managed and the ecological integrity in Grasslands National Park is maintained.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Canada lead species in Grasslands National Park have completed Recovery Strategies/Management Plans according to the deadlines prescribed by the Species-at-Risk Act. ▪ Critical habitat for species for which Parks Canada currently has a lead role will be identified to the extent possible by 2011. ▪ 90% of the <i>Species-at-Risk Act</i> Schedule 1 species (as of May 2009) that are affected by restoration activities for which Grasslands National Park plays a significant protection or recovery role, have a stable or improved condition by 2014. ▪ By 2014, key stakeholders feel that they have the opportunities to influence and contribute to prairie conservation and species at risk protection in the region that have linkages to Parks Canada. 	
Activities	Actions
Support Conservation Initiatives	1.1. Support inter-jurisdictional conservation and education initiatives (e.g., Weed Management Area, Crossing the Medicine Line Network, Prairie Conservation Action Plan, Prairie Grow Program, Saskatchewan Invasive Species Council, Prairie Learning Centre and wildfire response with neighbouring rural municipalities).
Complete Recovery Strategies	1.2. Complete the Recovery Strategy for the Eastern yellow-bellied racer and the action plan for black-footed ferret by 2012.
Participate and Support Multi-jurisdictional Planning and Implementation	1.3. Participate in Multi-Species Action Plan planning processes (led by the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Province of Saskatchewan) to develop a plan by 2011. 1.4. Play a support role in the subsequent implementation of the Multi-Species Action Plan.
Manage Species at Risk Populations	1.5. Complete species at risk conservation rankings using park-scaled criteria and measure changes in the condition of these species over a five-year period. 1.6. Inventory and develop monitoring plans for all listed species where there are significant populations in the park by 2014. 1.7. Look for opportunities to address knowledge gaps and mitigate conservation threats to species at risk on Parks Canada land and to support these activities in surrounding jurisdictions.

<p>Objective 2: <i>Canadians appreciate the significance of Grasslands National Park in contributing to prairie conservation and species at risk recovery.</i></p>	
<p>Target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By 2014, targeted audiences (i.e., southern Saskatchewan residents and urban Canadian audiences) will have an increased level of awareness and understanding of the importance of regional prairie conservation and species at risk protection linked to the park. 	
Activities	Actions
<p>Enhance Public Outreach Education</p>	<p>2.1. Strengthen public outreach education collaborations with urban zoos, citizen science volunteering opportunities, and other initiatives associated with species at risk recovery programs.</p> <p>2.2. Maintain existing public outreach education audiences, programs and products and review them to validate their continued delivery.*</p> <p>* The actions for Objective 2 of <i>The Grasslands Restored – The Prairie Persists Strategy</i> will also support this objective.</p>

Guiding Principles

In implementing the *Grasslands Conservation Partnering* strategy, Parks Canada will:

- Cooperate with other jurisdictions in the development and implementation of recovery strategies, management plans and action plans for species for which Parks Canada has the lead role and deliver these plans on time.
- Where species at risk go beyond the park boundary, collaborate with other agencies to effectively monitor the populations and ensure the development and implementation of recovery strategies and action plans.
- Complete five-year Species at risk recovery plan updates for species that Parks Canada currently leads and complete recovery strategies and management plans on time for any new lead species.
- Maintain dialogue with the park’s neighbours and stakeholders, protected area managers and research professionals of mixed-grass prairie sites in Canada and the United States.



Public education outreach (M. Yaskowich)

6. AREA MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

6.1. Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road, and the 70 Mile Butte and Two Trees Trails

The Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road, and the 70 Mile Butte and Two Trees trails will continue to be where most visitors are directed to go, see and learn about Grasslands National Park. The western end of the West Block is also one of the most actively managed areas of the park with bison reintroduction, prescribed burning, invasive plants management, and species at risk recovery programs taking place.

This area management approach is linked with the *Providing the Grasslands Experience*, *Grasslands Restored – The Prairie Persists* and *History Abounds* key strategies. It focuses on establishing the basics for facilitating visitor experiences by bringing the visitor service offer to standards of what Canadians expect from national parks. Improved welcome and orientation to the park, and facilities, services and programs that help the visitor connect to place, facilitate their needs and interests, and highlight themes of the park such as the prairie restoration, species at risk and human history, are integral parts of this area management approach. This area, with the exception of the Two Trees Trail, is within the fenced bison enclosure (Figure 3).

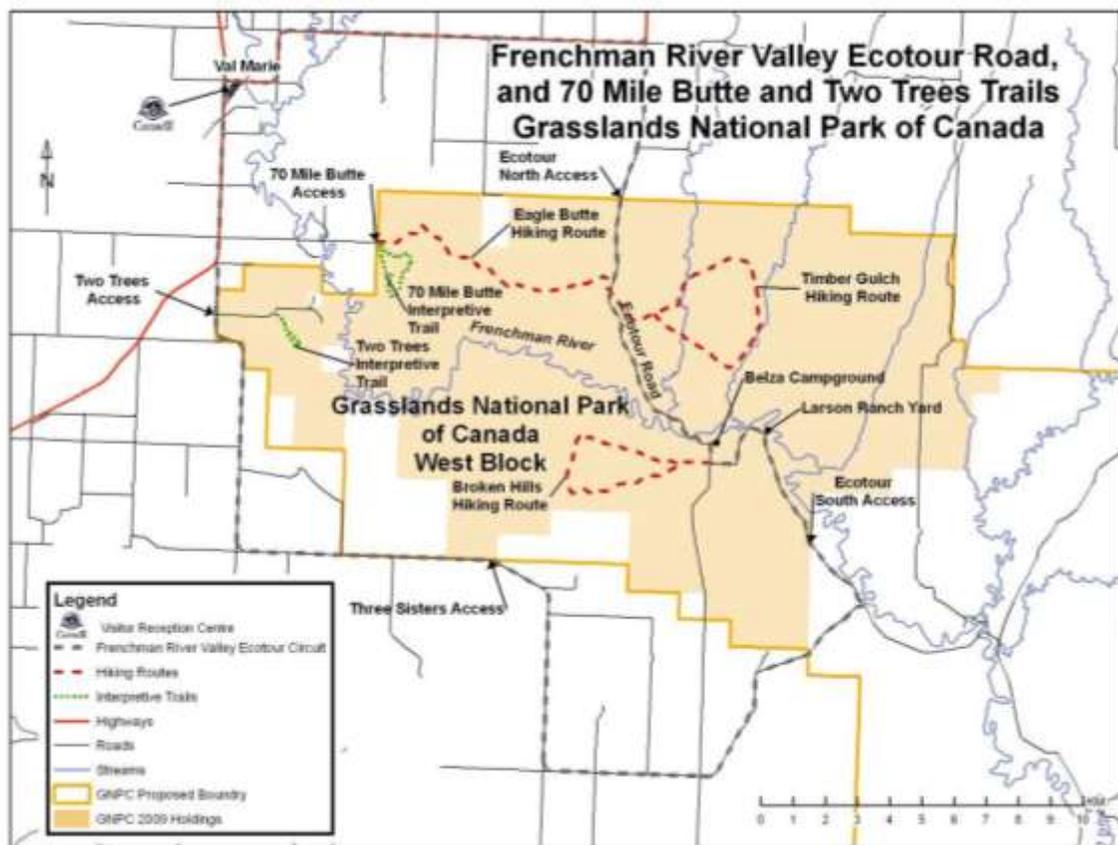


Figure 3. Area Management Approach: Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road, and the 70 Mile Butte and Two Tree Trails. (R. Jeffries)

Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road

The 28-kilometer Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road is a fair-weather motorized access road, used by both park visitors and neighbors, and is under the jurisdiction of the Rural Municipality of Val Marie. It runs northwest to southeast through the western end of the West Block and is part of a marked 80-kilometer circuit that can take visitors to 70 Mile Butte and Two Trees trails and back to the Visitor Centre in Val Marie. A brochure and signed pull-offs are used to guide visitors on the Ecotour. While the Ecotour Road will continue to be a vehicle-reliant experience for most visitors, a number of changes will be designed to entice people out of their cars so they may sense more of the place.

There are several un-marked hiking routes currently accessed from the Ecotour Road. The park will pilot and provide a range of trail marking, shade shelter and interpretation along these routes. Day use and access points will be designed with diverse visitor segments, needs and climate in mind. Sunshade structures will be piloted within the park as well as backcountry shelters.

A new campground at the Belza yard site will be designed to provide front country camping and day use opportunities. The master site plan for facilitating visitor experiences, identified in Objective 4 of *Providing the Grasslands Experience*, will include both an initial construction phase and an expansion phase to consider future increases in visitor numbers and broader services.

70 Mile Butte and Two Trees Trails

70 Mile Butte is a popular visitor area in Grasslands National Park. As one of the highest points of land in the West Block, the butte provides a window into the park. Visitor activities in the area include hiking, backcountry camping, horseback riding and nature viewing. Currently, 70 Mile Butte has an unmarked hiking approach, which is about five kilometres and rated moderate. A parking and turnaround lot, information kiosk and outhouse are located at the park entrance to 70 Mile Butte. The area is closed during eagle nesting. Because the Butte is a landmark, and easily accessed from Highway 4 and Val Marie, people will continue to be drawn here. Human impact will need to be managed through proper trail design and mitigating features to protect rare plants and wildlife, slopes and soils.

Two Trees Trail is a moderately easy, marked loop of 1.5 kilometres that introduces hikers to the native prairie and the Frenchman Valley. The trail and its road access are suited for interpreting park themes such as the role of fire in grasslands ecology because prescribed burning for ecological restoration has been done in this area.

The park plans to enhance the trail experience in these areas, recognizing their interpretive and “wow” potential, and natural and cultural resource management in the area.

Objective and Actions

- Facilities, programs and services are provided along the Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road, 70 Mile Butte and Two Trees trails for targeted audiences to have safe and memorable visitor experiences.

In the long-term (> five years), achievement of this objective will be seen when the Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road, and the 70 Mile Butte and Two Trees Trails form a “front country” service offer for the West Block. Front country is composed of outdoor areas that are easily accessible and mostly visited by day users. Developed campgrounds, accessible for car camping, are also included in the front country definition.

Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road, 70 Mile Butte and Two Trees Trails Area: Objectives, Targets and Actions for the five-year period of the plan.	
<p>Objective: <i>Facilities, programs and services are provided along the Frenchman River Valley Ecotour Road, 70 Mile Butte and Two Trees trails for targeted audiences to have safe and memorable visitor experiences.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85 % of visitors to this area will be satisfied with its facilities and services. Visitor use will increase at the Belza campground and day use area. Develop a baseline estimate as to targeted audiences learning something about the park (e.g., ecology, active management, cultural heritage, species at risk) from their use of the interpretive facilities and services for the area. 	
Activities	Actions
West Block Entry Points	1.1. Provide identifiable welcome and park orientation media at main park entry points (Ecotour North and South, Three Sisters, Two Trees and 70 Mile Butte).
Ecotour Road	1.2. Support the rural municipality in the maintenance of its road through the park.
Belza Ranch Yard	1.3. Design and build a campground, a day-use site, an interpretive area, and staging area for equestrian users. 1.4. Link the Belza Ranch Yard and Larson Ranch Yard by trail. 1.5. Establish a baseline of current visitor use, enjoyment and learning.
Larson Ranch Yard	1.6. Present the early ranch and homesteading story at the Larson site through interpretive signage, programming, and cleanup. Development and interpretation within the Larson site buildings and the bank-barn will depend on outcomes of visitor experience planning for the site and the park’s Cultural Resource Management Strategy (<i>see History Abounds</i>). 1.7. Establish baseline for the percentage of visitors that learn about human land relationships over recent historic period by 2009.

Trails	<p>1.8. Design and develop a trail plan that will include interpretive trails of 70 Mile Butte, Two Trees, and Belza, improved brochures, media for trails and trail markers. Trails will be built to minimize human impact in fragile areas.</p> <p>1.9. Pilot the use of back-country structures for visitor and staff/researcher use.</p> <p>1.10. Pilot methodologies for evaluating visitor enjoyment, connection to place and trail impacts on vegetation and soil.</p>
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6.2. McGowan Ranch Yard, Zahursky Point Trail and Dawson Viewpoints

The former McGowan Ranch Yard, the Dawson viewpoints of the badlands and the Zahursky Point trail that overlooks Rock Creek, will be a focal area for a variety of day-use and overnight visitors who want to experience the East Block. The area hugging the East Block boundary, offers a taste of what this unique landscape offers while leaving the majority of the East Block lands as solitude available for guided programs or independent, self-sufficient exploration.

This area management approach is linked with the *Providing the Grasslands Experience, Grasslands Restored – The Prairie Persists* and *History Abounds* key strategies.

Since 2002, visitor research, community interests and the Park Advisory Committee have identified the need for more varied visitor experiences in the East Block that would be on par with the visitor service offer for the West Block. The former McGowan Ranch Yard, the Dawson viewpoints of the badlands, and Zahursky Point Trail, overlooking Rock Creek and joining the ranch yard to the viewpoints, will be the focal points (Figure 4). These will serve day-use and overnight visitors who want to experience the East Block and its unique badlands. The Poverty Ridge Station was established in 2002 and provides a year-round Parks Canada presence for the East Block. It is located just outside the East Block boundary.

This area is accessible by fair weather roads from Wood Mountain on Highway 18, and Killdeer on Highway 2. Currently, visitors are urged to check with the Visitor Centre in Val Marie or the Rodeo & Ranch Museum (open summer only) in the Wood Mountain Regional Park to obtain information on the access routes and road conditions.

Locations slated for visitor facilities in this area have been previously disturbed from use as a ranch yard and as vehicle trails. Nonetheless, there are cultural and ecological features and species at risk that need to be considered in the environmental assessments planning and development of this area, including for example ferruginous and Swainson’s hawks, a historic garbage pit, house cellars, fossils, greater sage-grouse, and Aboriginal sites of some antiquity where bison were hunted and butchered.

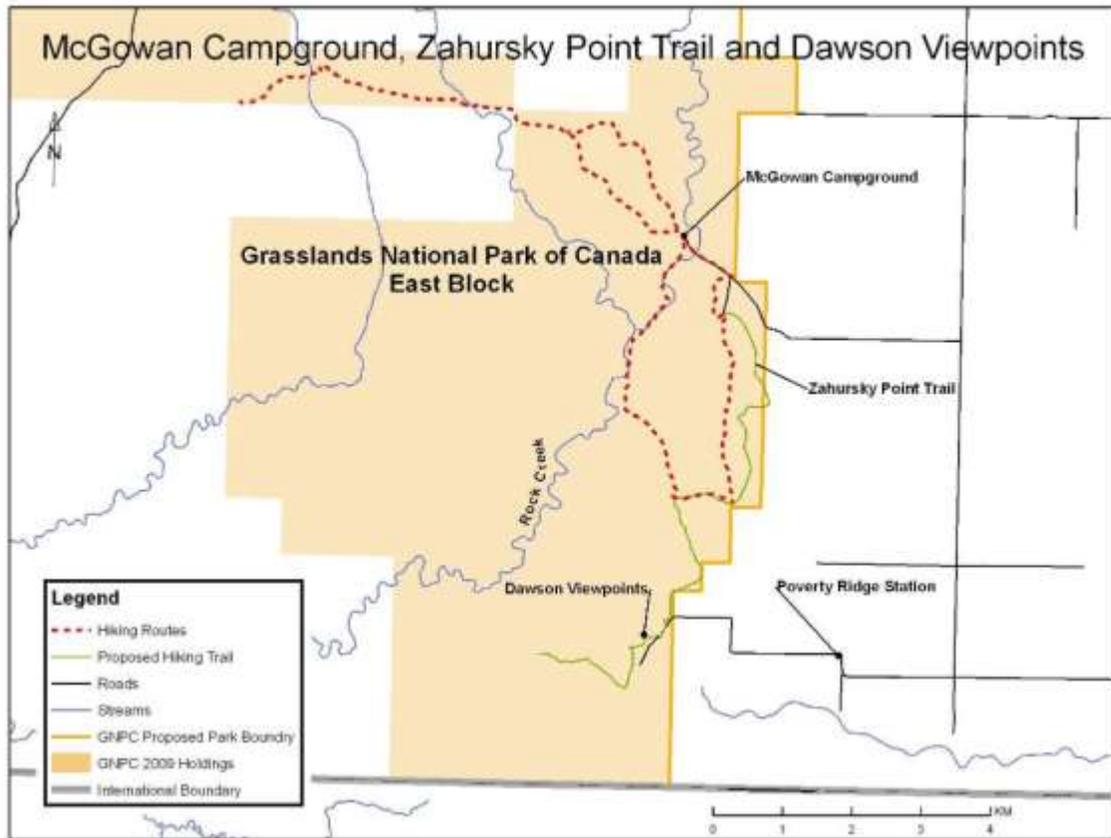


Figure 4. Area Management Approach: McGowan Ranch Yard, Zahursky Point and Dawson Viewpoints. (R. Jeffries)

McGowan Ranch Yard

The former McGowan house and garage have been used for park management purposes, including accommodations for researchers working in the East Block. Adjacent to the house is a campground under development. Parking, tent shelters, potable water and an outhouse have been added. A corral has been added for equestrian users. A rustic ranch-style gate and information kiosk provide a clearly identifiable welcome and park orientation at McGowan. Additional services are needed to enhance the visitor experience through basic user facilities, increased public safety, reduced potential for accidental fires, and reduced environmental impacts to the site from increased visitor use. The campground at the McGowan Ranch Yard is being designed to provide front country camping and day use opportunities. The master site plan for facilitating visitor experiences, identified in Objective 4 of *Providing the Grasslands Experience*, will include both an initial construction phase and an expansion phase to consider future increases in visitor numbers and broader services.

The use of the house for park management purposes will continue after the development of the campground, day-use site, and equestrian staging area. However, the Poverty Ridge Station site may be expanded for staff and research accommodations in the future, releasing the McGowan House for reception and heritage presentation, including the themes of Aboriginal use of the land, ranching history and palaeontology.

Parks Canada has used the yard site for the annual Grasslands National Park-sponsored East Block Party. The visitor services introduced here will support the continuation of this annual event.

Zahursky Point Trail

Starting at the McGowan Ranch Yard is the Zahursky Point Trail that has three alternate routes leading to a high point of land on the Lonesome Butte Flats. Known as Zahursky Point, it is named after the family that built its homestead there in 1912. Hikers can choose to hike in the valley along Rock Creek, traverse the badlands and ridges, or take a much easier section of prairie trail along the butte. It is a popular trail for hiking and horseback riding, with increased opportunity for cycling.



McGowan Ranch Yard - East Block Party (Parks Canada)

There is an opportunity to use an abandoned trail on the prairie upland to link the Zahursky Point Trail with the proposed Dawson Viewpoints and the McGowan Ranch Yard. This would provide a route for hikers, cyclists and horseback riders, and possibly wagons for special events.

Dawson Viewpoints

The area of Dawson Viewpoints (with four viewpoints) is located in the west end of the former Dawson lands of the East Block. It provides one of the best and most accessible vistas of the badlands. With its view of the eroded buttes, its abundant fossil resources and significant exposure of the Cretaceous-Tertiary boundary, Dawson Viewpoints is an ideal location to tell the park's geological and palaeontological story. Also here, thousands of pieces of fire-cracked rock, stone flakes and tools tell the story of First Nations people who returned to the area year after year to hunt bison on the uplands and then process the meat in camps that lined the rim edge.

Objective and Actions

- Facilities, services and learning experiences are provided in the area of the McGowan Ranch Yard, Zahursky Point and Dawson Viewpoints that welcome and provide the opportunity for targeted audiences to have safe, memorable visitor experiences.

In the long-term (> five years), achievement of this objective will be seen when this area serves as a destination for hiking, picnicking, camping and special events and as a staging area for backcountry hikers and campers, equestrian users and others who seek exploration and solitude further into the East Block.

McGowan Ranch Yard, Zahursky Point and Dawson Viewpoints Area: Objectives, Targets and Actions for the five-year period of the plan.	
<p>Objective: <i>Facilities, services and learning experiences are provided in the area of the McGowan Ranch Yard, Zahursky Point and Dawson Viewpoints that welcome and provide the opportunity for targeted audiences to have safe, memorable visitor experiences.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 85 % of visitors to this area will be satisfied with its facilities and services. ▪ Visitor use will increase by 50% at the McGowan campground and day use area by 2014. ▪ Visitor use will increase by 50% at Dawson viewpoints by 2014. ▪ Develop a baseline estimate as to targeted audiences learning something about the park (e.g., ecology, active management, cultural heritage, species at risk) from their use of the interpretive facilities and services for the area. 	
Activities	Actions
McGowan Ranch Yard	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Complete campground (with limited equestrian camping) and day use areas by 2011. 1.2. Look for opportunities to improve road access over the next five years. 1.3. Establish a baseline of current visitor use and enjoyment using the Visitor Information Program survey.
Dawson Viewpoints	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.4. Look for opportunities to improve road access to the park boundary at Dawson over the next five years (including a feasibility assessment to determine the preferred route and the acceptable degree of road development). 1.5. Develop interpretive viewing areas for up to four viewpoints and a day use area. 1.6. Rezone (from Wilderness to Outdoor Recreation) a small portion of previously disturbed lands to enable motorized access (fair weather) with parking amenities to two viewing points. 1.7. To assist the next management plan review, assess the feasibility and suitability of expanded motorized vehicle access and increased infrastructure development to enhance visitor experience. 1.8. The place names used in this area and Zahursky Point will be reviewed as part of the Cultural Resource Values Statement (Action 1.1. in <i>History Abounds</i>) for their historical appropriateness.

Zahursky Point	<p>1.9. Develop a scenic viewpoint with motorized vehicle access that includes rezoning (from Wilderness to Outdoor Recreation) a portion of previously disturbed land from the former kiosk site to the McGowan viewpoint.</p> <p>1.10. Develop interpretive opportunities along a marked Zahursky Point trail by 2013.</p> <p>1.11. To assist the next management plan review, assess the feasibility and suitability of motorized vehicle access along the Zahursky Point trail to enhance visitor experience opportunities.</p>
Explore Vehicle Access into East Block	<p>1.12. Assess primitive roads, bladed trails and creek crossings to determine the feasibility of guided and/or non-guided vehicle routes through the East Block for consideration in the next management plan review, as part of the site master planning described in Objective 4 of <i>Providing the Grasslands Experience</i>,</p>
Poverty Ridge Station	<p>1.13. Assess the feasibility of the Poverty Ridge station as an operational base for the East Block that can support the three mandate elements, and re-use the former McGowan house as an interpretive facility.</p>



Horse tour (Parks Canada)

6.3. Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area

The Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area is a part of the adaptive management strategy to restore ecological integrity in the park. It offers unparalleled research and learning opportunities about conservation-oriented grazing. Findings will be conveyed through public education outreach for a range of audiences, from students to land managers to stock growers. On-site tours can be arranged for those who have a vested interest in rangeland management.

This area management approach is integral to the *Grasslands Restored – The Prairie Persists* key strategy. The project has a time frame of up to ten years.

The program associated with the Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area stems from the 2002 park management plan goal to manage grazing in the park that will conserve native biodiversity and ecological integrity of the regional ecosystem. In 2005, Grasslands National Park initiated a large scale, long term, multi-partnered Biodiversity and Grazing Experiment in the East Block (Figure 5). The research compliments other efforts at adaptive management of grazing, such as bison reintroduction and permitted grazing.

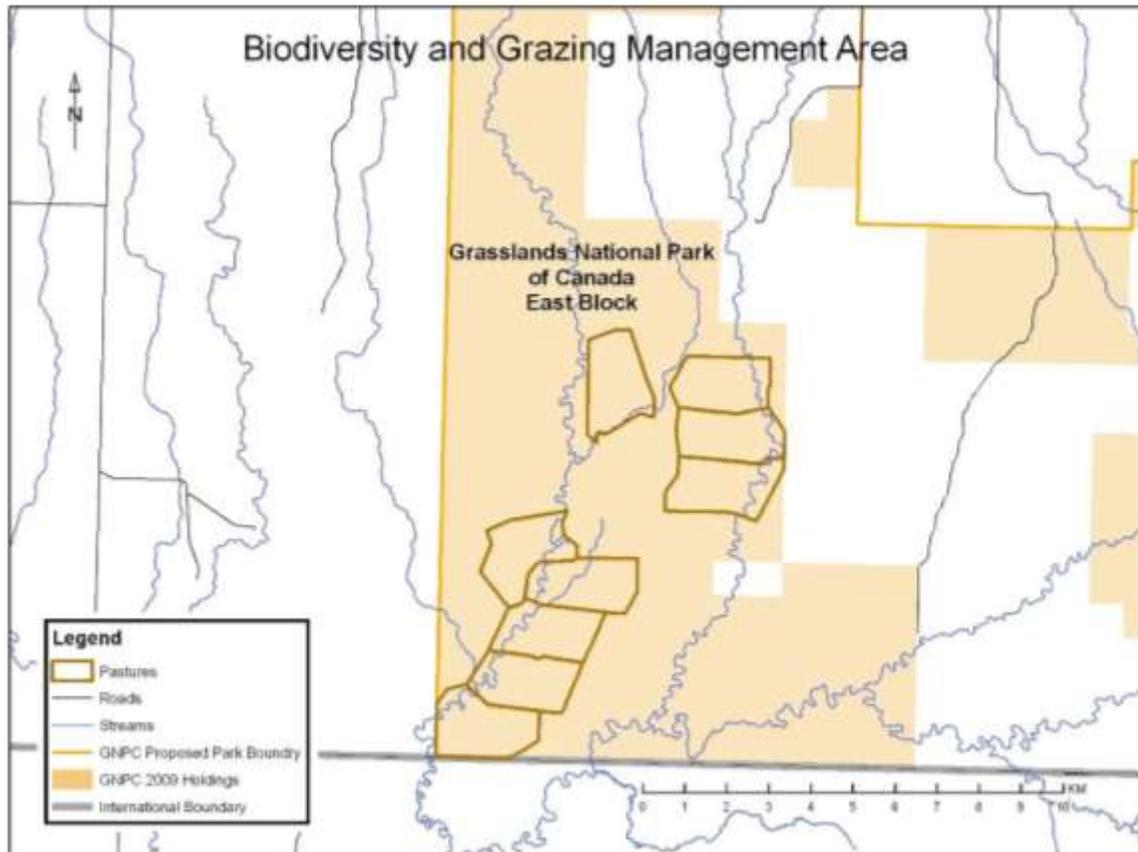


Figure 5. Area Management Approach: Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area, southwest corner of the East Block. Each pasture represents an area under study for biodiversity and grazing management. (R. Jeffries)

The effects of grazing on wildlife and habitats of the mixed-grass prairie, as well as effects on archaeological resources are being studied in the Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area. It will combine scientific research, monitoring and ecosystem protection with interpretation, public outreach and educational activities. As such, the Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area contributes to the 'story of grass and the prairie'. Targeted audiences include secondary and post-secondary students, the international prairie conservation community, stakeholders, nearby communities and park visitors. The Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area is remote and access is limited to bladed trails for park operation. The following objectives and actions stem from the *Biodiversity and Grazing Management Experiment Project Charter*.

Objectives and Actions

There are three objectives to the Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area management approach:

- Parks Canada gains significant additional knowledge to adaptively manage grazing and improve aspects of ecological integrity by 2014;
- Partners, stakeholders and visitors gain an appreciation of the importance of grazing to ecological integrity of native prairie; and
- Conservation of native prairie biodiversity and species at risk are advanced through relationships with and among partners and stakeholders in the Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area.

In the long-term (> five years), achievement of these objectives will be seen when the biodiversity and grazing experiment is finished and results are implemented on a park-wide scale to manage native species, including species at risk and their habitat. Research infrastructure, if no longer needed for park management purposes, will be decommissioned and restoration actions will be completed by no later than 2017.

Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area: Objectives, Targets and Actions for the five-year period of the plan.	
<p>Objective 1: <i>Parks Canada gains significant additional knowledge to adaptively manage grazing and improve aspects of ecological integrity by 2014.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The effects of a range of grazing intensities on mixed-grass prairie are better understood. ▪ Based on this new knowledge, revised grazing prescriptions are implemented at a park-wide scale to enhance ecological integrity including species at risk habitat beginning in 2012. 	
Activities	Actions
Grazing experiment operations	1.1. Implement the <i>Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area activities</i> annually. 1.2. Conduct a cost-benefit review in 2012. 1.3. Develop decommissioning strategy by 2013.

<p>Objective 2: <i>Partners, stakeholders and visitors gain an appreciation of the importance of grazing to ecological integrity of native prairie.</i></p> <p>Target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational and visitor opportunities are provided that promotes awareness of grazing as an important ecological process within a native prairie ecosystem and as a tool for active management in the park. 	
Activities	Actions
Grazing experiment communications	2.1. Implement the Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area communication plan tailored to various audiences (i.e., provide visitors, schools, stakeholders and the international science community with a range of on-site and off-site learning experiences about ecological effects of grazing).
<p>Objective 3: <i>Conservation of native prairie biodiversity and species at risk are advanced through relationships with and among partners and stakeholders in the Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Park grazing management objectives are developed & supported through enhanced partnering. ▪ Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area partners have the opportunity to influence and contribute the knowledge necessary to improve ecological integrity and species at risk management. 	
Activities	Actions
Partnering	<p>3.1. Coordinate forums and field tours on an annual basis with researchers and interested stakeholders.</p> <p>3.2. Ensure research information (including management recommendations) is obtained from partners and consolidated on an annual basis.</p> <p>3.3. Seek new and enhance existing partnering in research and management.</p>

7. PARTNERING AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Grasslands National Park depends on the cooperation and support of many neighbours, partners, stakeholders, the private and non-profit sector, and others to achieve the park vision. Grasslands National Park will continue to work on building and maintaining rewarding relationships with these groups and individuals, and to be a good neighbor.

Grasslands National Park has strong partnering in protecting heritage resources (for example, work with rural municipalities in weed management and fire suppression, the Prairie Conservation Action Plan), ecological studies and adaptive management (for example, universities of Saskatchewan and Manitoba) and public education (for example, Chinook School Division – Prairie Learning Centre, Prairie Wind and Silver Sage- Friends of Grasslands, Inc. and Wood Mountain Historical Society). It will move forward in building relationships and partnering related to marketing that will help facilitate visitor experiences.

Building strong, effective and mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal peoples is an ongoing goal for Parks Canada and for Grasslands National Park. Grasslands National Park will increase its efforts to strengthen Aboriginal involvement in areas of mutual benefit.

Objectives and Actions

There are three objectives to Partnering and Public Engagement:

- A meaningful partnership between Grasslands National Park and Aboriginal communities is developed, strengthened and nurtured. In addition to engaging the nearby communities of Wood Mountain and Nekaneet First Nations and Métis people, there may be First Nations communities in Saskatchewan who once had a connection to the park lands, but were relocated in the past century and a half away from the international border along which Grasslands National Park is situated;
- Partners, stakeholders and interested public are aware of and involved in the management of Grasslands National Park; and
- The park maintains its “good neighbour” relations.



Park Advisory Committee Meeting, Glentworth (M. Peniuk)

Partnering and Public Engagement: Objectives, Targets and Actions for the five-year period of the plan.	
Objective 1: <i>A meaningful partnership between Grasslands National Park and Aboriginal communities is developed, strengthened and nurtured.</i>	
Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities and roles for interested Aboriginal communities to participate in park management and planning, and to reconnect with traditional cultural landscapes, are increased and strengthened. ▪ Presentation of grasslands Aboriginal culture and history, in ways that respect traditional knowledge and values, is enhanced through improved relationships with Aboriginal communities.
Actions	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Research First Peoples' historic use of the proposed park lands by working with Aboriginal communities in order to understand their connections to the park lands. 1.2. Initiate dialogue with Aboriginal communities and educational and heritage organizations (e.g., the First Nations University of Canada), toward establishing Aboriginal advisory relationships with the park by 2013. 1.3. Increase opportunities for the hiring and training of staff from Aboriginal communities in support of park activities. 1.4. Support cultural learning opportunities in the park for Aboriginal youth that include a chance to learn from Elders. 1.5. Create cultural awareness opportunities for park staff through on-site workshops with Aboriginal Elders and other resource persons. 	
Objective 2: <i>Partners, stakeholders and interested public are aware of and involved in the management of Grasslands National Park.</i>	
Target:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey of the Park Advisory Committee and key partners and stakeholders indicate satisfied level of engagement.
Actions	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. Continue the Park Advisory Committee and its role in giving guidance and advice on the management plan implementation and review. Continue to ensure the composition of the Park Advisory Committee is representative of Parks Canada mandate elements. 2.2. Communicate research in the park (e.g., ecological, species at risk, cultural, palaeontological, visitor) to neighbours and local communities on a regular basis. 2.3. Make the park management plan, annual implementation updates, and State of the Park Report results available to partners, stakeholders and interested public (via website and other means). 	

<p>2.4. Facilitate the efforts of groups, volunteers and individuals whose actions support park objectives, by assisting them with research, program design and guided tours.</p> <p>2.5. Support the Prairie Wind and Silver Sage – Friends of Grasslands, Inc., Chinook School Division - Prairie Learning Centre and Prairie Conservation Action Plan.</p>	
<p>Objective 3: <i>The park maintains its “good neighbour” relations.</i></p>	
<p>Target:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Benchmark a “good neighbor” index in 2010 and again in early 2014 as the park prepares for its next management plan review.
<p>Actions</p>	
<p>2.1. Provide training on prairie fire suppression techniques and technology, in cooperation with local authorities and partners.</p> <p>2.2. Maintain park boundary signs to inform visitors about neighbouring private lands and protocols when using public access through these properties.</p> <p>2.3. Cooperate with neighbours, rural municipalities and the RCMP in areas of law enforcement, public safety (including 911 responses and search and rescue) and fire protection.</p> <p>2.4. Continue to host the annual East Block Party.</p>	

8. ZONING AND OTHER PARK LAND CLASSIFICATIONS

8.1. Zoning System

Parks Canada’s zoning system classifies areas in national parks according to their need for protection. The suitability of these areas for visitor activities is a consideration in zoning decisions. The zoning system has five categories: special preservation, wilderness, natural environment, outdoor recreation and park services. Figures 6 and 7 show the zones for Grasslands National Park.

Zone I – Special Preservation (<1% of the park)

Zone I lands deserve special preservation because they contain or support unique, threatened, or endangered natural or cultural features, or are among the best examples of features that represent a natural region. Preservation is the key consideration. Motorized access is not permitted. Visitor access is strictly controlled.

The large rattlesnake hibernaculum in the West Block is designated as Zone I - Special Preservation. This sensitive over-wintering habitat is subject to accelerated erosion and damage from excessive human traffic. The seasonal concentration of rattlesnakes is also subject to disturbance. Visitor access may be prohibited on a seasonal basis. Because of the sensitivity of this Zone I area, it is not shown on the maps.

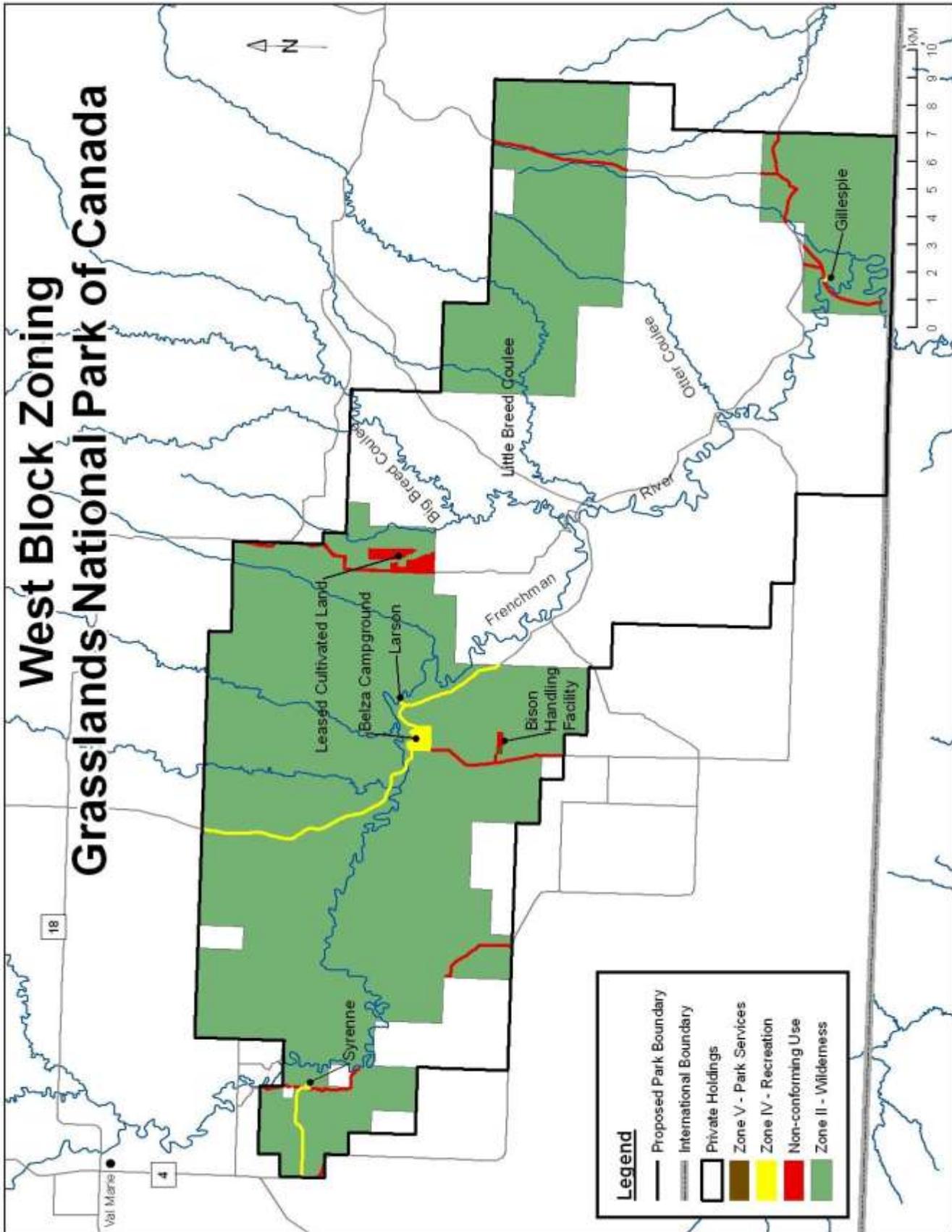


Figure 6. West Block Zoning (R. Jeffries)

East Block Zoning Grasslands National Park of Canada

Legend

- Proposed Park Boundary
- International Boundary
- Private Holdings
- Zone IV - Recreation
- Non-conforming Use
- Zone II - Wilderness

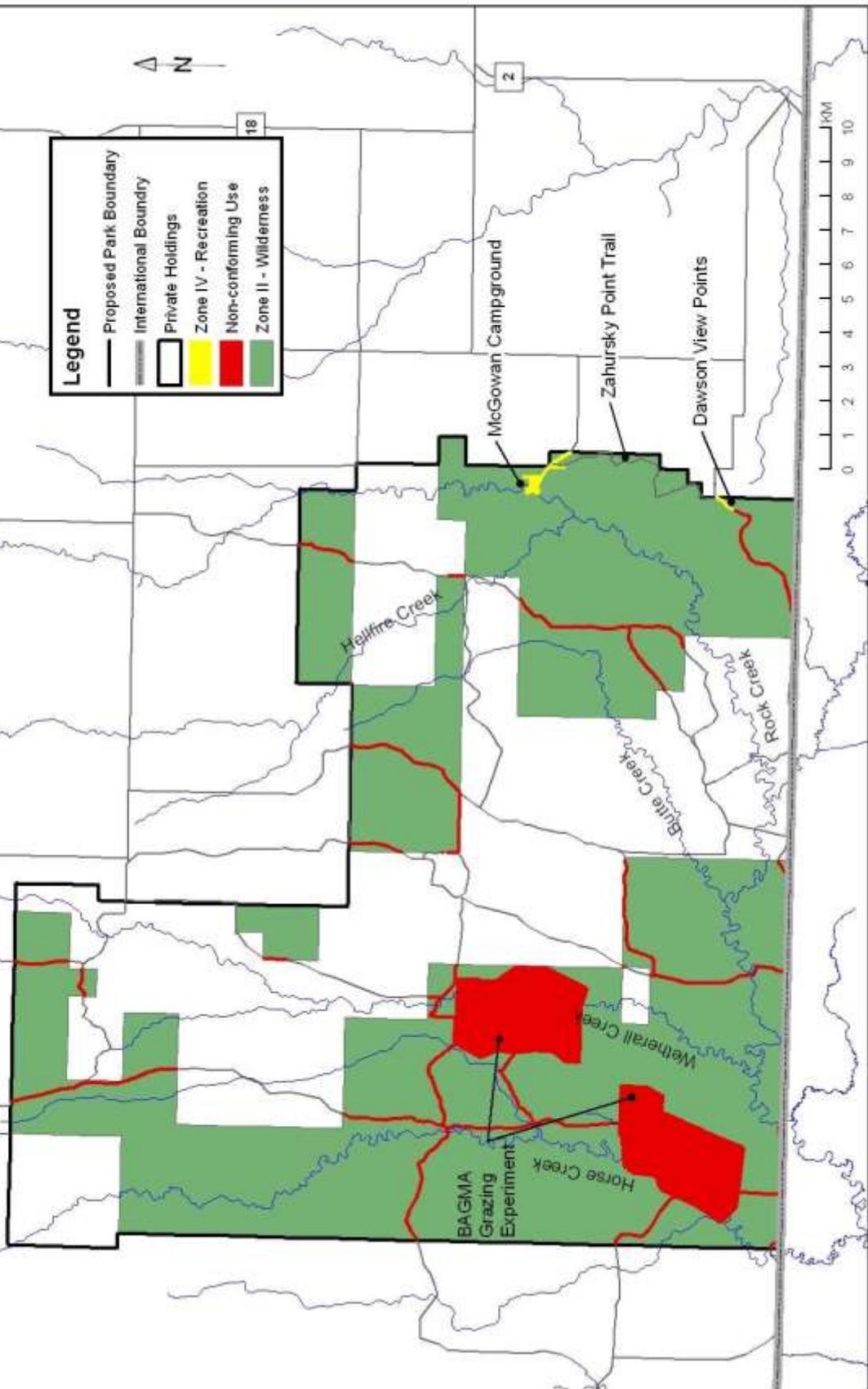


Figure 7. East Block Zoning (R. Jeffries)

Zone II – Wilderness (>98% of the park)

Zone II contains extensive areas that are good representations of a natural region and conserved in a wilderness state. Parks Canada's *Guiding Principles and Operating Policies* (Parks Canada 1994) states that the majority of a national park is to be designated Zone II. The perpetuation of ecosystems with minimal human interference is the key consideration. Zone II areas offer opportunities for visitors to experience firsthand the park's ecosystems. Such areas require few, if any, rudimentary services and facilities. Motorized access is not permitted. The maintenance of visual integrity of the landscape, through uninterrupted vistas, is also a major consideration.

In keeping with Parks Canada's policy, most of Grasslands National Park is designated as Zone II. All areas of the park not otherwise designated under another zoning, or a non-conforming use designation, are designated as Zone II.

Zone III – Natural Environment (<1% of the park)

In Zone III areas, visitors experience the park's natural and cultural heritage through outdoor recreational activities that require minimal services and facilities of a rustic nature. Zone III applies to areas where visitor use requires facilities that exceed the acceptable standards for Zone II.

Remote, designated campgrounds in the park, if established, will be designated as Zone III because of the requirement for a basic level of facilities. Motorized access to these sites will not be permitted.

Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation (<1% of the park)

Zone IV accommodates a broad range of opportunities for understanding, appreciating, and enjoying the park's heritage. Essential services and facilities are provided in ways that have the least possible impact on the ecological integrity of the park. Direct access by motorized vehicle is permitted.

Areas in the park designated as Zone IV include:

- the Ecotour Road and road to McGowan Ranch Yard, which are the two main public access roads. McGowan Road is designated Zone IV, while the Ecotour Road is designated Zone IV in principle because it is municipally owned;
- the access route from Poverty Ridge to two of the viewing nodes at Dawson Viewpoints;
- the access route from the McGowan road to McGowan viewpoint;
- the following sites, which are prime candidate sites to be considered for the establishment of basic campgrounds, basic horseback rider campgrounds and/or day-use sites: Belza, McGowan, Larson, Syrenne and Gillespie;
- Dawson Viewpoints and other scenic lookouts (when established); and
- trailhead parking lots (when established).

Access to some Zone IV areas may need to be temporarily by roads and trails designated as non-conforming use, until proper Zone IV routes can be established and incorporated in a management plan review.

Zone V – Park Services (<1% of the park)

Zone V applies to communities in national parks with a concentration of visitor services, support facilities, and commercial enterprises. Major park operational and administrative functions are also located centrally to minimize impact on ecological integrity. A bison handling facility of sheds, squeezes, fencing and loading area is situated on 6.5 hectares in the West Block. The facility was established in 2005 to support the bison reintroduction program in the park.

A master site planning process (see Objective 4 of *Providing the Grasslands Experience*) will be initiated through this planning cycle that may identify proposed changes in zoning for the next management plan review that will be subject to public consultation and environmental assessment.

8.2. Sensitive Sites Designation

Parks Canada's policy provides for the designation of Culturally and Environmentally Sensitive Sites to complement the zoning system. This designation applies to small areas that contain significant and sensitive resources that require special protection or management. A designation can be applied within any of the five zones. Specific guidelines for each sensitive area will define visitor use and resource management strategies. Because of the sensitivity of these areas and, in some cases, their locations may change they are not shown on the maps.

Environmentally Sensitive Sites

Three types of resources in the park are designated as Environmentally Sensitive Sites.

Greater sage-grouse leks and raptor nesting sites are designated as Environmentally Sensitive Sites because these sites are susceptible to human disturbance and their locations may change from year to year. The specific locations of these sites may, as a result, be decided on a seasonal basis. Environmentally sensitive sites may be identified for other species at risk, such as the black-footed ferret. Visitor access may be seasonally prohibited and an intensive monitoring program will be implemented.

To increase their level of protection, palaeontological sites can be designated Environmentally Sensitive Sites and managed in accordance with the Park's Palaeontological Protection and Presentation Plan.

Culturally Sensitive Sites

Culturally Sensitive Sites include features that may be considered sacred by Aboriginal people, such as medicine wheels and burials, and cultural resources that require special actions for their protection.

8.3. Non-Conforming Uses

Non-conforming uses are those uses that are permitted but are not in keeping with national park standards and values. They may be designated where unique circumstances require the recognition and permitting of exceptional activities. Non-conforming uses are usually short term and guided by prescriptions that set out the time frame and special circumstances that apply to this designation. The key objective is to

ensure that these uses do not become permanent, by recognizing them as temporary and conditional. The following are identified as non-conforming uses.

Roads and Trails

The present patchwork of park and private lands will require vehicle access throughout large areas of the park for local residents, park managers, and visitors for the foreseeable future. As a result, trails and roads that are presently needed and used for local or visitor access or for park management are designated as a non-conforming use (excluding the Two Trees Trail, Eco-tour, McGowan roads and Poverty Ridge-Dawson Viewpoints route, which are Zone IV - Outdoor Recreation). This designation will be removed when park holdings are consolidated to the point that there is no further need for local access in that particular area, and/or when sufficient alternate road routes are provided.

A network of bladed trails is used by park staff, researchers and neighbouring landowners on the west side of the East Block as part of the Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area. Eight creek crossings associated with this network of trails have been identified for remediation to improve ecological integrity, and provide access for researchers and for park management purposes. These trails were in existence prior to the acquisition of the land by Parks Canada. Prior to the biodiversity and grazing management program, these trails received infrequent use by Grasslands National Park staff and neighbours. With this program, the use of these trails by research staff on ATVs has increased dramatically throughout the growing season. Trails and creek crossing will be maintained or improved to minimize their deterioration and impact the environment.

Biodiversity and Grazing Management, and Bison Holding Areas

The Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area, discussed in Section 6.3, is situated in the southwest corner of the East Block. The two large areas (approximately 1700 hectares) identified as non-conforming use are those fenced pastures with water pipelines and troughs. A decommissioning strategy will be developed by 2013 for the Biodiversity and Grazing Management Area.

A bison holding area of about 10 hectares is situated next to the bison handling facility. A permanent holding area will be needed as part of the handling facility, but its location and size has yet to be finalized.

Licenses of Occupation

As land is acquired for the park, a lease-back can be extended to the land seller by Parks Canada to minimize disruption to ranchers during the transition period. Licenses are also granted to operate cultivated land, to minimize weed proliferation until the lands can be rehabilitated. A total of 522 hectares of land are cultivated under land leases. These areas will actively be restored to native mixed-grass prairie as seed becomes available and resources permit. In the meantime, farming is an effective short-term means of controlling exotic plant species until the sites can be revegetated with native species. By 2014, farming leases will be phased out as cultivated lands are revegetated. In the meantime land leases are identified as non-conforming uses. A license is negotiated for periods of up to five years.

8.4. Domestic Grazing

From 1984 to 2002, domestic grazing was terminated on rangelands that were acquired by Parks Canada. However, in the 2002 Grasslands National Park management plan, the decision was reached to resume domestic grazing on some park lands as a way to control invasive plant species. The 2002 management plan outlined a role for grazing in Grasslands National Park. It identified bison as the preferred native species for grazing in the park. However, given that land assembly is incomplete and park lands are discontinuous, the management plan calls for the use of domestic livestock to achieve the grazing benefits where it would be impractical to use bison. An additional role for grazing identified in the 2002 management plan is its possible use in the control of plant species that are not native to the park.

A provision, article 4 (1.1), was added to the National Parks of Canada Domestic Animal Regulations to provide the Superintendent of Grasslands National Park with the authority to issue grazing permits for domestic animals for the purpose of achieving ecological integrity goals for the park.

8.5. Declared Wilderness

Lands within national parks may be designated as declared wilderness, under the *Canada National Parks Act*. Designating lands in Grasslands National Park during the ongoing period of land acquisition is impractical. The appropriateness of designation for Grasslands National Park will be evaluated again at the next management plan review.

9. PARK ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

Grasslands National Park boundaries continue to expand with new land acquisitions within the proposed boundary area of the 1988 park establishment agreement. Consequently, the planning, managing and developing of Grasslands National Park for heritage protection, public education, facilitating visitor experiences, and park operations and access, can evolve and change as new opportunities and challenges come with newly acquired lands.

Administration of Patchwork Holdings and the Two Park Blocks

The land acquisition process of willing seller-willing buyer has resulted in a patchwork of private lands, park lands and community pastures in the proposed park boundaries. This may create access problems for park administration, visitors, hunters and landowners, as well as non-conforming uses.

Issues of public access through private land between park parcels, maintenance of fences and gates, and respect for property are a priority in park administration and operation. With the ongoing land acquisition process, the patchwork landscape will exist for the foreseeable future.

On a broader scale, the patchwork of land holdings creates both opportunities and challenges in compatible land management practices among a number of landowners. There are a number of cooperative and collaborative programs underway that complement the ecological integrity objectives for Grasslands National Park including, for example the Prairie Conservation Action Plan, Weed Management Area initiative and others described in the *Grasslands Conservation Partnering* key strategy.

In addition to these challenges of managing a patchwork of lands, the East Block is managed from the park administrative offices in Val Marie, although a limited operations base has been located at Poverty Ridge. The distance between the East and West blocks has meant there have been limited opportunities to expand needed resource management and protection activities, and visitor services in the East Block. Options for establishing a permanent, seasonal operational base in the East Block that can adequately support and deliver Parks Canada’s integrated mandate for the East Block is a long-term objective for Grasslands National Park.

Objective and Actions

- New park lands are acquired and effectively integrated in to Grasslands National Park.

In the long-term (> five years), achievement of this objective will be seen when: the acquisition and consolidation of park lands is completed as per the terms of the park establishment agreement; there is a master site plan implemented for facilitating visitor experiences; a master plan for roads and routes; and an operational base is completed for the East Block.

Park Administration and Operation: Objectives, Targets and Actions for the five-year period of the plan.	
Objective: <i>New park lands are acquired and effectively integrated in to Grasslands National Park.</i>	
Target:	▪ None
Activities	Actions
Land acquisition	1.1. Continue to acquire park lands on a willing seller – willing buyer basis. 1.2. Schedule newly acquired lands under the <i>Canada National Parks Act</i> as they are acquired, and manage accordingly.
Inventory and analysis of new lands	1.3. Conduct bio-physical, species at risk, cultural resource, palaeontological, land remediation inventories and historical ranching / homesteading profiles for new park lands within five years of their acquisition where funding is available. 1.4. Inventory trails on new lands and identify visitor use opportunities in relation to adjacent land owner access, park operations (including fire control). 1.5. Evaluate visitor experience opportunities on new acquired lands in preparation for future management plan reviews. 1.6. Test for contaminated sites on newly acquired lands and remediate contamination problem as necessary.
Interim use of new lands	1.7. Develop and implement interim access and use plans for newly acquired lands.

9.1 Environmental Stewardship

Environmental stewardship reduces the impact of our daily activities on the environment. The idea of stewardship includes a range of issues from water quality and energy consumption, to chemical use and contaminated sites. It also includes a wide variety of activities from recycling and reducing consumption to restoring disturbed landscapes. While Grasslands National Park is responsible for providing leadership in environmental stewardship, effective action requires support from its stakeholders, partners and visitors.

This section of the plan identifies the measures to be taken at Grasslands National Park to meet or exceed environmental laws and regulations, and follow best environmental practices available.

A Horse Program in the Park

Grasslands National Park, in keeping with the history and culture of horse use in southwestern Saskatchewan, intends to use horses for operational purposes, when and where appropriate. The lack of roads and the scarring of the terrain by motorized vehicles or equipment have meant the prohibition or minimal use of such mechanical means of operation. Some tasks can be accomplished on foot and others done by horse. Use of horses by staff can not only contribute to reduced vehicle use, but also enhance the authenticity and setting of the park for visitors.

A horse program can be integrated into various park functions. Grasslands National Park will endeavour through the equestrian expertise that exists with staff to instruct other staff in the use of horses.

Objectives and Actions

There are two objectives to Environmental Stewardship:

- Sound environmental practices are demonstrated in Grasslands National Park's activities, services and products; and
- Park visitors share responsibility for environmental stewardship.

In the long-term (> five years), achievement of these objectives will be seen when environmental stewardship is integral to how the park is operated and visited.

Environmental Stewardship: Objectives, Targets and Actions for the five-year period of the plan.	
Objective 1: <i>Sound environmental practices are demonstrated in Grasslands National Park's activities, services and products.</i>	
Target:	▪ None
Activities	Actions
Riparian areas	1.1. Monitor potential for impact of bison, domestic livestock and vehicle crossings on creeks and take remedial action as necessary.

Pest management	1.2. Use integrated pest management practices to reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides used in the eradication of invasive species.
Transportation	1.3. Implement a horse use program and infrastructure for the park's operation that includes activities in resource conservation, visitor services and assets management. 1.4. Implement the park's prevention strategy for the management of off-road vehicles.
Fuel savings and alternatives	1.5. Conduct an energy audit and adapt operations as required. 1.6. Incorporate energy efficient, cost-effective technologies when building and upgrading facilities and equipment.
Objective 2: <i>Park visitors share responsibility for environmental stewardship.</i>	
Target:	▪ None
Activities	Actions
Facilities and services	2.1. Implement recycling programs and waste collection at campgrounds and day-use areas. 2.2. Develop manure waste sites at the campgrounds and equestrian staging areas. 2.3. Ensure potable water meets or exceeds provincial and national public health standards.
Communications	2.4. The park will lead by example. Park visitors are informed of environmental stewardship principles and initiatives in the park (e.g., website information on stewardship programs done in the park).

10. TRACKING SUCCESS: MONITORING AND REPORTING ON THE STATE OF THE PARK

Every five years, Parks Canada completes an assessment of each national park, called a State of the Park Report. The first State of the Park Report for Grasslands National Park was completed in 2007 (Grasslands National Parks of Canada 2008). The report is integral to Parks Canada's management process as it provides a measured understanding of the park's condition and trends in terms of its ecological integrity and heritage resources protection, public outreach education, facilitation of visitor experiences and people's connection to place. It also documents the implementation and effectiveness of the park's management plan and identifies issues and challenges to be considered in the management plan review done every five years. The State of the Park Report also contributes to the State of the Protected Heritage Areas Report, which reports on the state of all national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas administered by Parks Canada, and is presented to Parliament and to all Canadians every two years.

The information in the State of the Park Report is the best available description of the current state and trends of various aspects and activities of the park. The information comes primarily from monitoring and research undertaken by Parks Canada, other government agencies, partner organizations and universities. While the park has a very active monitoring program in the natural, cultural and social sciences, this databank is relatively limited due to the short period in which monitoring has been undertaken. As a result, many measures may have insufficient data to determine the condition or trends. An ecological monitoring framework was completed for the park in 2008 and will be implemented to facilitate improved reporting capability on the next State of the Park Report slated for 2012. Additional monitoring and evaluation, particularly regarding visitors and public engagement, have been identified in this management plan.



Remote camping in Grasslands National Park (S. Thomson)

11. MANAGEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

This management plan provides long-term strategic direction and more immediate measures for Parks Canada managers of Grasslands National Park. It is a framework for more detailed planning and decision-making, and a strategic reference for capital expenditure forecasts and future management and operations.

Implementation of the management plan is the responsibility of the Saskatchewan South Field Unit Superintendent. Implementation will be done through the Saskatchewan South Field Unit business plan. The business plan identifies which actions of the management plan will be realized within a five-year period. Any changes to the five-year forecast are captured by the annual review and updating of the business plan. Implementation of the strategies and actions may be reconsidered in response to new circumstances or information, or changing national priorities and decisions.

Progress on management plan implementation will be communicated through annual reporting and the Grasslands National Park State of the Park Report. The management plan will also be subject to periodic review (at least every five years) and can be amended to reflect changing circumstances. The public will be consulted about proposed major changes.



Reintroduced bison in Grasslands National Park (A. Ancitil)

12. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

In accordance with *The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals, 2004*, a strategic environmental assessment was conducted on the “Grasslands National Park of Canada Management Plan”. The strategic environmental assessment process was integrated with the management planning process so that potential positive and negative effects were identified early in the process and appropriate mitigations and enhancements could be incorporated within the plan. Some of the initiatives described in the plan are conceptual in nature and will require further assessment under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* when the specific project proposals have been developed. The required mitigation, surveillance and follow-up will be developed when the proposals are subject to project specific environmental assessments. Each of the actions in the plan was evaluated to determine if they might have adverse environmental effects. Many actions are not expected to cause adverse environmental effects. Other actions are expected to have positive environmental effects as a result of greater knowledge of ecosystems, ecosystem restoration and monitoring and greater connections between Canadians and the park to encourage support for park management.

The following sections summarize the actions that may cause adverse cumulative environmental effects on cultural resources, palaeontological resources, aquatic ecosystems, vegetation and soil and wildlife. For each component there is a summary of the actions identified in the plan that could affect the component, the mitigation identified in the plan to reduce or eliminate adverse effects and any additional actions that need to be taken for mitigation. No cumulative impacts to air quality are expected and therefore mitigation will be addressed in project specific environmental assessment and not in this document. Two strategic plans have the potential to impact multiple components, a comprehensive park-wide trail system plan and master site plan for facilitating visitor experiences. To ensure that cumulative effects are considered and planned for, a strategic environmental assessment will be integrated with each of these plans focused on the outcomes identified in the following sections.

Cultural Resources and Palaeontological Resources

Cumulative effects could occur on cultural resources and palaeontological resources as a result of increased visitation, new facilities and restoration activities. The Cultural Resource Management Strategy and a Grasslands National Park Palaeontological Protection and Presentation Plan should identify sensitive sites that need to be avoided by visitors and facilities. This information should then be incorporated into the strategic environmental assessments. Due to the large number of cultural resources in the park, project level environmental assessments on facilities should be started in the design phase to ensure *site specific* information on cultural resources can be gathered and considered in the locations and design of facilities.

Aquatic Systems

Cumulative effects to aquatic systems are primarily possible through crossings (vehicles, wildlife and livestock). Although bison crossing rivers is a natural disturbance, the frequency of crossings may not be natural because the bison and cattle are fenced. Desired ecological outcomes should be identified as soon as possible in order that

monitoring of crossings, as identified in the plan, can then be focused on ensuring those outcomes are achieved. Furthermore, these objectives should be used to assess the implications of creek crossings in the strategic environmental assessments.

Vegetation and Soil

The plan identifies a number of activities that could cause negative cumulative effects on vegetation and soil including: activities spreading invasive species, visitor activities, increased number of facilities, fire and grazing. Regionally the area of mixed grass prairie is declining. Strategic efforts being used to mitigate cumulative effects to vegetation include: restoration of fire following the fire management plan (which was subject to a strategic environmental assessment), focused control of crested wheat grass, prioritization of crested wheat grass control, restoration of some riparian areas, restoration of grazing and restoration of cultivated fields. The plan identifies the desired ecological outcomes for each of these activities. An integrated ecological restoration and active management plan for the west side of the West Block will facilitate appropriate consideration of the interactions between these various restoration efforts in that area. To minimize new reductions in native prairie, new facilities should not be located on native prairie wherever possible. This objective should be considered as part of the strategic environmental assessments.

Wildlife

The plan identifies a number of activities that could cause negative cumulative effects on wildlife including: increased visitation, increased facilities and changes to habitat as a result of changes to vegetation discussed above. A number of the species in the park are species at risk and therefore populations are of concern regionally. Many of the changes to vegetation (restoration, grazing, fire) are positive as they will provide better habitat for some wildlife. Many cumulative effects to bison and species at risk are addressed through species-specific plans or strategies and the associated strategic environmental assessments and are not considered further here.

Planning related to increased visitation and the development of visitor facilities must include an analysis of potential cumulative effects to wildlife in order to prevent important cumulative effects to wildlife. To ensure that cumulative effects to wildlife are considered and planned for, a strategic environmental assessment will be integrated with the comprehensive park-wide trail system plan and master site plan for facilitating visitor experiences. The strategic environmental assessments will identify how to mitigate the activities and facilities associated with the trail system plan, facilities and visitor use with respect to the following ecological outcomes important to wildlife:

- core habitat areas for wildlife remain undisturbed,
- connectivity between important habitat areas is maintained,
- wildlife are not displaced by human use or activity during vulnerable life cycle stages, and
- no reduction in total available native habitat for sensitive species.

Project level environmental assessments on facilities should be started in the design phase to ensure *local* site wildlife values are considered in the locations and design. Project level environmental assessments should also identify how they meet the above

ecological outcomes and any cumulative effects ecological outcomes for wildlife identified in the strategic environmental assessment of the trail system plan.

Follow-Up and Public Involvement

The plan describes numerous monitoring programs that will be implemented over the course of the plan to provide information to decision-makers (for example action 4.7, Grasslands Restored – The Prairie Persists). The monitoring programs will also provide follow-up to the potential cumulative effects identified above. Monitoring programs are intended to identify the onset of potential adverse impacts early on, so that adaptive management measures can be identified and implemented before impacts affect desired objectives.

At several stages in 2008 and 2009, proposals for the management plan were discussed with the Park Advisory Committee, presented at community open houses, and made available for stakeholder and public review by way of the information available at the park's Visitor Centre in Val Marie, in mail-outs, on the Parks Canada Grasslands National Park website, and by other means. The management plan was completed considering results from these consultations.

Conclusion

As a result of the actions in the plan and with appropriate project specific environmental assessment mitigation, negative cumulative effects are not expected to be important.

13. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grasslands National Park Core Planning Team - Ervin Carlier, Shelly Duquette Larson, Pat Fargey, Michael Fitzsimmons, Irene Legatt, Kevin Lunn, Katherine Patterson, Cheryl Penny, Elaine Rohatensky, Colin Schmidt, Karin Smith-Fargey, Adrian Sturch

Park Advisory Committee members – Miles Anderson, Branimir Gjetvaj, Mike Klein, Catherine Macaulay, Sue McAdam, Mike Sherven, Warren Spagrud, Maureen Reed, Carol Low, Judy Fitzpatrick, David Ogle, and Dale Mosquito

Grasslands National Park and Parks Canada Western and Northern Service Centre staff

Very special thanks to Thelma Poirier for contributing her enthusiasm and skills in helping draft the park vision statement.

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15. GLOSSARY

Actions: are established in the management plan to ensure that the plan's implementation will either achieve or move toward the targets set, address identified issues and ultimately help achieve the vision. The list of actions for an objective are not comprehensive, but give an indication of where effort will be directed in the implementation of the plan for a five year period. Actions are what Parks Canada can control and undertake to influence the achievement of an objective.

Adaptive management: is a common-sense approach to the management of ecological integrity that supports "learning while doing" and serves the dual goals of achieving management objectives and gaining reliable knowledge. It implies the development of a hypothesis (theory), and the implementation of monitoring, periodic review, and where required, changes in management actions.

Area management approaches: involve describing objectives and integrated set of actions for resource protection, visitor experience opportunities, and public education to be achieved over time in a distinctive area of the protected heritage place. The area can be based on: the complexity of issues; the size of the heritage place; the logical grouping of resources; the special attachment to the area by local residents or visitors; or simply lends itself to a distinct management approach.

Connection to place: reflects the relevance and importance of protected heritage places to Canadians. The concept expresses the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual attachment Canadians and visitors feel toward our natural and cultural heritage places. Parks Canada works to foster this sense of attachment through meaningful opportunities for enjoyment and learning provided on-site and through public outreach education. Respecting, understanding, and facilitating the relationship between heritage places and Canadians, including Aboriginal peoples, visitors, partners and stakeholders help promote a shared sense of responsibility for heritage places and engage minds and hearts to support their protection and presentation now and for future generations.

Cultural resource: is a human work, or a place that gives evidence of human activity or has spiritual or cultural meaning, and that has been determined to be of historic value. Cultural resources are distinguished from other resources in a park by virtue of their assigned historic value. This value derives from an association with an aspect or aspects of human history. Parks

Canada may apply the term cultural resource to a wide range of resources in its custody, including, but not limited to, cultural landscapes and landscape features, archaeological sites, structures, engineering works, artifacts and associated records.

Cultural resource management: applies to all activities that affect cultural resources administered by Parks Canada, whether those activities pertain primarily to the care of cultural resources or to the promotion of public understanding, enjoyment and appropriate use of them.

Cultural Resources Values Statement: is a strategic document that identifies cultural resources and their values for heritage places located outside national historic sites and managed by the Parks Canada Agency, and sets out objectives to protect cultural resources and present their values.

Ecological integrity: with respect to a national park, is a condition that is determined to be characteristic of its natural region and likely to persist, including abiotic components, the composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change, and processes. National parks are managed so as to protect ecological integrity, ensuring that all plant and animal species native to the area can continue to live in their natural habitats over their natural ranges, without threats to their long-term survival.

Integrated planning: that solutions for all aspects of the Parks Canada mandate be carried out concurrently, and results in improvements to each aspect in a mutually supportive manner. Integration means looking at issues holistically: that is, planning for visitor experience and public education entails also planning for protection; making decisions about protection means also considering actions for visitor experience and public education.

Key strategies: give focus to where change and effort is needed to achieving the vision and how. They clarify the issues, opportunities, objectives and overall strategic approaches to achieving the vision. In this way, a key strategy channels the three mandate elements, and the park's energy and resources to effectively undertake one or more thematically- related objectives that are fundamental to achieving the park vision.

Mixed-Grass Prairie: of North America includes both short and tall grasses and associated forbs and is found in the southern parts of the Prairie Provinces, the west Dakotas, northeastern Wyoming and eastern Montana.

Objectives: serve as a description of the condition sought through management and serve as criteria for necessary policies and actions. Clearly stated objectives are the key to effective management plans.

Public Outreach Education: is reaching Canadians at home, at leisure, at school and in their communities through effective and relevant learning opportunities designed to increase understanding and appreciation of the natural and historical heritage of PC places, and to encourage individuals and communities to support and become engaged in their protection and presentation.

Restoration (ecological): is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. It initiates or accelerates recovery of an ecosystem with respect to its function (processes), integrity (species composition and community structure), and sustainability (resistance to disturbance and resilience) (Canadian Parks Council 2008: 8, 15).

Riparian: areas of land immediately adjacent to streams and rivers. Riparian also describes plants and animals associated with these areas.

Species at Risk: are extirpated, endangered or threatened species or a species of special concern. "Extirpated species" means a wildlife species that no longer exists in the wild in Canada, but exists elsewhere in the wild. "Endangered species" means a wildlife species that is facing imminent extirpation or extinction. "Threatened species" means a wildlife species that is likely to become an endangered species if nothing is done to reverse the factors leading to its extirpation

or extinction. "Species of special concern" means a wildlife species that may become a threatened or an endangered species because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats.

Targets: are aims or objective set by managers and to be achieved within a specified time frame. A target is written in conjunction with an objective and facilitates measuring and reporting progress in achieving the objective.

Visitor: is a person entering the park (including the Visitor Centre) for recreational, educational or cultural purposes.

Visitor Experience: The sum total of a visitor's personal interaction with heritage places and/or people that awakens their senses, affects their emotions, stimulates their mind and leaves them with a sense of attachment to these places.

16. APPENDICES

Appendix A. Plans and Strategies Used in Implementing the Park Management Plan

- Various species at risk recovery strategies (burrowing owl, Sprague's pipit, greater sage-grouse, swift fox, mormon metalmark) and the black-tailed prairie dog management plan
- Plains Bison Reintroduction Plan
- Fire Management Plan
- Grazing Management Plan
- Ecological Integrity Monitoring Framework
- Biodiversity and Grazing Experiment Charter
- Public Safety Plan
- Master Interpretive Plan
- Heritage Presentation and Visitor Services Master Work plan
- Palaeontology Protection and Presentation Plan
- Grasslands National Park Prevention Strategy for the Management of Off-Road Vehicles
- Grasslands National Facilities Appearance Guidelines

Plans to be Initiated and Developed in this Planning Cycle

- Systems thinking approach for a 20-year park vision
- Grasslands National Park marketing and brand approach
- Site master plan for facilitating visitor experiences
- Site master plan for roads, trails and routes
- Cultural Resource Values Statement
- Cultural Resource Management Strategy
- Integrated Ecological Restoration Plan for West Side of the West Block

Appendix B. Facilities and Services Available in the West and East Blocks of Grasslands National Park.

Visitor Opportunities	West Block	East Block
Unique landscape and resources of interest	<p>The Frenchman River Valley is the main formation of the West Block with its glacial meltwater channel features, plateaus and coulees, and the dominant 70 Mile Butte with its impressive view.</p> <p>Bison, black-tailed prairie dog colonies, rattlesnake hibernaculum, precontact, ranching and homesteading history and sites, rare plants and animals</p>	<p>The East Block features the badlands with its exposed, eroded layers of geological and palaeontological history.</p> <p>Fossils and badlands features, precontact, ranching and homesteading history and sites, rare plants and animals</p>
Enroute reception and orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visitor Centre – Val Marie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rodeo & Ranch Museum – Wood Mountain Regional Park
In-park reception and orientation nodes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ecotour Road Entrance (improved) ▪ Two Trees Trailhead ▪ 70 Mile Butte Trailhead (improved) ▪ Three Sisters Trailhead (new) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ McGowan Ranch Yard (improved) ▪ Dawson Viewpoints or Poverty Ridge Station (new)
Self-reliant non-trail hiking routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timbergulch ▪ Broken Hills ▪ North Gillespie ▪ Eagle Butte (from Ecotour) ▪ 70 Mile Butte 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Butte Creek ▪ Zahursky Point
Self-reliant random backcountry camping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ √ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ √
Supported day hiking - marked trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two Trees ▪ Eagle Butte ▪ 70 Mile Butte (new) ▪ Belza Area (new) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zahursky Point (new - portion) ▪ Dawson Viewpoints (new)
Guided hiking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ √ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possible in future (e.g., fossil hikes)
Interpretive Viewpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 70 Mile Butte (new) ▪ Larson prairie dog town (new) ▪ Larson Ranch Yard (new) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dawson Viewpoints (new)
Supported campground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Belza Ranch Yard (new) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ McGowan Ranch Yard (improved)
Supported Day-use site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Belza Ranch Yard (new) ▪ 70 Mile Butte trailhead (new) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ McGowan Ranch Yard (new) ▪ Dawson Viewpoint (new)
Motorized access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ecotour Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ McGowan Ranch Yard ▪ Dawson Viewpoints (new)

Appendix C. Recreational and Other Activities that Enable Visitors to Experience and Enjoy the Park.

Auto-Touring	Casual	Guided (West Block only)			
Backpacking	Casual	Expedition			
Camping	Primitive	Serviced	Group camping		
Cycling	Road touring	Trail biking			
Heritage Appreciation	Art activities	Photography	Learning about local history / culture	Experiencing heritage resources	
Hiking / Walking	Interpretive trails	Dispersed / Backcountry	Guided tours	Day / overnight	
Horseback Riding	Casual	Guided / Expedition			
Interpretive Programs	Guided hikes	Curriculum-based school programs	Audio-visual presentations	Special events	Demonstrations
Nature Appreciation	Bird-watching	Nature observation	Photography / Art	Wildlife viewing	
Volunteering	Citizen scientist	Campground hosts / Park Ambassador / Helping hands			
Orienteering	Exploring				
Picnicking	Day-use sites				
Research	Personal	Professional			
Sightseeing	Scenic vistas / landscapes		Wildlife	Dark Skies	Vegetation
Special Events	Canada Day	Parks Day	Prairie Appreciation Week	Prairie Wind & Silver Sage events	East Block Party
Photography	Casual	Commercial filming			
Visitor Reception	Casual visits	Structured visits	Park orientation	Personal and non-personal media	
Wilderness Skills	Development	Enhancement			