

# 2016 IRC

## Workshop

### Managing Species at Risk - Policies and Tools

Sunday, July 17, 2016

*Organized with support from the Government of Canada*

#### Overview

Stewarding rangeland resources in Western Canada no longer means ensuring maximum productivity for economic gain. There are multiple stakeholders invested in the results of that stewardship. A variety of drivers influence how human activities change the landscape. This half day workshop will focus attention on approaches to conserving and protecting species at risk (SAR) and their habitat on the prairie landscape in a sustainable balance with the economic and social demands.

On the Northern Great Plains, it is recognized that grazing is necessary to maintain the grassland ecosystem. However, there are many variables within the broad management practice of grazing. It is commonly said that grazing management is both an art and a science.

There are two broad focus areas. One addresses the opportunities in developing sustainable approaches to managing species at risk and their needs. This includes presentations on the use of tools such as modifying range health assessments, developing beneficial management practices and taking an ecosystem/multi-species approach. The use of citizen science and social media are also explored.

The second area focuses on the use of policies to lower the risk for ranchers protecting SAR habitat through conservation/management agreements, incentives such as payment for ecological services and providing additional management information through existing programs such as the Provincial Environmental Farm Plans.



Photo credit: Environment Canada

This half-day workshop will be held on Sunday afternoon following the morning session with the jointly hosted Workshop by the United States Geological Survey and the Bureau of Land Management: Monitoring rangeland condition and forecasting the future; Sage-grouse and sagebrush-steppe ecosystem of western North America.

This project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada.

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## **AGENDA**

### **Species at Risk : A Global Workshop Afternoon of July 17, 2016 Gallery D, TCU Place, Saskatoon, SK**

#### **1:00-1:15 PM**

##### **An overview of the Canadian Species at Risk Act (SARA)**

*Robin Bloom, Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Land (SARPAL) Coordinator  
Environment Canada - Canadian Wildlife Service*

Adopted in 2002, SARA provides a variety of measures to provide for the recovery of wildlife species that are extirpated, endangered, or threatened as a result of human activity, and to manage species of special concern to prevent them from becoming endangered or threatened. The process for legal protection for species and habitat will be reviewed as will sections of the legislation that enable voluntary approaches to implementing conservation and recovery measures.

#### **1:15-1:30 PM**

##### **Beneficial Management Practices for Species at Risk in the Prairie Provinces**

*Peg Strankman – SARPAL Project Coordinator; Canadian Forage and Grassland Association*

The implementation of beneficial management practices (BMPs) is an accepted approach to avoiding or minimizing environmental impacts of human land use. They are foundational for the environmental farm plan programs in each province. BMPs are also the basis for verification programs being developed to demonstrate stewardship of Canada's agriculture sector. There is already considerable information intended for ag producers regarding how to help wildlife on the prairie landscape. However, there are also reasons to conduct a systematic review of the academic and gray literature pertaining to species at risk (SAR) to bring all 60 species to the same information level. The literature review will result in a searchable data base.

**1:30-1:45 PM**

**A Numerical Approach to Species at Risk on Producers' Farms**

*Paul Watson – Environmental Farm Plan Director, Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta*

The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan is adding a SAR module to its EFP workbook. Our approach is to use data at the section level to determine the probability of occurrence and the reliability of the data. Species will be evaluated for conflict and recommendations for action will be given to producers. This SARPAL initiative includes both information and assessment tools that will help agricultural producers support species at risk and prepare for the emerging market demand for sustainably sourced products. The project will use several data sources to simplify and speed up the process of completing an environmental farm plan.

**1:45-2:00 PM**

**Saskatchewan Species at Risk Farm Program**

*Tracy Hansen - Saskatchewan Species at Risk Farm Program Coordinator  
Simply Ag Solutions Inc.*

The Saskatchewan Species at Risk Farm Program is a three-year species at risk initiative designed to work with agriculture producers throughout the province of Saskatchewan to enhance and protect species at risk and their critical habitats. The program will bring increased awareness to species at risk in Saskatchewan and what we can do to ensure these species survive and thrive in their habitats. The program will offer free workshops to participants, where they will be provided with a workbook, aerial images of their farm and the opportunity to complete a species at risk self-assessment and action plan.

**2:00-2:15 PM**

**Enhancing Species at Risk Habitat in Alberta Grasslands: Collaboration between Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Alberta Beef Producers, MULTISAR and Cows and Fish**

*Brad Downey – Biologist, Alberta Conservation Association*

Numerous species at risk occur in the southern part of Alberta, often overlapping with agricultural landscapes, particularly livestock grazing operations. Often, existing management is what has allowed the species at risk to persist, but there are also many opportunities on those lands and adjoining lands to further enhance the habitat quality for Species at Risk. This will be completed through knowledge sharing, habitat assessments, development of voluntary habitat conservation plans and subsequent implementation and monitoring of beneficial management practices.

**2:15-2:30 PM**

**Multiple Approaches to Habitat Conservation: Finding the Right Fit Encourages Producers to Manage for Species at Risk Habitat**

*Tom Harrison, Program Coordinator, Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association*

The Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association Species at Risk Partnership on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL) project is engaging the agricultural sector in preserving key wildlife habitat. Potential initiatives are designed to fit the unique needs of producers and habitat. The tools being tested on the prairie include landscape grass-banking, habitat management agreements, habitat restoration agreements, niche product marketing, results-based conservation agreements and the use of term conservation easements.

**2:30-2:45 PM**

**Miles Anderson, Rancher, Fir Mountain, Saskatchewan**

Greater Sage Grouse, Silver Sage, and cattle - they live together. What can a land manager do to promote a dwindling population? What do we know about sage grouse and their silver sage habitat? Can land managers, through cattle management, give the sage grouse its' food and shelter through four distinct life cycles? These are the types of questions ranchers are working to answer in sage grouse habitat.

**2:45-3:00 PM**

**Ecological Services Initiative**

*David Zehnder, Program Coordinator and Rancher, British Columbia*

Ecological services initiative is exploring a voluntary incentive-based ecosystem services program encouraging producers to adopt beneficial management practices for the maintenance and enhancement of ecological services. At the core of this work, which has now expanded to 60 demo sites across B.C. and Alberta, are financial incentives for practices under a producer's management control. The basic premise of the approach is if farmers or ranchers implement management practices that produce clean air and water and improve/maintain wildlife habitat, they will receive monetary benefits.

**3:00-3:20 PM**

**Mapping Canada's Rangeland and Forage Resources using Earth Observation**

*Emily Lindsay, MSc Candidate,*

*Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Carleton University*

Since the launch of the first Landsat satellite in 1972, repeated, spectrally rich and synoptic imagery of the earth has been readily available for many research and application needs. Canada's rangeland and forage resources have been historically difficult to classify using Earth Observation because of the variation in ecology and management practices across the prairies. The goal of Emily's research is to create a robust set of methods to support a future operational inventory of Canada's rangeland and forage resources using space-based imagery to compliment AAFCs annual crop inventory. This annual inventory will have many applications, but most importantly it can be used to monitor change in these ecologically significant areas."

**3:20-3:40 PM**

**Lessons from grasslands conservation in Manitoba**

*Tim Sopuck, Chief Executive Officer, Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation*

The presentation will discuss lessons learned from 15 years of delivering native range conservation and enhancement activities in the mixed-grass prairie area of southwestern Manitoba. Topics will include: conservation tools, approaches to landowner engagement and delivery, connection to science and advice to funders.

**3:40-4:00 PM**

**Communicating Wildlife Habitat Needs on Rangelands: Linking Ranchers, Rangeland Health and Grassland Songbird Abundance**

*Allison Henderson, PhD Wildlife Ecologist*

*Government of Saskatchewan. Fish, Wildlife and Lands Branch, Ministry of Environment*

The world's remaining temperate grasslands actively support livestock production, yet they are among the most imperilled ecosystems on the planet. Given the capacity of grazing to shape the health of grasslands, decisions of livestock producers are instrumental to maintaining habitat for threatened grassland species. I explore the possibility of using a rangeland assessment tool to target grazing management at habitat requirements for species at risk in southern Saskatchewan, namely three grassland songbirds: Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus sprageuii*), Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*) and McCown's longspur (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*).

**4:00-4:20 PM**

**Engaging Citizen Scientists in Grizzly Bear Population Monitoring in Alberta, Canada**

*Anja Sorensen, Gordon Stenhouse, Terry Larsen and Sarah Rovang  
Forest Research Institute*

The value of engaging volunteers in citizen science has been demonstrated around the globe, across a variety of topics from climate change, to water quality and species monitoring. In Alberta, grizzly bears are provincially listed as a threatened species, with a range largely restricted to mountainous and boreal habitats, presenting formidable challenges for population inventory work. Our goal was to develop a program to engage volunteers in the collection of grizzly bear scat as a source of DNA for estimating population distribution and abundance. To address the unique needs of this project, the research team developed a multi-platform smartphone application to gather the necessary spatial data accompanying scat samples, and importantly, communicate results back to participants. This project revealed important considerations for designing citizen science programs well beyond grizzly bears in Alberta and highlights a new tool that can aid in conservation efforts.

**4:20-5:00 PM**

**Panel Discussion**

A short panel discussion will look at how to extend the afternoon's learnings into the ranching community in practical ways. A broader general discussion with the entire audience will follow.

**Video: "A Ranchers View" – The Grasslands Project, National Film Board of Canada (8 minutes)**

**Summary:** Miles Anderson is in a tough spot. The land he ranches has been in his family for over a hundred years, but it's bordered on three sides by an expanding Grasslands National Park and its conservation imperative. Cattle were once considered a major threat to the integrity of the grasslands and the endangered sage grouse in the region, but, due in large part to Miles' persistence, his cattle are now seen as part of the conservation solution.

<http://grasslands.nfb.ca/>

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