



Grassland and Grouse Project

An Adaptive Management Action Plan
for the Protection and Enhancement of Native Grassland Habitat
at the Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area

Project Introduction

Looking into the future at the Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area we foresee a healthy, diverse native grassland with minimal non-native species and an abundance of flourishing native grasses, forbs and wildlife. This vision can become a reality through the Grassland and Grouse Project, a three year Adaptive Management Action Plan.

The Grassland and Grouse Project will serve as a model conservation initiative contributing to the preservation of Alberta's natural and cultural heritage. By creating a healthy and diverse native grassland we will protect Alberta's deminishing prairie landscape and the native species within it.



Goal

The goal of the Grassland and Grouse Project is to protect and enhance biodiversity on the remaining native grassland on the Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area.

Area Introduction

The Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area (ASCCA) is a 4,800 acre nature preserve *donated to the Province of Alberta* by Ann and Sandy Cross for the purpose of protecting wildlife habitat and providing conservation education opportunities. The Area is managed by the Sandy Cross Conservation Foundation, a not for profit organization founded in 1996 (Charity number 89877 6331 RR 0001).

Project Background

The Grassland and Grouse Project is guided by ecosystem based management and a desire to achieve our first Guiding Principle, 'to protect habitat and provide space for native species of wildlife'. This project is also undertaken in memory of Sandy Cross, who passed away at 89 years of age on December 13, 2003. He loved both the native grassland and the Sharp-tailed Grouse.

The ASCCA is fortunate to have between 4 and 8% of the native grassland still intact. Unfortunately, the remaining native grassland is not in pristine condition as aggressive non native species, such as smooth brome grass, thistle, toadflax, leafy spurge and burdock have invaded the native grassland. The Area will work towards reducing the influx of brome and other weedy species in the remaining native patches and perhaps lay the groundwork for more aggressive native grassland restoration in the future.

Action Plans

Native Grassland Action Plans 2005-2007

The focus of this project is the protection and enhancement of the remaining native grassland and native species of plants found on the Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area.

- Divide native grassland into 5 sites and develop an Action Plan for each site, considering both the native grassland site as a whole and the patches of native grassland within the larger site.
- Apply a variety of different proven management techniques at each site, i.e., mowing, weed whipping, selective grazing, biological weed controls, manually hand pulling weeds, limited use of Round Up (Glyphosate) and others based on our research and actions.
- Monitor results of actions and modify plans accordingly.

Sharp-tailed Grouse Action Plans 2005-2007

The Sharp-tailed Grouse is the flagship wildlife species for this project; monitoring for Sharp-tailed Grouse and other grassland bird species, assessing habitat suitability and developing plans for potential future management actions are vital actions. At this time there are no plans to modify existing habitat or reintroduce the Sharp-tailed Grouse.

- Monitor for Sharp-tailed Grouse to determine the status of their use of the Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area.
- Research Sharp-tailed Grouse habitat needs and compare the habitat at the Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area to the ideal habitat for these birds.
- Develop future plans for the sharp trail grouse, and plans for the management of other native grassland birds.

Grassland and Grouse Project – A Partnership Opportunity



The ASCCA recognizes that partnerships are an important part of creating a conservation community. With combined support of local, district and regional partners, the Grassland and Grouse Project will promote a common vision of a sustainable prairie landscape and the long-term protection of native species at the Cross Conservation Area and in Alberta.

You are invited to become a Grassland and Grouse partner!

We would like to invite you to participate in this dynamic project, and offer your support in a way that best suits you or your organization. Below you will find a preliminary list of needs we will be looking to meet for 2005. Please note this is not an exhaustive list, and if you or your organization can offer other resources we would like to hear from you. We would also like to ask all of our interested partners for a letter of support to strengthen our position for project funding in 2005.

Project Needs

In-kind Support

- **Native grassland and grouse site assessment**-expertise and monitoring tools-volunteer and staff training
- **Community outreach and promotions**-media support-developing promotional materials-printing-using available networks to broadcast information to the community-website design-signage
- **Education Component** -source related education resources-Alberta Environmental Partnerships & Education Branch has been engaged in helping to develop our grassland education program
- **Volunteer support**-looking for individuals and groups with specialized skills from outside the ASCCA (specific actions TBA)
- **Equipment** -tractor, mower, GPS, topographic maps-GIS equipment and expertise
- **General support**-database construction-research and communications support-project review

Financial Support

The total cost of this three-year project is estimated at \$600,000.

Contribution levels to consider:

\$100-\$10,000

\$10,000- \$29,000

\$30,000- \$49,000

\$50,000- \$70,000

Partner Recognition

While we are still in the process of developing a formal recognition plan, we can offer our partners a wide range of recognition opportunities. Whether you make a financial or gift in-kind contribution, you will be rewarded immediately with our gratitude and the awareness that you are part of a larger conservation effort, working to conserve native species in Alberta! Formal recognition may include, a charitable tax receipt, ongoing project updates, invitations to Area events and educational programs, logo placement on promotional materials, signage and recognition through local media, on our website and in our agency newsletter the *Cross Current*.

Please contact Sue Hayduk if you or your organization is interested in supporting the Grassland and Grouse Project. We also would be pleased to share our detailed project proposal with you upon request.

Contact information

For more information or to discuss this Grassland and Grouse Project, please contact:

Jacquie Gilson, Executive Director

(403) 931-3377 at jgilson@crossconservation.org

Or

Sue Hayduk, Support and Development Manager

(403) 931-1042 at shayduk@crossconservation.org



To learn more about the Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area visit our website: www.crossconservation.org