



**NATURE**  
**CONSERVANCY**  
**CANADA**

# **West Souris Mixed-Grass Prairie**

**Natural Area Conservation Plan Summary  
2015-2023**

# West Souris Mixed-Grass Prairie Natural Area Conservation Plan Summary

## Table of Contents

---

The Nature Conservancy of Canada .....	2
Natural Area Conservation Planning .....	2
Natural Area Vision Statement .....	3
Implementation Period .....	3
Location .....	3
Conservation Context.....	6
Biodiversity Targets .....	8
Threats .....	10
Strategic Plan .....	11
Priority Areas for Biodiversity Conservation.....	16
Project Team .....	18
Acknowledgements.....	18
References .....	19
Appendix .....	20

Recommended citation: Neufeld, R. & C. Hamel. 2017. West Souris Mixed-grass Prairie Natural Area Plan Summary. The Nature Conservancy of Canada, Winnipeg, MB. 20 pp.

Cover Photo: Mixed-grass Prairie in the West Souris Mixed-grass Praire Natural Area. Photo Credit: Cary Hamel/NCC

# The Nature Conservancy of Canada

---

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is Canada's leading national land conservation organization. A private, non-profit organization, we partner with individuals, corporations, other non-profit organizations and governments at all levels to protect our most important natural treasures — the natural areas that sustain Canada's plants and wildlife. We secure properties (through donation, purchase, conservation agreement and the relinquishment of other legal interests in land) and manage them for the long term.

Since 1962, NCC and our partners have helped to conserve more than 2.8 million acres (1.1 million hectares) of ecologically significant land from coast to coast. In Manitoba, we have conserved and protected over 65,000 acres (26,305 hectares) across nine natural areas critical to biodiversity across the province.

## **Our Mission Statement:**

The Nature Conservancy of Canada leads and inspires others to join us in creating a legacy for future generations by conserving important natural areas and biological diversity across all regions of Canada.

## **Our Vision:**

We envision a world in which Canadians conserve nature in all its diversity, and safeguard the lands and waters that sustain life.

## Natural Area Conservation Planning

---

Guided by the best-available conservation science, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) seeks to protect areas of natural diversity for their intrinsic value and for the benefit of our children and those after them. We focus our work on specific landscapes throughout Canada that have been identified as important to biodiversity conservation, often through ecoregional-scale Conservation Blueprints and Ecoregional Assessments. Specific focal landscapes are referred to as Natural Areas (NA), and a Natural Area Conservation Plan (NACP) is developed for each. The purpose of these plans is to act as strategic plans for conservation implementation and support decision making at inception and throughout the implementation period, so that limited conservation resources are used most efficiently. Through these plans, we seek to identify desired conservation results, develop, prioritize, and implement activities that will lead to these results, track their progress, and adapt based on what we have learned. The scope of each plan encompasses the long-term conservation of all biodiversity in each NA. Conservation planning requires recognition of the shifting nature of landscapes and our knowledge of them. This planning process is viewed as an iterative and ongoing, rather than a once-a-decade exercise and this document should be viewed in that context.

## Natural Area Vision Statement

---

The West Souris Mixed-Grass Prairie Natural Area sustains large, connected tracts of mixed-grass prairie that support thriving populations of grassland birds and other wildlife. Wetlands and streams function within a natural hydrologic regime. Healthy livestock and ecotourism industries support the maintenance and recovery of natural areas. The local community champions the conservation of these ecosystems.

## Implementation Period

---

Start date: 12/01/2015

End date: 11/30/2023

## Location

---

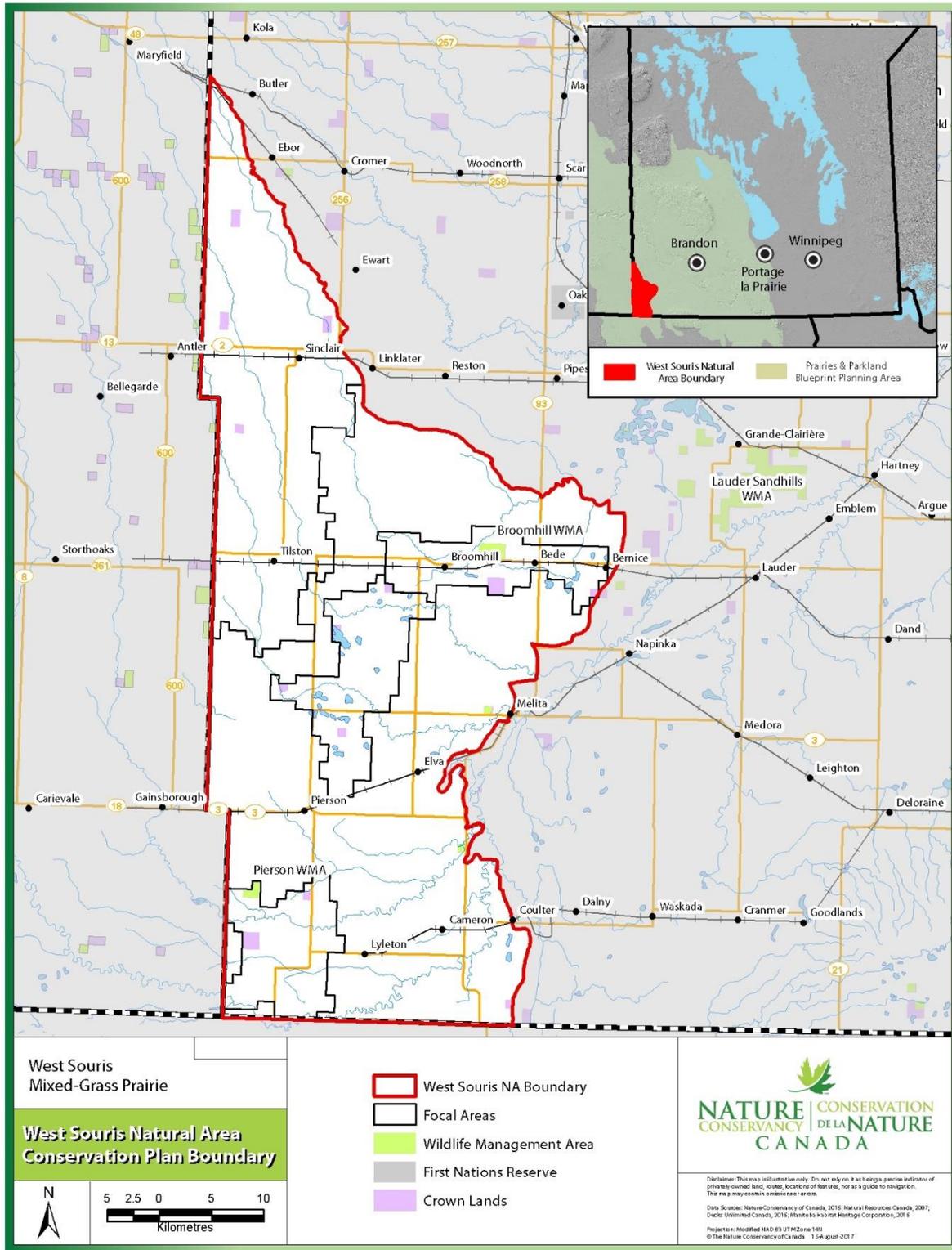
The West Souris Mixed-grass Prairie Natural Area (WSMGP) is a 198,206 hectare (1982 km<sup>2</sup>, 489,775 acre) landscape abutting the Saskatchewan and North Dakota borders in southwest Manitoba. Portions of three Municipalities fall within the Natural Area. The Natural Area occurs in the southeastern portion of the Aspen Parkland Ecoregion (in both the Marshall & Schut (1999) and TNC (2001) classification schemes), but shares some ecological characteristics with the Dakota Mixed-grass Prairie Ecoregion (*sensu* TNC 2001), whose northern boundary lies 19 km south.

The boundary of the Natural Area corresponds with the watersheds of the five main rivers and creeks that flow easterly through the Natural Area. These watersheds encompass three relatively large grassland blocks and part of an adjacent prairie pothole wetland region identified in the Prairies and Parklands Conservation Blueprint (Riley et al. 2007). With a few exceptions, the entire Manitoba portion of the watersheds were included, as the conservation of waterbodies necessitates action on a watershed scale. The West and south boundaries are congruent with the Saskatchewan and North Dakota Borders respectively. The east and north boundaries generally correspond with the watershed boundaries with the exception of one watershed that extends into NCC's Oak Lake Sandhill and Wetlands Natural Area and begins to capture a unique set of ecological characteristics. In this case the bisecting stream was used to delineate the boundary between the two natural areas.

The WSMGP Natural Area boundary is contiguous with that of NCC's Oak Lake Sandhills and Wetlands Natural Area on its northern edge, and with that of NCC's Souris River Valley Grasslands Natural Area on its eastern edge. The conservation targets and threats (and thus the conservation strategies required to address them) differ substantially among these three Natural Areas; as such, separate conservation planning efforts were determined to be necessary.

Four focal areas were delineated. Three (Broomhill-Bede Prairie, Poverty Plains, Pierson-Lyleton Prairie) encompass the last remaining large, mostly contiguous blocks of mixed-grass prairie and adjacent patches of non-native perennial grasslands that received the highest priority scores based on the occurrence of mixed-grass prairie and grassland birds. The boundaries encompass non-native perennial grasslands as well as some parcels of cultivated land that occur among, or adjacent to perennial cover. The latter parcels were included within the focal area boundaries in recognition of their potential importance to maintaining large, un-fragmented blocks of grasslands for grassland bird management and recovery. Securement and conservation efforts related to grassland targets will be focused within these regions. Some parcels on cultivated lands do occur within the focal areas, and may have conservation values where securement can address incompatible land-use, reduce fragmentation and increase connectivity. Despite two of the focal areas being adjacent to each other, they were kept as separate in recognition of the two disjunct patches of mixed-grass prairie for which there will be specific targeted activities.

The fourth focal area (Sinclair-Tilston Potholes) encompasses the densest concentrations of potholes located in the northern tip of the Natural Area, as identified in the Prairie & Parklands Conservation Blueprint (Riley et al. 2007). This area is also one of the priority landscapes for waterfowl production in the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture Implementation Plan: 2013-2020. Securement efforts related to wetland targets will be focused within this landscape in recognition of its significance to waterfowl and the ability to maximize the use of resources to achieve those target goals.



**Map 1. West Souris Mixed-grass Prairie Natural Area Boundary**

## Conservation Context

---

The West Souris Mixed-grass Prairie Natural Area (WSMGP) represents one of the last habitat strongholds in Manitoba for grassland birds.

Grassland birds are one of the most threatened groups of birds in North America. Species that were once seen across most of southern Manitoba are now primarily limited to the extreme southwest corner of the province (e.g. Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*), Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia*), and Baird's Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*)).

The relatively large and intact prairies that remain in the WSMGP are key to the conservation of grassland birds and many other species. Great Plains Toads (*Bufo cognatus*) and Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) occur here, as do over 150 other species. Twenty species listed on national endangered species lists, and 10 listed provincially occur within the WSMGP. Fifty-six provincially and 15 nationally rare or uncommon species are known from the Natural Area.

Despite national conservation significance, the grasslands of the WSMGP are being quickly lost. Approximately 3% of native prairies were cultivated between 2010 and 2015, and less than 10% of the Natural Area supports native prairie. Temperate grasslands are the most converted, and least protected habitat on earth, with less than two percent effectively conserved (The Nature Conservancy, undated). Less than 10% of WSMGPs native grasslands are conserved through conservation easement or ownership by a conservation agency, and all of these areas are subject to potential disturbance from mineral or petroleum resource extraction.



Mixed-grass Prairie. Photo by Cary Hamel

provide nesting and foraging sites for migratory songbirds and important habitat for wildlife.

The local economy is agriculturally based, primarily comprised of crop and livestock production often in mixed farms that allow for economic diversification. Oil



Baird's Sparrow.  
Photo by Alan MacKeigan

production, petroleum transfer and metal fabrication are the other major industry in the area, but tourism driven by interest in grassland birds is also a contributor to the economy.



Gainsborough Creek. Photo by NCC

NCC is well positioned to become a conservation leader in this threatened landscape. Ninety-two percent of the WSMGP is privately-owned, including the vast majority of prairie and wetland sites. NCC is one of the few conservation

organizations with the capacity to take conservation action at a scale large enough to produce measurable, landscape-scale conservation results.

NCC has been active in the area since 1993 and partnered with the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation and Critical Wildlife Habitat Program in establishing the 130 hectare (320 acre) Mixed-grass Prairie Preserve. Since then, NCC has secured 130 hectares (320 acres) of land through conservation agreements and 126 hectares (312 acres) through fee-simple purchase. An additional 9,267 hectares (22,900 acres) are under other land ownership or management pertinent to conservation planning (e.g. Wildlife Management Areas, lands eased or owned by various conservation organizations). Though not necessarily protected from development or resource extraction, these lands are managed to mitigate negative impacts arising from those activities. NCC has become a recognized agency in the Natural Area and has built a number of strong stewardship, research and community-oriented partnerships.



American Bittern. Photo by NCC

It is recognized that long-term biodiversity conservation in the WSMGP will rely on the stewardship of local producers, governments and communities, not just conservation organizations. An understanding and appreciation of the importance and rarity of mixed-grass prairie and grassland birds will be necessary to effect broader changes on the landscape. As such, the strategies and objectives include a focus on the importance of grazing as a land management tool, the maintenance of a

sustainable livestock industry and promotion of management practices that are compatible with the requirements of the targets and economically sustainable.

This NACP builds upon the successes and lessons learned of the previous plan – if successfully implemented this plan is expected to:

- Maintain and recover populations of grassland-obligate birds
- Increase compatible land use through direct support of private landowners
- Improve viability of core mixed-grass prairie blocks by measurably reducing invasive species and woody encroachment
- Increase awareness of the significance of the Natural Area for biodiversity by implementing well-planned, coordinated and measurably-effective communications and marketing
- Achieve biodiversity goals through increased local support of natural area conservation by increasing local economic dependence on healthy natural areas that support agriculture, ecotourism and research
- Abate key threats through the strategic securement and maintenance of existing connections and corridors, increasing protected lands classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as Category IV or lower from 0 to 0.5% of the Natural Area



Mule Deer. Photo by NCC

## Biodiversity Targets

Target:	Mixed-grass prairie	Current status:	FAIR	Desired future status:	GOOD
<b>Goals</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌿 By 2023, over 12,000 hectares acres of mixed-grass prairie are maintained, and the surface rights of at least 3400 hectares are perpetually conserved* *Includes lands conserved by other organizations</li> <li>🌿 By 2035, at least 10% of the native ecosystems burn at least once within twice the natural fire return interval</li> <li>🌿 By 2023, at least 3% of the native ecosystems burn at least once within twice the natural fire return interval</li> <li>🌿 By 2035, over 4,800 hectares of mixed-grass prairie are in contiguous blocks &gt;810 hectares acres, and are linked by perennial grassland cover within, and between the Broomhill-Bede Prairie, Poverty Plains and Pierson-Lyleton Prairie focal areas</li> <li>🌿 By 2023, at least 4,800 hectares of mixed-grass prairie are in contiguous blocks &gt;810 hectares, and are linked by perennial grassland cover within the Broomhill-Bede Prairie, Poverty Plains and Pierson-Lyleton Prairie focal areas</li> </ul>					

<b>Target: Grassland-obligate birds</b>	<b>Current status:</b>	<b>POOR</b>	<b>Desired future status:</b>	<b>GOOD</b>
---	------------------------	-------------	-------------------------------	-------------

**Goals**

-  By 2035, all patches of mixed-grass prairie are physically linked\* by perennial grassland cover within the Pierson-Lyleton Prairie focal area; and both within and between the Broomhill-Bede Prairie and Poverty Plains focal areas
-  By 2023, all patches of mixed-grass prairie are physically linked\* by perennial grassland cover within the Broomhill-Bede Prairie, Poverty Plains and Pierson-Lyleton Prairie focal Areas  
\*Physically linked' refers to adjacent parcels of arable land, disregarding the presence of gravel roads and road allowances
-  By 2035, breeding populations of grassland-obligate birds increase by 100% from 2015 numbers
-  By 2023, breeding populations of Grassland-obligate birds are maintained at 2015 numbers or higher  
\*species include: Ferruginous Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Baird's Sparrow, Chestnut-collared longspur, Loggerheaded Shrike and Sprague's Pipit

<b>Target: Rivers streams &amp; riparian areas</b>	<b>Current status:</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Desired future status:</b>	<b>Good</b>
--	------------------------	-------------	-------------------------------	-------------

**Goals**

-  By 2035, >70% of river and stream segments are un-fragmented\*
-  By 2023, >50% of river and stream segments are un-fragmented\*  
\*As defined by the Aquatic Fragmentation indicator used by the Saskatchewan Water Authority in the 2010 State of the Watershed Report
-  By 2035, >75% of river and stream riparian zones have permanent cover within an 30 meter buffer from the banks
-  By 2023, >50% of river and stream riparian zones have permanent cover within an 30 metre buffer from the banks

<b>Target: Ephemeral &amp; temporary wetlands and associated riparian areas</b>	<b>Current status:</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Desired future status:</b>	<b>Good</b>
---	------------------------	-------------	-------------------------------	-------------

**Goals**

-  By 2040, the hectares\* of ephemeral and temporary wetlands within the Natural Area exceeds the 2016 extent\*\* by 10%
-  By 2023, the hectares\* of ephemeral and temporary wetlands within the Broomhill-Bede Prairie, Poverty Plains and Pierson-Lyleton Prairie focal areas is maintained at the 2016 extent\*\*  
\*within the range of natural variation  
\*\*as determined by the Canadian Wetland Inventory mapping conducted by Ducks Unlimited

<b>Target:</b> Permanent & semi-permanent wetlands and associated riparian areas	<b>Current status:</b> Fair	<b>Desired future status:</b> Good
<b>Goals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> By 2040, the hectares* of permanent and semi-permanent wetlands within the Natural Area exceeds the 2016 extent**by 10%</li> <li> By 2023, the hectares* of permanent and semi-permanent wetlands within the Broomhill-Bede Prairie, Poverty Plains and Pierson-Lyleton Prairie focal areas is maintained at the 2016 extent**</li> </ul> <p>*within the range of natural variation  **as determined by the Canadian Wetland Inventory mapping conducted by Ducks Unlimited</p>		
<b>Target:</b> Large mammals	<b>Current status:</b> Good	<b>Desired future status:</b> Good
<b>Goals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> By 2023, the Mule Deer population within the Natural Area is maintained at 2016* numbers or higher</li> </ul> <p>*population levels to be determined</p>		
<b>Overall target viability for the natural area:</b>	<b>Current status:</b> Fair	<b>Desired future status:</b> Good

### Threats

The table below includes only those threats assessed as medium or higher. This assessment is based the threat and their expected impact of the viability of the target over the course of the NACP. See the Appendix for more information on how threats are identified and assessed.

IUCN Classification*	Threat	Overall magnitude
2.1 Annual & Perennial Non-Timber Crops	Conversion of native habitat to annual & perennial cropland	Very High
7.2 Dams & water Management/Use	Construction & maintenance of drainage network	High
8.2 Problematic Native Species	Woody vegetation encroachment	High
2.3 Livestock Farming & Ranching	Incompatible grazing practices	Medium
3.1 Oil & Gas Drilling	Oil and Gas Drilling	Medium
3.2 Mining & Quarrying	Gravel extraction	Medium
3.3 Renewable Energy	Wind farm siting	Medium
4.1 Roads & Railroads	Roads & railroads	Medium
4.1 Roads & Railroads	Mortality of grassland birds during migration and on wintering grounds	Medium

7.1 Fire & Fire Suppression	Incompatible fire management	Medium
8.1 Invasive Non-Native Species	Invasive alien species	Medium
8.2 Problematic Native Species	Hostile habitat that provides perch sites and nesting habitat for avian parasites and predators of grassland-nesting birds	Medium
9.3 Agricultural & Forestry Effluents	Incompatible crop production practices	Medium
11.2 Drought	Extreme drought events	Medium
	<b>Overall Threat Status for the Natural Area</b>	<b>Very High</b>

\*See Appendix for information on IUCN Classifications

## Strategic Plan

### 1.1 Site/Area Protection

Permanent protection of key land parcels (*Importance: Critical*)

- Secure Priority 1 or 2 lands within the Broomhill-Bede Focal, Poverty Plains, Pierson-Lyleton and Sinclair Tilston focal areas through fee-simple purchase and conservation agreement by November 2023.
- Consider the opportunistic securement through donation or purchase of easements or land of ecologically significant Priority 1 or 2 lands, and Priority 1-3 lands that will provide connections between focal areas or Priority 1 grassland patches with an opportunity to increase grassland block size.
- Consider the opportunistic securement of subsurface mineral rights on perpetually secured lands within the Broomhill-Bede, Poverty Plains and Pierson-Lyleton focal areas.
- Annually submit list of newly-acquired NCC lands to the Government of Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative (PAI) for inclusion in Manitoba's Protected Areas Network. Encourage PAI to consider protecting ecologically significant Crown lands in the Natural Area

Objectives:

- 🌿 By 2023, proportion of Natural Area that is protected (IUCN Categories IV or higher) has increased from 0% to 0.5%

### 1.3 Conservation Science and Planning

Address Key Knowledge Gaps (*Importance: Necessary*)

- Conduct surveys for Dakota Skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*) by December 2018
- Determine the extent and distribution of ephemeral and temporary wetlands in extreme southwestern Manitoba by 2020
- Develop objective-based reference descriptions of "high quality" Mixed-grass Prairie
- Evaluate the effectiveness & impact of various woody control management techniques (fire/shrub mowing/ haying) on condition and landscape scale pattern requirements of habitat mosaic of grasslands and grassland birds by 2019

Conservation Planning (*Importance: Necessary*)

- Complete progress reports for the NACP bi-annually
- Review and update the West Souris Mixed-grass Prairie NACP by November 2023
- By December 2018, undertake climate change adaptation of NACP. Revise NACP actions, if necessary

**2.1 Site/Area Management**

Temporary securement & management of key land parcels (*Importance: Necessary*)

- Secure Priority 1 or 2 lands in each of the Broomhill-Bede, Poverty Plains or Pierson-Lyleton Prairie focal areas through 5-10 year lease agreements

Objectives:

-  By 2023, at least one lease has been converted to perpetual securement (easement or fee-simple)

Implement status and effectiveness monitoring protocols as scheduled in NACP monitoring plan (*Importance: Necessary*)

Prepare Interim Stewardship Statements (ISS) within one year of closing, and Baseline Inventories for fee-simple properties of closing and Property Management Plans (PMPs) following NCC's approved Policies, Procedures, Standards and Guidelines. (*Importance: Necessary*)

Conduct stewardship actions on acquired properties as required (short-term stewardship actions outlined in CPSs, longer term actions as outlined in Property Management Plans). Annually satisfy taxation and other legal obligations for all fee-simple properties. (*Importance: Necessary*)

Monitor all Conservation Agreement properties annually following NCC's approved Procedures, Policies, Standards and Guidelines. (*Importance: Necessary*)

**2.2 Invasive/Problematic Species Control**

Establish terrestrial invasive species monitoring and control program for the Broomhill-Bede Prairie, Poverty Plains and Pierson-Lyleton Prairie focal areas (*Importance: Critical*)

- Establish a working group to determine invasive species project scope, boundary and goals by 2017
- Support working group partner efforts to monitor and control invasive species in core conservation areas
- Annually report on status of invasive species and implementation of control activities in core conservation areas. Evaluate the effectiveness of the treatments every 5 years.

Objectives:

-  By 2023, no new terrestrial invasive species have established in the grassland focal areas
-  By 2023, there is a 25% reduction in the patch size and density of Leafy Spurge in grassland focal areas

Support partner efforts to monitor and control aquatic invasive species in Lotic systems in the Natural Area (*Importance: Necessary*)

Objectives:

-  By 2023, no net gain in the extent of reaches impacted by aquatic invasive species

### **2.3 Habitat & Natural Process Restoration**

Implement and/or support prescribed fire program (*Importance: Necessary*)

- Develop & maintain fire-oriented coordination and communications with the Office of Manitoba Fire Commissioner, rural municipal fire departments, Manitoba Sustainable Development and other fire practitioners
- Develop a prescribed fire strategy with partners that encompasses site selection, resourcing and funding considerations by December 2017
- Implement and/or support the implementation of prescribed fire on grasslands within the Broomhill-Bede, Poverty Plains or Pierson-Lyleton Prairie focal areas by November 2023

Objectives:

-  By 2023, 750 acres of mixed-grass prairie burn at least once within the 2X fire return interval

Establish capacity for mixed-grass prairie restoration projects (*Importance: Necessary*)

- By 2021 Develop plan for establishing a local native Mixed-grass Prairie seed source
- By 2022 effectively engage with potential partners and interested landowners
- By January 2023, identify potential donors and apply for funding to support capacity-building for the establishment of a local seed source
- By November, 2023 implement plan

Objectives:

-  By 2023, at least one mixed-grass prairie site has been identified as a source of seed for restoration or seed production plots

### **3.2 Species Recovery**

Multi-species and ecosystem at risk recovery, management and research (*Importance: Necessary*)

- Develop Multi-SAR workbooks for all fee-simple properties by November 2017, update annually.
- By March 2018 develop a multi-partner mixed-grass prairie/grassland bird recovery plan for the Broomhill-Bede Prairie, Poverty Plains and Pierson-Lyleton Prairie focal areas, and update NACP activities
- Support ongoing surveys and development of recovery strategies for Species at Risk
- Annually submit rare species & Species At Risk monitoring findings to the Manitoba Conservation Data Centre
- Engage with partners and other organizations to ensure strategies related to grassland-bird recovery in the Natural Area are aligned with international recovery efforts.

Objectives:

-  By November 2017, Multi-SAR workbooks are utilized by NCC land managers
-  By Spring 2018 the mixed-grass prairie/grassland bird recovery plan strategies have been incorporated into NCC's and at least one partner's conservation planning and land management

### 4.3 Awareness & Communications

#### Develop Communications Plan & Implement (*Importance: Necessary*)

- Develop communications plan by November 2016
- Implement communications plan & review every two years as part of NACP progress report

#### Objectives:

- 🌱 By 2023, 75% of survey respondents indicate that they were previously aware of NCC and are familiar with NCC's work, 75% of respondents indicate that they are aware of the significance of the area for grassland birds and mixed-grass prairie

#### Raise awareness of NCC's work, conservation practices, science, stewardship and program opportunities (*Importance: Necessary*)

- Partner with Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, conservation districts, Manitoba Forage and Grasslands Association and other partners to hold an open house/promotional tour in local communities for landowners and stakeholders in 2017 with a focus on sharing information about conservation, management programs and research.
- Engage with conservation easement holders annually by providing materials on land management practices and opportunities and appreciation events

#### Objectives:

- 🌱 By 2023, at least 2 easement holders have adopted compatible land management practices
- 🌱 By 2018, at least 3 landowners have indicated that they consider/implement land management information/practices shared by NCC and partners through public forums or communication materials
- 🌱 By 2017, an open house is held in at least 3 communities with at least 2 other conservation organizations participating

#### Education and Outreach (*Importance: Necessary*)

- Develop an education and outreach strategy by December 2017
- Develop and implement a fundraising strategy by April 2018
- Implement education and outreach programming by September 2018

#### Objectives:

- 🌱 By 2023, at least 75% of surveyed students indicate an increased awareness or understanding of the significance grassland birds and mixed-grass prairie in the Natural area
- 🌱 By 2023, at least 3 schools are engaged in education and outreach programming
- 🌱 By 2023, outreach programming is offered in 5 communities within the Natural Area

#### **5.4 Private Sector Standards & Codes**

Development and implementation of internal Oil and Gas Development Procedures and Guidelines (*Importance: Necessary*)

- Update NCC's Oil and Gas Development Procedures Manual and meet with Manitoba Petroleum Branch and the locally operating oil and gas companies to share results.
- Ensure oil and gas development on NCC lands/Conservation Agreements comply with NCC Manitoba's oil and gas development procedures manual

Objectives:

-  All oil and gas developments on NCC-owned lands and easements comply with NCC Manitoba's oil & gas development procedures

#### **5.2 Policies & Regulations**

Participate as a stakeholder on committees related to changes to provincial drainage regulations and other provincial drainage initiatives. (*Importance: Beneficial*)

Objectives:

-  By 2023 the ten year rate of wetland loss in the Natural Area is <1.5%

#### **5.4 Compliance & Enforcement**

In the event of a breach of a Conservation Agreement, follow NCC's Policies, Procedures, Standards, and Guidelines and obtain legal counsel where appropriate (*Importance: Necessary*)

#### **6.1 Linked Enterprises & Livelihood Alternatives**

Expand compatible tourism/ecotourism initiatives focussed on mixed-grass prairie and grassland birds

(*Importance: Beneficial*)

- Work with Westman Tourism to identify opportunities for co-ordinating tourism related initiatives
- Partner with the Southwestern Manitoba Mixed-grass Prairie Important Bird Area (IBA) and other partners on complementary tourism/interpretive/conservation initiatives

Objectives:

-  By November 2023, NCC and the Southwestern Manitoba Mixed-grass Prairie IBA partner on at least two outreach/tourism initiatives

#### **6.4 Conservation Payments**

Establish a performance-based ecological goods and services (EG&S) program in co-operation with West Souris River Conservation District (*Importance: Necessary*)

- Conduct feasibility study by 2017 to determine program requirements, establish pilot project details
- Implement Pilot Program in 2018
- Report and evaluate on progress/findings of pilot project by April 2019
- Implement permanent program Spring 2019

Objectives:

-  By 2023, at least 10 grassland projects and 10 riparian projects qualify for payments per year
-  By 2023, at least 30 landowners apply to the EG&S program

## 7.2 Alliance & Partnership Development

Partner with Conservation Districts on complementary planning actions identified in the Integrated Watershed Management Plans covering the West Souris River Mixed-grass Prairie Natural Area (*Importance: Beneficial*)

Objectives:

 By 2023, Partner with conservation Districts on at least two initiatives

By November 2017, meet at least once with the Saskatchewan Region of NCC to explore complementary watershed conservation opportunities (*Importance: Beneficial*)

\*Strategies are ranked on their relative importance to achieving the biodiversity goals of the plan. These rankings are defined as follows.

**Critical:** Conservation strategies that, without implementation, would clearly result in the reduction of viability of a biodiversity target or the increase in magnitude of a critical threat within the next 5-10 years. Also includes information that requires research before important decisions can be made on the management of biodiversity targets.

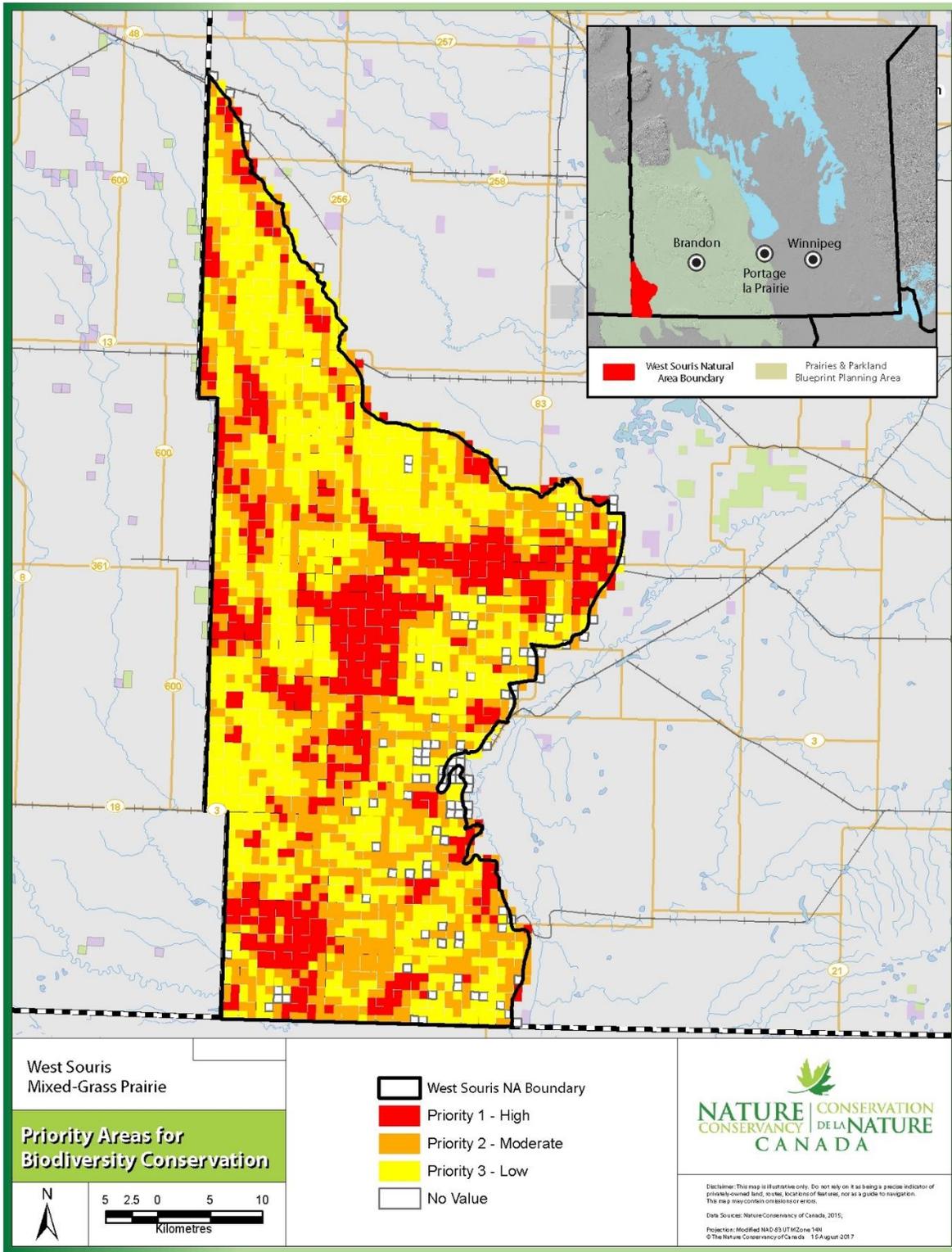
**Necessary:** Conservation strategies that are needed to maintain or enhance the viability of biodiversity targets or reduce critical threats. Also includes research that will inform decisions regarding management of biodiversity targets.

**Beneficial:** Conservation strategies that will assist in maintaining or enhancing viability of biodiversity targets and reducing threats.

## Priority Areas for Biodiversity Conservation

---

In order to focus conservation efforts and ensure the most efficient and effective use of resources, NCC conducts an analysis to identify priority areas within the Natural Area landscape. This analysis considers the presence, distribution, and relative abundance of biodiversity targets, Species at Risk, and existing conservation lands within the Natural Area. By using this prioritization to guide the delivery of activities and programming, NCC strives to obtain the best possible impact on defined biodiversity targets while minimizing threats to those targets.



**Map 2. Priority areas for delivering conservation programming**

## Project Team

---

Primary Authors: Rebekah Neufeld and Cary Hamel, Nature Conservancy of Canada

Planning Team:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Role</b>
Cary Hamel	NCC	Team member
Christian Artuso	Bird Studies Canada	Project advisor
Christine Chilton	NCC	Team member
Jeff Polakoff	NCC	Team member
Jordan Becker	NCC	Team member
Josh Dillabough	NCC	Plan lead
Julie Pelc	NCC	Team member
Kevin Teneycke	NCC	Team member
Laura Holt	NCC	Team member
Melissa Grantham	NCC	Team member
Michelle Dano	NCC	Project advisor
Natalie Nikiforuk	NCC	Project advisor
Nicola Koper	University of Manitoba	Project advisor
Rebekah Neufeld	NCC	Team member
Stephen Geitz	NCC	Team member
Steven Harper	NCC	Team member

## Acknowledgements

---

Plan development benefited from a workshop held October 28<sup>th</sup> in Melita Manitoba. In addition to NCC Manitoba staff, 19 participants representing conservation organizations, partners, landowners, species experts and government representatives discussed the environmental, social and economic factors influencing mixed-grass prairie and grassland bird conservation in the Natural Area. Attendees included: Christian Artuso, Bird Studies Canada; Yasemin Keeler, Turtle Mountain Conservation District; Henry Nelson, Manitoba Forage and Grasslands Association; Janet Moore, Critical Wildlife Habitat Program; Lena Vanden Elsen, Ducks Unlimited; Ron Bazin, Environment Canada; Dean Brooker, West Souris Conservation District; Allison Krause Danielson, Conservation Water Stewardship; Cameron Wood, NCC Saskatchewan Region; Carol Graham, Manitoba Habitat Heritage; Callie Bowman, Bird Studies Canada; Ken DeSmet, Manitoba conservation and Water Stewardship; Mae Elsinger, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Joan Murray, landowner; Mary and Dave Wang, landowners; Margaret McRae, landowner; Keith Vanblaeslare, Turtle Mountain Conservation District; Lisa Vanbaeslare, landowner.

Dr. Christian Artuso of Bird Studies Canada and Dr. Nicky Koper of the University of Manitoba provided information advice on grassland bird conservation issues and approaches. Andrew Didiuk of Environment Canada provided information on the status and range of Great Plains Toads. Candace Parks of the Invasive Species

Council of Manitoba and Bob Tingey of the Pipestone Weed District provided information on the status of invasive species and monitoring and control activities in the Natural Area.

NCC Manitoba's Scientific Advisory Committee (Terry Galloway, Bob Wrigley, Elizabeth Punter, Bob Jones, Nicky Koper, Larry Demarch) provided advice through engagement in a review of status and effectiveness monitoring results as part of developing NACP II.

NACP development was supported by a grant from the Province of Manitoba and the Government of Canada's Natural Areas Conservation Program (NACP). The NACP is a unique public-private partnership to accelerate the pace of land conservation across southern Canada. NCC manages the program. Federal funds are matched by contributions raised by NCC and its partners.

## References

---

Marshall, I.B. & P.H. Schut 1999. A National Ecological Framework for Canada – Overview. Ecosystems Science Directorate, Environment Canada and Research Branch, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Ottawa, ON. Available online at:  
<http://sis.agr.gc.ca/cansis/nsdb/ecostrat/intro.html>

Riley, J.L., S.E. Green and K.E. Brodribb. 2007. A Conservation Blueprint for Canada's Prairies & Parklands. Nature Conservancy of Canada, Toronto, ON 226 pp. plus DVD-ROM.

The Nature Conservancy. Undated. Global Grasslands Campaign Case Statement. Accessed September 21, 2009 at:  
[http://www.nature.org/aboutus/campaign/files/casestatement\\_grasslands.pdf](http://www.nature.org/aboutus/campaign/files/casestatement_grasslands.pdf)

TNC 2001. Ecoregions of the United States of America. The Nature Conservancy, Western Conservation Science Centre. Accessed August 20, 2009 at:  
<http://gis.tnc.org/data/MapbookWebsite/getimage.php?id=3>

## Appendix

---

### **Conservation Planning Approach**

NCC has committed to examining the effectiveness of conservation activities using an adaptive management approach. To do so, NCC adopted the Conservation Measure's Partnership (CMP)'s *Open Standards for the Practices of Conservation* as an adaptive and results based planning method. For more information on this approach and the methods used in the development of this NACP visit:

<http://cmp-openstandards.org/>

### **Threat and Conservation Actions Classifications**

Threat and Conservation Action Class and Nomenclature are based on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Classification Schemes:

Conservation Actions:

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes/conservation-actions-classification-scheme-ver2>

Threats:

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes/threats-classification-scheme>