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Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative

Stewardship Investment Program Application Form - 2024

Program Background

The Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative – Stewardship Investment Program is a multi-year (2021-2024) collaboration to celebrate, steward and protect one of Canada’s most ecologically valuable and threatened ecosystems: native prairie grasslands. The Nature Conservancy of Canada, together with Ducks Unlimited Canada, Manitoba Habitat Conservancy, Southern Alberta Land Trust Society and Western Sky Land Trust will work with their landowners and land managers to implement a Stewardship Investment Program to accelerate the adoption of sustainable approaches to protect and restore biodiversity in this unique landscape.

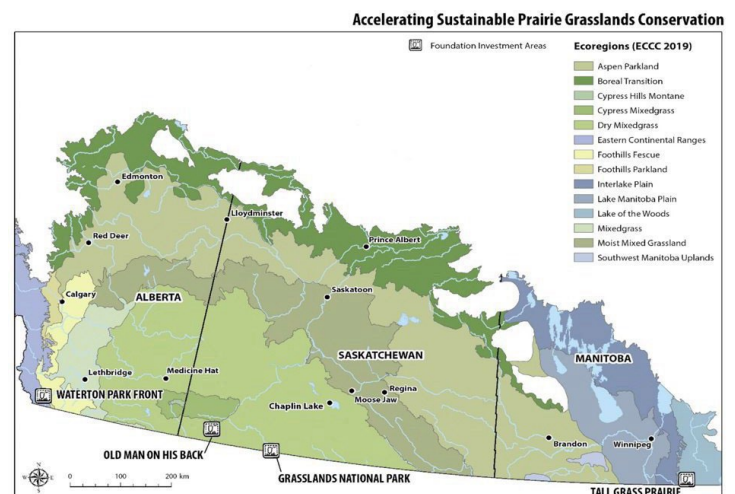


Canadian prairie grasslands are complex ecosystems that support critical biodiversity. These working landscapes provide habitat for hundreds of species, including migration stops for millions of birds. Grasslands provide food for Canadians by supporting soil health, offering grazing for livestock, and acting as habitat for pollinators. Native grasslands are resilient and play a key role in mitigating the effects of climate change, but once destroyed are difficult to restore. Through this program, we will work with local communities and grassland managers to increase the amount of land protection in the prairies, improve species at risk habitat, enable wildlife movement, and ultimately increase long- term ecological and economic stability.

Program Eligibility

Landowners with an existing conservation agreement from a partnering land trust that protects intact native grasslands, renters of the Nature Conservancy of Canada fee simple land, and eligible community pastures and their patrons can apply for Stewardship Investment Program grants. The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), Manitoba Habitat Conservancy (MHC), Southern Alberta Land Trust Society (SALTS), and Western Sky Land Trust (WSLT) will work with Applicants to screen and prioritize projects according to the acres of land that can be improved, and the biodiversity and ecosystem enhancements that can be achieved through nine categories: 1) improve range utilization, 2) increase native range, 3) improve wildlife habitat, 4) support species at risk, 5) reduce fencing impact on wildlife movement, 6) improve water management, 7) manage weeds and invasive species, 8) educate grassland stewards, 9) reduce predator conflict.

Land Trusts will employ conservation prioritization tools to examine occurrences of species at risk, rare or endangered plant, bird or wildlife species when considering project approval. Lands must be located within the 14 priority ecoregions identified across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba; projects may be ranked by the Land Trust to prioritize funding to projects with the highest biodiversity outcome rating.



Potential projects will be screened by Land Trusts to verify eligibility. Projects may require a site visit by land trust staff to determine project suitability. Applications may be submitted from January 3, 2024 to June 30, 2024. Land Trusts will submit projects to the NCC Weston Family Prairie Grassland Initiative (WFPGI) program staff (the Program) for final approval prior to implementation. Applicants will have until November 30, 2024 to complete projects, and final verification from the Applicant's Land Trust partner must be completed prior to the release of grant funds. Funding will be awarded for an average of \$10,000 per project. Project costs can exceed \$10,000, but partial funding may be awarded. Applicants are responsible for all costs beyond the agreed upon grant value.

Examples of Projects

Stewardship Investment projects may include such things as removing old fence, building wildlife friendly fence, installing remote water systems, conducting range health assessments, species surveys, weed control through herbicide or biological control and workshops or classes to support landowners that want to improve grassland stewardship. A comprehensive list of 36 separate projects follows in Appendix A.

Grant recipients of portable infrastructure, such as portable water systems or electric fencing, will use the equipment on the designated lands in the application for the length of the project (June 2021 - December 2024) to achieve lasting biodiversity results. These portable units shall not be sold or transferred without express permission from the Land Trust and NCC Program Director.

Applicant Information	
Name	
Company (if incorporated)	
Name of Registered Land Owner	
Applicant Mailing Address	
City	
Physical Land Location of Applicant	
Phone Number	
Email	
Application Date	
Legal Land Description of Project	
Indicate if the Project is on a Conservation Easement, Fee Simple land, or Pasture. If Pasture/patron, please indicate pasture name:	<input type="checkbox"/> Fee Simple <input type="checkbox"/> Easement <input type="checkbox"/> Community Pasture <input type="checkbox"/> Pasture Patron
Project Information (to be completed by Land Trust)	
Land Trust	
Land Trust Contact (staff name)	
Legal Land Description of Project	
Ecoregion	
GIS ID# or Unique Project Name	
Date of Site Visit to Confirm Eligibility	
Date Approved by the Program	
Estimated Project Completion Date	
Verified Complete by Land Trust Staff	
Budget (to be completed by Land Trust or Applicant)	
Please list all estimated costs required to complete the project (capital, labour/contractor) and in-kind labour costs provided by landowner.	
Project Capital Cost (equipment, materials)	\$
Labour or custom work	\$
Project Total Cost	\$
Funding Request	\$
In-Kind Labour (in hours) (Landowner or other)	

Applicant (Landowner) Statement of Declaration

1. I hereby apply to the Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative Stewardship Investment Program (the "Program"), administered by the Nature Conservancy Canada (NCC) in partnership with _____ (Land Trust) for the funding requested in this application.
2. I declare that I am the Applicant or that I am authorized to sign on behalf of the Applicant. I agree that all references to "I", "me" and "my" in this Statement of Declaration shall be deemed to read the "Applicant", with the necessary grammatical changes required; and that by my signature and delivery of this application, including this Statement of Declaration, to the Program, I understand I will be legally bound by, and agree to adhere to the Program guidelines, including the terms set out below.
3. I declare that my project is as described in Appendix A.
4. I declare that:
 - a. the eligible project was not commenced before January 3, 2024;
 - b. any capital infrastructure purchased through the Program shall be utilized on the associated lands enrolled, as indicated on the application form for the duration of the agreement (ending December 31, 2024);
 - c. I will secure all necessary permits, licenses and regulatory approvals where required prior to commencing the project.
5. I agree that NCC and related agencies will in no way be liable for anything related to the construction of an approved project. Neither NCC, nor the associated Land Trust, shall be liable to me for any liabilities that I incur in the performance of the work undertaken by me in this project. I shall indemnify and hold NCC, the Land Trust, and employees, agents, and representatives, past or present, harmless from and against all claims, liabilities, losses, damages, costs, expenses and causes of action, including claims:
 - a. arising out of any breach or failure by me to perform any of my obligations under this Program;
 - b. relating to injury (including death) to persons or loss of or damage to property arising out of the implementation of the project by me or my contractors, officers, agents or employees; or
 - c. arising out of the work undertaken by me related to this project including, but not limited to, claims for builders' liens, workers' compensation, employment insurance, holidays, or other employment benefits.

6. I acknowledge and agree that I am not eligible for reimbursement unless and until 1) the Program has provided approval for the project(s), and 2) all necessary project completion verification documentation has been provided to the Program. I agree to inform the Land Trust as soon as practicable of any changes to my application information for the purpose of administering this application. I acknowledge and agree that any changes made to the project without the approval of the Program may not be reimbursed. Amounts reimbursed to applicant shall not exceed the budget for labour and custom work without prior approval by the Program.
7. I acknowledge and agree that eligible expenses may include costs such as capital costs for water systems, fencing, custom work such as for well drilling or fencing, and rental costs for machinery to complete projects. Ineligible costs include travel costs to pick up materials, or the purchase of tools to build or complete the projects. Applicants may elect to perform some of the custom work themselves and will be compensated at a rate approved by the Program, not to exceed \$30/hour for labour. Rates for machinery rental must be approved by the Program.
8. The following additional requirements are applicable where the applicant is a pasture patron or a grazing lease holder on NCC owned land.
 - a. I agree that the equipment and supplies purchased with program funding will be used to contribute to improving grassland and rangeland management;
 - b. I agree to maintain the equipment and supplies purchased with program funding in good and serviceable condition;
 - c. I agree to return the equipment and supplies to NCC if at any time prior to December 31, 2024 the equipment and supplies are not being used for the purposes of improved grassland and rangeland management;
 - d. Following completion of the Program on Dec 31, 2024, any equipment of portable nature, such as portable electric fencing or a portable solar system, will be owned by the applicant. Permanent equipment installed on the landscape remains the property of NCC.
9. I agree to provide information, including access to project records such as original receipts, proof of payments for costs claimed and photos of the completed eligible project, that the Program may reasonably require.
10. I declare and agree that to avoid duplication of reimbursement to be made pursuant to this application, no other claim has been made, or will be made to other programs, for the eligible expenditures that are the subject of this project, to programs administered under any other government grant, rebate or assistance program unless otherwise disclosed in this application.

11. I agree that all reporting to Canada Revenue Agency of income and expenses arising from the project through the Program are my responsibility.
12. I agree to provide upon request to Land Trust and/or NCC : information about me or my project, which will be collected for the purposes of:
 - i. verifying and processing the application;
 - ii. determining my eligibility for the Program;
 - iii. verifying that regulatory requirements have been addressed;
 - iv. verifying project completion and eligibility for reimbursement;
 - v. research and statistical analysis of program outcomes as they relate to biodiversity outcomes.
13. I agree that random audits may be performed, and I agree to cooperate with NCC and Land Trusts in the completion of any audit, evaluation, or survey of the project or of the Program.
14. I agree that NCC, Land Trust or designated representatives are authorized to enter the properties identified on the application in order to conduct an inspection of the eligible project, when completed, that is subject of this application, up to the end of the project, December 31, 2024.
15. I declare that this application does not constitute a conflict of interest for the Landowner, Applicant, Land Trust staff or board members. I declare that NCC and my Land Trust representative have been notified of any personal relationships I hold with members of their organization or board which may be perceived as a conflict of interest.
16. I agree that payments to Applicants will not exceed the grant subtotal in the budget above and that any cost overruns or expenditures in excess of the grant amount will be the responsibility of the applicant. Financing, interest, legal fees, or taxes are not eligible for reimbursement.
17. The Land Trust reserves the right to terminate the Agreement if the Applicant fails to complete the project as described in Appendix A by November 30, 2024. In such event, the Land Trust is not liable to provide compensation for materials and/or labour to the Landowner for partial completion of the project and any advance payments will be reimbursed to the Land Trust.
18. I declare that the information included in this application is true and correct in every respect. I understand that the provision of false, misleading, or fraudulent information, or a failure to comply with the program guidelines may result in this application or future applications being denied, and any payments issued being declared an overpayment and must be repaid.

Applicant Name

Witnessed by Land Trust Name

Applicant Signature

Witnessed by Land Trust Signature

Lessee Name (fee simple projects)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Project Goal and Rationale (to be filled by Applicant)

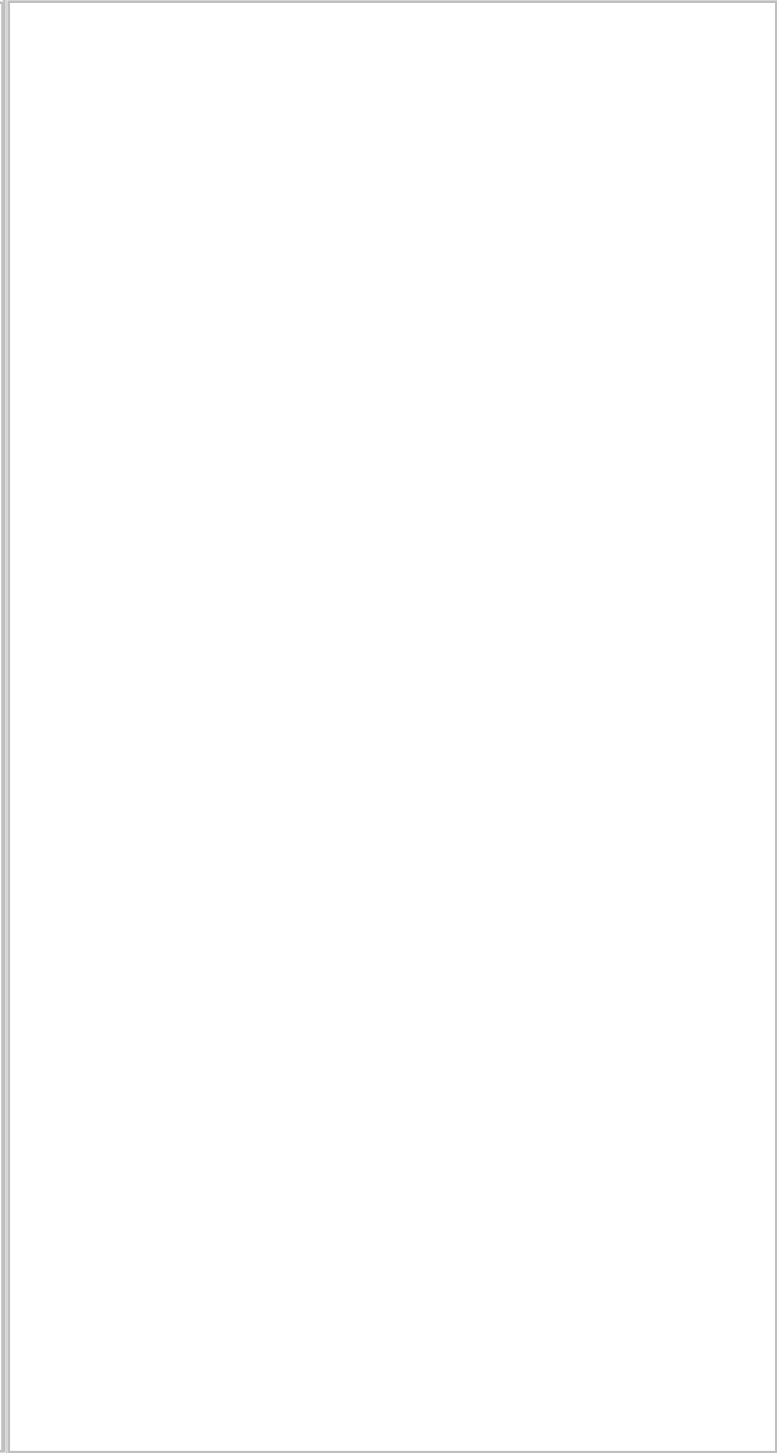
How will this project be helpful to your operation? What biodiversity outcomes could be improved, such as creating safe wildlife corridors by removing old fence, replacing with wildlife-friendly fencing, improved grazing management, invasive weed control, safe access to healthy water sources?

Appendix A - Eligibility Criteria (to be completed by Applicant)

Is the property over 100 acres?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	# Acres directly impacted:
Does this project improve grazing management and biodiversity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	# Acres influenced*:
Please indicate the stewardship investment category. Check all that apply:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve range utilization	<input type="checkbox"/> Improve wildlife habitat	<input type="checkbox"/> Increase native range
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve water management	<input type="checkbox"/> Improve fencing impact on wildlife	<input type="checkbox"/> Support species at risk
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve weed and invasive species management	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce predator conflict	<input type="checkbox"/> Educate grassland stewards
Please indicate stewardship investment project. Check all that apply:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct range health assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Install portable cross fencing	<input type="checkbox"/> Install virtual fencing
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete a conservation ranch plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Install electric fencing in calving areas, bee yards, and other farm attractants	<input type="checkbox"/> Smooth bottom wire to at least 46 cm height
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct species survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Reclamation of disturbed area with native plants	<input type="checkbox"/> Install fence reflectors
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete environmental farm plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Restore converted lands with native plants	<input type="checkbox"/> Smooth top wire no more than 102 cm height
<input type="checkbox"/> Habitat assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Perform prescribed fire	<input type="checkbox"/> Remove old fence
<input type="checkbox"/> Habitat improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Install nest boxes, platforms, or dens	<input type="checkbox"/> Create 30 cm gap between top 2 wires
<input type="checkbox"/> Remove in-stream artificial barriers	<input type="checkbox"/> Reintroduce beaver	<input type="checkbox"/> Solar-powered pump systems
<input type="checkbox"/> Install wildlife-friendly exclusion fence around wetlands and riparian areas	<input type="checkbox"/> Install culvert to restore surface water flow across barriers	<input type="checkbox"/> Install off-site watering system
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct riparian health assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Install dugout	<input type="checkbox"/> Enroll in ranch family bear smart training
<input type="checkbox"/> Increase in-stream coarse debris	<input type="checkbox"/> Biological control	<input type="checkbox"/> Installation of predator-proof grain bin
<input type="checkbox"/> Spraying of weeds	<input type="checkbox"/> Small ruminant grazing	<input type="checkbox"/> Installation of predator-proof dead stock bin
<input type="checkbox"/> Host tour or event for ranchers	<input type="checkbox"/> Attend workshop or course	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

* Broader area impacted, if applicable. For example, a new well/water system might directly impact the 160 acre piece of land it is installed on, and also influence positive biodiversity outcomes on the larger area of the ranch.

Please provide a map, shapefile, GIS, or sketch of project and area. (to be completed by Land Trust.)

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying the left half of the page below the header. It is intended for a map, sketch, or GIS data.A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying the right half of the page below the header. It is intended for a map, sketch, or GIS data.

Provide details in spaces below such as project description, total acres impacted, species at risk, and any specific vegetation or weed identification if appropriate. Certain projects, such as fencing or remote water systems may also *influence* a larger area, by improving grazing management for example. Please estimate acres influenced, where possible.

1. Provide detailed project description. Include where the project will be located, including legal land description.

2. Outline total acres directly impacted. Certain projects, such as fencing or remote water systems may also *influence* a larger area, by improving grazing management for example.

3. How will this project have a positive impact? Are there species at risk on the property that may benefit from this project? Will their habitat be improved, or will grazing management be improved that might help grassland health?

4. Please provide a budget for the project. Include estimates for labour, custom work, and materials. Applicants may provide the custom work; prices require approval prior to starting.