

Grasslands Conservation Council of BC
STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2022 - 2026



Contact



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Photo Mike Keefer

Stories

1. Foreword
2. Chair's Message
3. British Columbia's Grasslands
4. Vision, Mission, and Principles
5. Key Priority Issues
6. Strategic Direction for 2022-2026
7. Strategic Areas: Outcomes and Actions
 - Community Engagement, Education, Outreach and Communications
 - Conservation, Restoration and Stewardship
 - Supporting Research Informed by Science, Indigenous and Local Knowledge
 - Policy Support, Input, Recommendations and Guidance
 - Building Capacity in the GCC



Foreword

This 5-year Strategic Action Plan (2022-2026) was developed through an in-person workshop with the GCC board in September 2021 followed by an online survey open to members and non-members for feedback on the vision, mission and strategic areas. This information was incorporated into a draft plan and further refined by GCC steering committee members to this final version. It is intended to be a living document revisited every year with feedback welcomed from our members, partners, funders, and the public.

Chair's Message

As we approach the next five years, it is a time to reflect on the work done by GCC in its 20 + years, largely by a committed group of volunteers, our directors. Their efforts have been complemented by our managers, and let's not forget a supportive membership. The work of the GCC has been made possible by membership dues and supplemented with funds afforded by our many generous donors.

Going forward we need to keep up this important work. We are entering a period when the world struggles with climate change and the many problems caused by it. Well managed grasslands can play an important part in solving this formidable problem by sequestering carbon and storing it securely in the soil. Our work should include studying the mechanisms involved in this process with a goal to maximize sequestration with appropriate management.

The GCC has a role to identify the many threats to our grasslands and work towards minimizing them. One of the biggest threats the grasslands face is encroachment by invasive species. Research should focus on developing management strategies that reduce invasives initially, but keep them in check in the longer term. Monitoring and mapping the extent of invasive infestations is work for us to concentrate on. This needs to be followed by action on the ground where invasives are on the increase.

We should support research to develop grazing strategies that discourage invasives and allow grassland communities to recover and thrive. Seeking more bio-control agents is important work that GCC should encourage. The use of selective chemical control agents is often the fastest way to bring heavy infestations under control and should not be ruled out. For the long term proper grazing strategies and bio controls are more realistic measures and education, and outreach to land managers is a crucial step for GCC to play a role in.

The work of the GCC can only be achieved if we find long term secure funding. Finding funding for ongoing projects continues to be important but finding core funding to keep a full time manager in place and possibly an assistant is key to our success. This will allow us to carry out the work that we acquire specific funding for.

The massive wildfires of late have burned many diverse landscapes. We have an important role to ensure that the grassland portion of these landscapes is protected. The powerful forest lobby is inclined to ignore biodiversity and plant densely spaced conifers without any consideration for the value of a diverse landscape. Small grassland patches interspersed with deciduous trees and shrubs amongst the conifers are something worth protecting. Recovery from fire needs to be done with a landscape lens, and biodiversity as the goal. The devastating effects of insect infestations and the intensity of recent wildfires is proof of the folly associated with unbroken stands of conifers, particularly monocultures like that which the forest industry promotes. Free to grow pine stands seem to be the accepted norm on most harvested areas. You don't know what you've got 'till it's gone.

~ Bob Haywood-Farmer

Photo Wendy Gardner

BC Grasslands



Photo Nick Hamilton



Photo Wendy Gardner



Photo Paul Sanborn



Vision, Mission & Principles

Vision

It is our vision that British Columbia's grassland ecosystems are healthy, interconnected, and supporting rich biodiversity that is valued by current and future generations.

Mission

The Grassland Conservation Council's mission is to ensure the conservation, restoration and stewardship of British Columbia's grasslands through partnerships and collaboration across people, place and purpose.

Principles Guiding the Grassland Conservation Council's Actions

The GCC aims to achieve our vision and mission through fostering trust. Our priority is to work collaboratively to encourage increased awareness and stewardship of BC grasslands, and to promote innovative approaches and perspectives from throughout the province. In so doing we will endeavour to constantly improve our relationships with all of our partners, especially First Nations, the general public and governments. Our overarching goal is to ensure consensus with our partners on collaborations and partnerships to conserve grasslands.



Photo Mike Keefer



Priorities

Key Priority Issues to Support the Conservation of BC's Grasslands include:

- o Balancing human values and uses to ensure grassland ecosystem health;
- o Using a philosophy of *Walking on Two Legs* to bring Indigenous knowledge into balance with western scientific knowledge in service of upholding an Indigenous stewardship ethic that is embedded in Indigenous ways of relating to land and embodies principles of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility;
- o Reversing patterns of increasing invasive species abundance and tackling cross-jurisdictional management challenges;
- o Increasing awareness of the importance of grasslands;
- o Focusing on collaboration versus competition to avoid isolation.

Strategic Direction for 2022-2026

Through our 5-year Strategic Action Plan, we will continue to focus on engagement and education activities that increase awareness and recognition of the diverse native grasslands of BC. We will prioritize supporting partnerships and stewardship efforts by engaging in collaborative initiatives. This 5-year plan identifies key outcomes within our five key strategic areas of focus, as well as the essential actions and activities to achieve those outcomes. The improved conservation and stewardship of our native grasslands will require that the GCC is financially sustainable in order to deliver those outcomes. Our areas of focus will continue to be informed by the GCC board, member and non-member feedback, and our organizational vision and mission. We invite you to be part of this journey with us.

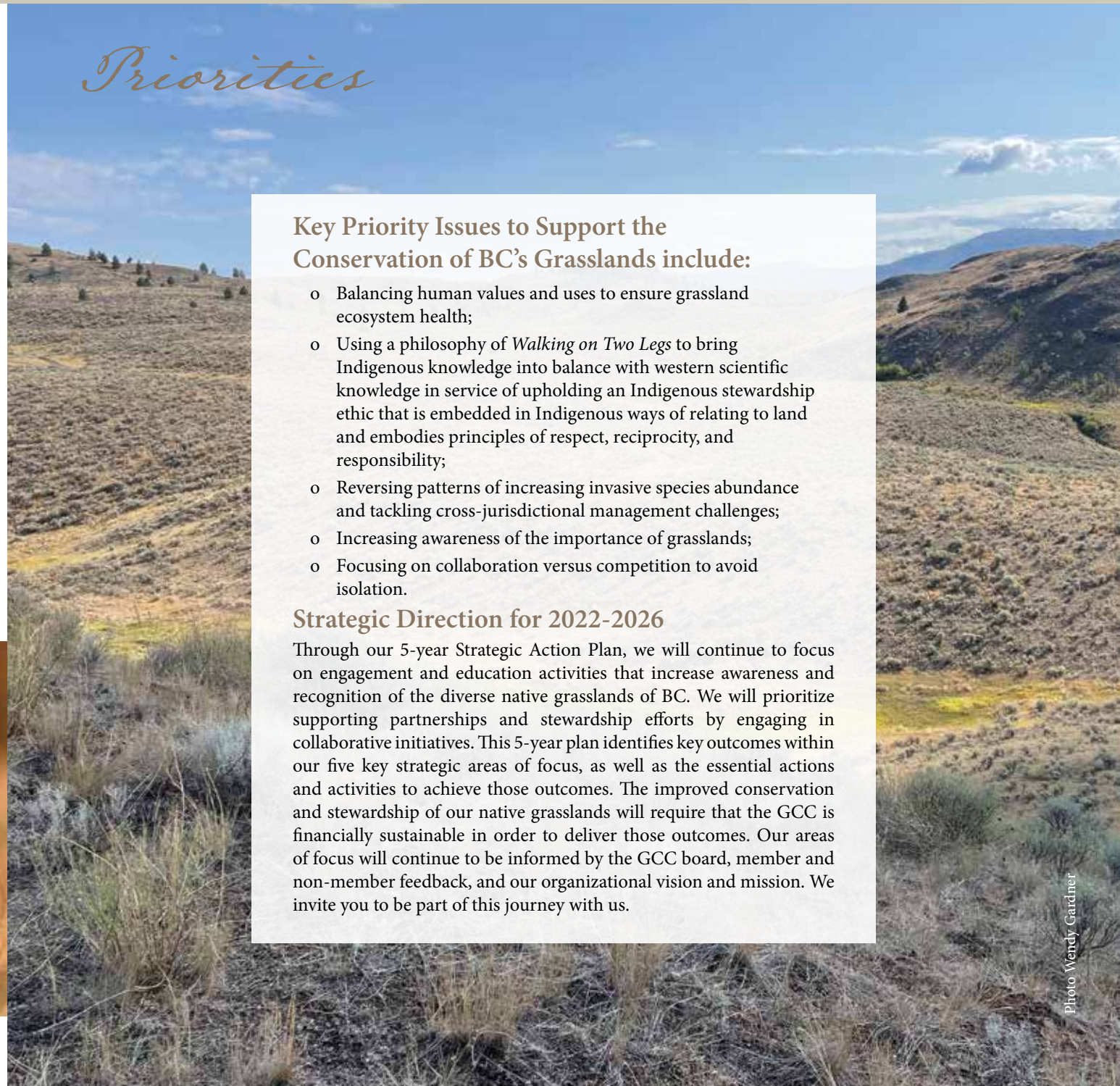


Photo Wendy Gardner

Strategic Areas

OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS

Community Engagement, Education, Outreach and Communications

We Aim To:

- Increase British Columbians' knowledge about the role of healthy grasslands in provincial biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and the importance of stewardship across sectors in supporting the resilience of grasslands to land use impacts and climate change.
- Increase British Columbians' awareness of the importance of collaborative grassland conservation efforts, research and land use decisions in supporting the conservation, restoration, and stewardship of BC grasslands.

Key Actions:

- Support an Outreach Coordinator contract position
- Create original material and collaborative opportunities to increase public awareness through:
 - > Video series
 - > Webinars
 - > Magazine
 - > Website
 - > Community events
 - > Social media
 - > Promoting external organizations and activities
- Partner with other regional organizations engaged in grassland conservation, restoration, and stewardship projects to leverage funding opportunities and amplify the reach of conservation and stewardship activities.
- Collaborate with partners and private land stewardship organizations to deliver outreach material and locally-relevant grassland management educational opportunities and field days.
- Expand the reach of our social media and community engagement program across all regions of BC, increasing both the numbers of followers and views, as well as the diversity of audience members.



Conservation, Restoration and Stewardship

We Aim To:

- Facilitate both broad and in depth knowledge exchange and conversation on topics to improve grassland conservation, restoration and stewardship.
- Lead and support collaborative initiatives that support improved grassland conservation, restoration, and stewardship
- Undertake projects that will build in scale from local to regional and provincial applications to improve grassland mapping, conservation, restoration and stewardship

Key Actions:

- Host annual provincial workshop(s) and field day(s) focusing on stewardship, conservation and restoration initiatives relating to grassland
- Support a Provincial workshop on restoration following fire –Province to Project bringing land managers and practitioners together across sectors.
- Lead and facilitate hands-on collaborative restoration projects in all regions of the province involving all types of grasslands, including:
 1. Friends of Lac du Bois invasive plant management project to improve species at risk habitat;
 2. Laurie Guichon Memorial Grassland Interpretive Site invasive species demonstration project for spotted knapweed control;
 3. Oak Meadow community restoration projects;
 4. Other projects as they arise.



Photo Mike Keefer

Supporting Research Informed by Science, Indigenous and Local Knowledge

We Aim to:

- Establish GCC as a hub for collaborative research partnerships.
- Support innovative projects to map, inventory and assess the health of the grasslands of BC.

Actions:

- Facilitate an annual event or series of events to bring grassland western science, Indigenous, and local knowledge to stewards and decision makers.
- Support projects to remotely map and classify grassland ecosystems.
- Support projects to assess the health of grassland ecosystems across the province.”
- “Create new funding opportunity(ies) for student directly through GCC funding sources, or indirectly through facilitating industry and other partnerships.” [
- Provide support for collaborative research efforts such as contracts and collaborations, including graduate student research involving universities, industry, provincial, and federal governments.

Policy Support, Input, Recommendations and Guidance

We Aim To:

- Be recognised as the “go to” organization for information on the distribution and ecology of BC grasslands, and a body willing to provide input on policies related to native grassland conservation.
- Represent a trusted source of knowledge for decision-makers on the effectiveness of management practices that support grassland conservation.
- Be identified as a catalyst for bringing together specialists, local knowledge, and indegenous knowledge to develop guidance in support of policies around grassland retention and stewardship.
- Cultivate trusting relationships with responsible people at all levels government.
- Bring the expertise and the robust guidance of GCC board, staff, and partners to addressing issues of grassland conservationthrough presentations, workshops, social media and written materials.

Actions:

- Proactively send policy briefs on grassland issues to relevant Government representatives (e.g., Ministers and Deputy Minsters, Tribal Councils).
- Curate a publicly-available library of products and recommendations surrounding key topics that arise from virtual and face to face workshops and forums
- Create a series of papers on key grassland threats and solutions that will be available through GCC and shared with partners and all levels of government.
- GCC is seen as the most relevant provincial organization by partners, land managers, and decision-makers to seek out for relevant guidance on issues relating to grassland grassland conservation policy and practice, specifically surrounding wildfires, grassland restoration, forest encroachment, urban expansion, and recreation.

Building Capacity in the GCC

We Aim to:

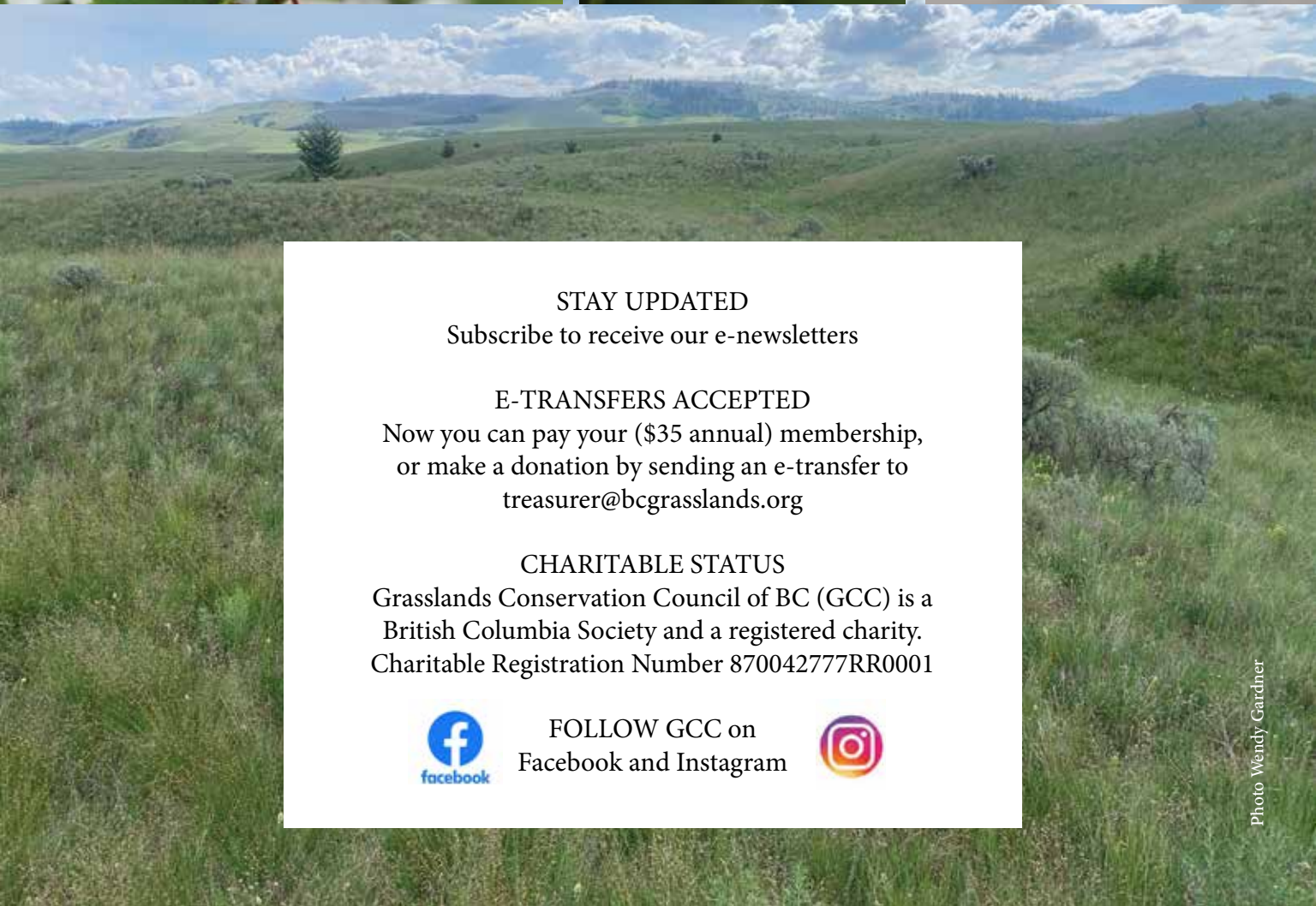
- Be a financially sustainable organization with staff dedicated to coordinating activities that address our vision and mission.
- Have a predictable, ongoing revenue stream to support a full time staff that can manage the organization’s strategic area actions
- Develop a body of supporters and donors to supplement project-based revenue streams to enable the ongoing support of full time staff

Outcomes:

- Expand the organization’s membership base to four times that in 2021/22.
- Grow the quality of integrated projects in which GCC is involved to support long term financial support.
- Grow the number and range of partner organization memberships as well as corporate memberships.
- Grow the number of long-term grant funders who support of key GCC initiatives.
- Write and implement a GCC engagement and funding strategy.
- Host an annual fundraising and donor recognition event to thank supporters.



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Now you can pay your (\$35 annual) membership,
or make a donation by sending an e-transfer to
treasurer@bcgrasslands.org

CHARITABLE STATUS

Grasslands Conservation Council of BC (GCC) is a
British Columbia Society and a registered charity.
Charitable Registration Number 870042777RR0001



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