

Renewal Time for SK PCAP!

For the past 15 years, the Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan (PCAP) has been working towards a shared vision of for healthy native prairie ecosystems as vital parts of our vibrant and strong communities. To accomplish this vision, PCAP has operated on 5 year plans, and is currently working on development of the next 5-Year Framework. A renewal meeting was held recently where 23 of the 31 PCAP partners were in attendance to provide input on development of the new Framework that will guide the organization for 2014-2019.

To begin the process, a review of the previous 5-year plan was conducted. Partners agreed that the Strategic Framework 2009-2013 was successful on many fronts. PCAP's website is full of information, guides, and workshops that all pertain to grasslands conservation. However, not all objectives were met successfully in part because of the difficulty in making accurate assessments due to the lack of specific performance measures. Partners felt that in order to demonstrate trends and effectively make the case for grasslands conservation policies and programs, it is critical that PCAP develop an evidence-based approach to gathering data and developing metrics. This approach is also critical to PCAP's ability to educate the public, students, and politicians on the social, economic and environmental assets contained in prairie grasslands. This suggestion will be taken into account in the 2014-2019 framework.

During the renewal meeting, participants identified a number of trends such as increasing urbanization, resource development, reduced economic resources available for conservation, shifting government priorities and fewer people with direct ties to the land as some of the issues facing native prairie conservation. With these trends in mind, partners came to the following conclusions:

- Education and awareness should become the primary motivation and focus for PCAP;
- Communication within the PCAP Partners needs to improve through sharing information, developing collaborative opportunities, and developing key messages to be used in briefs for the public, students, and politicians;
- Valuing ecological goods and services has been a difficult and contentious issue. This area requires facilitated dialogue between the Partners to encourage information sharing and problem-solving.

In addition, partners agreed that streamlining to 4 priority areas with specific objectives and measurable outcomes would be an improvement in the new Framework. The four priority areas suggested are:

1. Native prairie education and awareness
2. Sustainable/responsible human impact
3. Valuing ecological goods and services
4. Ecosystems management – invasive alien species and grazing

In each of these 4 priority areas, objectives, strategies and outcomes/activities were identified. Wherever possible, objectives and measurables will be defined in terms of quantity, quality, and time.

The next steps will include a refining of ideas and input gathered from partners at this renewal meeting and development of a draft 2014-2019 Framework document. The draft will be sent to all partners for review and comment with the final document to be signed during native prairie appreciation week in June of 2014.

Input provided by partners at the renewal meeting acknowledged the importance of native prairie stakeholders working together. The Framework 2014-2019 provides a new opportunity for organizations to “pick their spots”, to find the collaborative opportunities on which they can be successful, and put aside those areas where we lack consensus or resources. SK PCAP looks forward to continuing and improving this collaborative approach to native prairie conservation over the next 5 years!