



Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan is pleased to announce SODCAP Inc. is the winner of the 2020 Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation Award! SODCAP was recognized at an awards ceremony at the 7th Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation and 5th Transboundary Grasslands Partnership Workshops on February 26th, 2020.

About SODCAP Inc.

The South of the Divide Conservation Action Program Inc. (SODCAP Inc.) is an environmental non-government organization that has been actively working over the last six years in Native Prairie Restoration and Reclamation in southwestern Saskatchewan, Canada. SODCAP Inc., in partnership with other environmental NGOs, government agencies, and industry, has proven to be successful in delivering Stewardship Programs that encourage producers to make species at risk a priority in their management decision making on their ranches. A recent, third party funded postdoc research from the University of British Columbia, found that SODCAP conservation and restoration programs have a significant value for producers and a very positive impact on habitat conservation.

With funding from various sources including Environment and Climate Change Canada, SK Ministry of Agriculture, Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, SK Ministry of Environment, Water Security Agency, Saskatchewan Cattleman's Association, Rancher's Stewardship Alliance Inc., SaskPower, Crescent Point Energy, and the US National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, SODCAP provides financial incentives for native prairie restoration, reclamation and conservation to producers and First Nation Communities, through a variety of programs and agreements.

More than 250,000 acres of critical habitat and/or native grasslands are currently under some type of SODCAP conservation or restoration agreements on private and public lands, involving 45 individual projects. Habitat Restoration Agreements, for example, are long-term agreements (>20 years) signed between SODCAP and land owners, aimed to restore vegetation composition, structure, and functioning of native prairie on currently cultivated lands. SODCAP Inc. provides native seed mixes and technical support, and the producer is responsible for seedbed preparation, weed management, and seeding. A grazing management plan is always associated with these restoration plans.

Results-Based Conservation Agreements is another type of program that SODCAP successfully delivers. In this case, agreements are designed to encourage producers to make management decisions that support habitat for a specific target species - Greater Sage Grouse or Sprague's Pipit, for example. SODCAP's agroecologists work with individual producers to help them meet habitat requirements for the target species. In exchange for achieving the desired habitat targets, producers are rewarded with financial incentives. Habitat assessments, management plan reviews, and payments to producers occur on an annual basis.

Habitat Management Agreements is another type of programs that SODCAP is implementing, which focuses on improving and maintaining critical and important habitats for species at risk.

Habitat management plans may include activities such as upholding appropriate stocking rates, improving grazing management, avoiding destructive activities, and monitoring. Producers are fully or partially compensated for all costs associated with implementing the agreement and any potential lost opportunity. Besides those agreements with producers, SODCAP works in many other projects to improve and conserve native prairies in Saskatchewan. In partnership with the Frenchman Wood River Weed Management Area, for example, SODCAP is implementing integrated weed management projects that focus on leafy spurge control on native grasslands and along the Frenchman river. One of these projects, encompassed 6,880 acres of native grassland near of Cypress Hills, and used an integrated approach to control leafy spurge by using spurge beetles and target-grazing with goats.

SODCAP also teamed up with Parks Canada's Grasslands National Park (GNP) and the SK Stock Growers Association to implement two Grass Banking initiatives with local producers, with the goal of creating habitat for multiple species at risk. These projects covers more than 40,000 acres of public and private land, much of which is considered critical habitat for Greater Sage-grouse, Sprague's Pipits, and Chestnut-collared Longspurs.

In another initiative, SODCAP is also collaborating with the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association to engage producers who own or manage critical and important habitat for species at risk, to enter into Term Conservation Easements. SODCAP is also partnering with the SK Ministry of Agriculture and other Watershed Stewardship Associations to provide support and expertise for producers in submitting applications for fund to the Farm Stewardship Program (FSP) and the Farm and Ranch Water Infrastructure Program (FRWIP). In 2019-20, SODCAP collaborated in twenty nine FSP and FRWIP applications. These projects include restoration and reclamation of cultivated lands, and habitat enhancement through improvement of grazing management in native prairies.

SODCAP demonstrates remarkable innovation in programming by working in Niche Product Branding initiatives with two livestock operations and individual ranchers, to market their beef produced on grasslands that are managed conservation purposes. This program attaches attributes to a beef product that the consumer values and therefore would select over other products and be willing to pay a premium. SODCAP in the process now of promoting these certified beef products. SODCAP continues working on new programs and projects.

With the collaboration of the SK Wildlife Federation and the SK Water Security Agency, SODCAP is looking to lead a project to restore and conserve important riparian habitats in the Saskatchewan portion of the Milk River watershed (Frenchman River and tributaries creeks). This project proposes working with producers that manage these watercourses, in order to improve and protect priority riparian areas for threatened Mountain Sucker and other aquatic species.

Finally, SODCAP outreach and extension programs are also a clear demonstration of the exceptional commitment of this organization in restoration and conservation of native prairies. SODCAP works on educating and increasing awareness through a variety of activities and communication channels, including E-newsletters (two per year), articles in producer's



magazines, workshops organized with other SODCAP partners (2-3 per year), participation and collaboration in Conferences and Meeting, and technical assistance to individual stakeholders. SODCAP's audiences include producers, industry, government, NGOs, research and educational institutions and general public.