

# Trilateral Grassland Conservation Letter of Intent Implementation Recommendations

The Trilateral Grassland Letter of Intent Implementation Team was convened in November 2023 and worked through May 2024 to provide recommendations on how to support the recommendations made in the Grasslands Letter of Intent. Listed actions aim to support the communities and the partnerships doing grassland conservation work.

The **vision and guidance** for the recommendation work is provided by the Grasslands Letter of Intent:

Effective, well-coordinated actions to conserve, restore, and connect grasslands across North America are urgently needed to halt or reverse grassland bird population declines, recover populations of other grassland wildlife, and recover rural communities. (from the Grasslands LOI with edits by the Implementation Plan Team)

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## **Recommended actions to support the Letter of Intent**

### General

- Create a forum where we can continue to have multi-nation grassland conservation conversations and follow-up on ideas and actions.
- Devote the plenary sessions at the next few Trilateral meetings and beyond to training and workshops on Indigenous Engagement and Reconciliation. As a demonstration of our commitment to improving our understanding and ability to meaningfully engage Indigenous Peoples in our shared work on grassland conservation.
  - Full training and workshops at Trilateral meetings *and beyond* could include:
    - How to re-work funding mechanisms to increase inclusivity
    - [The First Nations Principles of OCAP®](#)
- Create a history and a timeline of existing grassland implementation plans and calls to action. Include the relevance of these initiatives to efforts today.

### Holistic Approach

- Bridge all ways of knowing:
  - Indigenous communities are holistic (e.g. [the Beaver Bundle ceremony](#)).
  - Silos are part of the problem: they damage grasslands.
  - Shared vision helps us work towards integration and avoid silos.
  - Remember: if we measure one thing, we don't measure another.
- Examine cumulative impacts and effects on grasslands:
  - Determine impacts to grasslands from policy, plans, programs, industry and at watershed-scale (e.g. there are multiple inputs to inherent Blackfoot Confederacy rights)
  - Consider multiple levels of risk, sensitivity, and vulnerability.

### Networks

- Create alignments between existing grassland networks to ensure networks move forward together.
- Within networks, work to elevate solutions and funding for grasslands.
- Reach out to grassland conservation groups and encourage the inclusion of cross-cutting grassland topics in their work, while respecting the jurisdiction and limitations of each group.
  - Include grasslands in the large landscape connectivity (e.g. [Yellowstone to Yukon \(Y2Y\)](#)) and ecosystem restoration conversations and working groups.
- Encourage the inclusion of grasslands as a topic at “the table” of all other relevant groups.
  - Ask to be part of the [North American Forestry Commission \(NAFC\)](#) agenda and the [Forestry Working Group of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#) agenda (meets at the Tres Amigos/The North American meeting).
- Mainstream grassland conservation efforts and provide support to bring spheres like agriculture and environment together (like under the Convention on Biological Diversity).

- Promote the interconnectedness of all the Trilateral (and other) grassland initiatives:
  - Develop a map of initiatives with contacts (e.g. [North American Intergovernmental Committee on Cooperation for Protected Areas Conservation \(NAPA Committee\)](#), with connection to the Bison LOI).
  - Create a directory of people working in the grasslands.
  - Make communication products (e.g. [ArcGIS StoryMaps](#)) that bring together different communities and show community-driven success.

## Policy

- Develop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Interagency Agreements to improve interagency grassland work.
  - A call to the main table to consider adding interagency agreements to discussions.
  - Use the Trilateral Committee to reach champions inside of government.
  - Ensure all agencies are involved in grassland work.
- Determine how we can apply similar forest sustainability approaches to grasslands (e.g. In Mexico: kill a tree (need a permit), kill grass (no permit needed)).
- Research the existing [Protected Areas](#) that include grasslands and provide funding to those areas.
  - Develop a tool or evaluation to determine the Protected Areas that have left out Indigenous Nations and Indigenous Knowledge. Ensure rights-based accordance (like hunting in parks).
  - Tie conservation of grasslands and food security together as dual mandates: an area that produces food also counts towards grassland conservation (e.g. [Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures \(WDOECM\)](#), [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)).
  - Weave Indigenous food systems into grassland conservation: are food systems meeting the needs of health and wellbeing?
- Create policy that elevates grasslands.

## Climate Change

- Include climate change – in a section of considerations at the beginning to give a frame of reference for what we are trying to achieve (“our grasslands are the lungs of our nation” – US Representative)
  - Methane from agriculture is often left off lists of causation
  - Bring urgency around truth and what the threats are
  - Find a place for all sectors to come together rather than in competition to one another.
  - How to change/divert the conversation from “let’s just go plant a tree”
  - [Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan \(SK PCAP\) \(pcap-sk.org\)](#) and note the talk on March 21st about grazing and carbon sequestration, entitled "[Grazing boosts grassland carbon storage: An undervalued ecosystem service](#)"

- Include the [Resist-Accept-Direct \(RAD\) Framework](#) in grassland conservation plans and work.
  - Provide training on use of the RAD Framework (e.g. [USFWS RAD Webinar Series](#)).

#### Wildlife

- Consider wildlife, not just cattle and grazing.
- Combine objectives of sustaining wildlife and livelihood (profitability of the land).
  - Work with the cattle unions of Canada, Mexico, and the U.S.

#### Data

- Ensure data sharing is Indigenous-led (and includes informed consent): “nothing about us without us.”
  - Informed consent includes what and how data is being collected and shared.
- Apply [The First Nations Principles of OCAP®](#) to all grassland inventories and databases, including data collection, maintenance, and use.
  - Provide training on [The First Nations Principles of OCAP®](#).
  - Some Indigenous communities are working on Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for data sharing and other Indigenous communities have their own atlases and dashboards.
- Increase Indigenous Nation access to data that stretch beyond reservation lands. Ensure data is open to Indigenous communities.
  - Some Indigenous communities need additional capacity to store, access, and use data. (e.g. Potential for the [Indigenous Kinship Circle](#) to have individual agreements with Nations).
  - Find ways that communities can build on existing infrastructure and provide cross-training.

#### Agriculture and Ranching

- Create spaces for peer-to-peer learning in agriculture.
- Improve the management of agricultural lands.
- Provide spaces to heal the relationship between agriculture and environment:
  - The two sectors are siloed in government and societal structures.
  - The intersection of agriculture and environment is very strong in grasslands, which provides an opportunity to build and work together.
  - Opportunity to work together in sustainability measures.
- Balance the commodities and conservation arms of the US Farm Bill.
- Add grain production representation to the sustainable beef agriculture working groups of Canada (CRSB), Mexico, and the U.S. (e.g. Forthcoming document on the Pan-Canadian Agriculture Action Plan: plan on crops in grasslands in Canada (intersects the [Species at Risk approach](#) and includes Indigenous Knowledge).