

A SUMMARY OF THE PEACE PARKLAND
NATIVE GRASSLAND STEWARDSHIP
PROGRAM LANDOWNER
SURVEY, 2002



by:
Lorraine Sawdon
Habitat Technician

Alberta Conservation Association
Northwest Boreal Region
January, 2003

Executive Summary

The Peace Parkland Native Grasslands Stewardship Program Landowner Survey was distributed to landowners in the Fairview, Spirit River and Grande Prairie areas of the Peace River country between May and August, 2002. The prime objectives of the survey were to determine the level of interest in native grasslands and their stewardship, to identify potential future landowner partners with the Alberta Conservation Association, to determine the level of awareness about existing stewardship programs, to provide an opportunity for land owners to express their concerns, and to help tailor information to the needs of land owners. The vast majority of landowners interviewed believed that conserving native grasslands was important and most were open to the idea of conserving native grasslands on their property. The greatest motivation for its conservation was self –satisfaction, while the greatest deterrent to conserve native grassland was the increased risk of liability from trespassers. Most landowners were unaware of the various stewardship options. The resulting recommendation is that more monetary funds be put into educational purposes with the aim to spread the concepts and programs that deal with stewardship, and promote recruitment into those programs.

Acknowledgements

ACA would like to extend sincere thanks to Tara Sample for developing the survey,

Darcy Meyers, Tara Sample, Denise Kurina, and Annette Baker for distributing the survey,

Adam James and Tara Szkoropa from Fish and Wildlife Division, Kim Good and Laurel Murphy from Nature Conservancy Canada, Reg Arbuckle from Ducks Unlimited Canada, Margot Hervieux from Peace Parkland Naturalists, Cameron Broatch, Darcy Meyers, Ed Kolodychuk, from ACA for reviewing and providing input into the survey development,

Sharon Metz of Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation and Cameron Broatch from ACA for providing information on their landowner surveys,

and finally, the landowners themselves, for completing the survey.

This project would not have been possible if it had not been for the financial funding received from North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Alberta Conservation Association, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Human Resources Development Canada.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Study Area	1
3.0 Methods	2
4.0 Results	
4.1 Landowner Profile Information	2
4.2 Management Options	3
4.3 Native Grasslands	6
4.4 Stewardship Options	8
4.5 Further Information	12
5.0 Highlights of Results	14
6.0 Recommendations	15
7.0 Appendix A: Tabulated Results	16
8.0 Appendix B: Non Numerical Results	20
9.0 Appendix C: Peace Parkland Native Grasslands Stewardship Program Landowner Survey	21

1.0 Introduction

Throughout the summer of 2002 a survey (see Appendix B) was distributed to landowners with native grassland, throughout the Fairview, Spirit River and Grande Prairie areas in the Peace Parkland. The aim of the survey was to determine the level of landowners' interest in native grasslands and its stewardship, to identify potential future partners with the Alberta Conservation Association and other conservation organizations, to determine the level of awareness about existing stewardship programs, to provide an opportunity for land owners to express their concerns, and to help direct future information to the needs of landowners.

2.0 Study Area

The surveys were distributed to landowners in the white zone, west of the 6th parallel, and can be seen in the Figure 1 below.

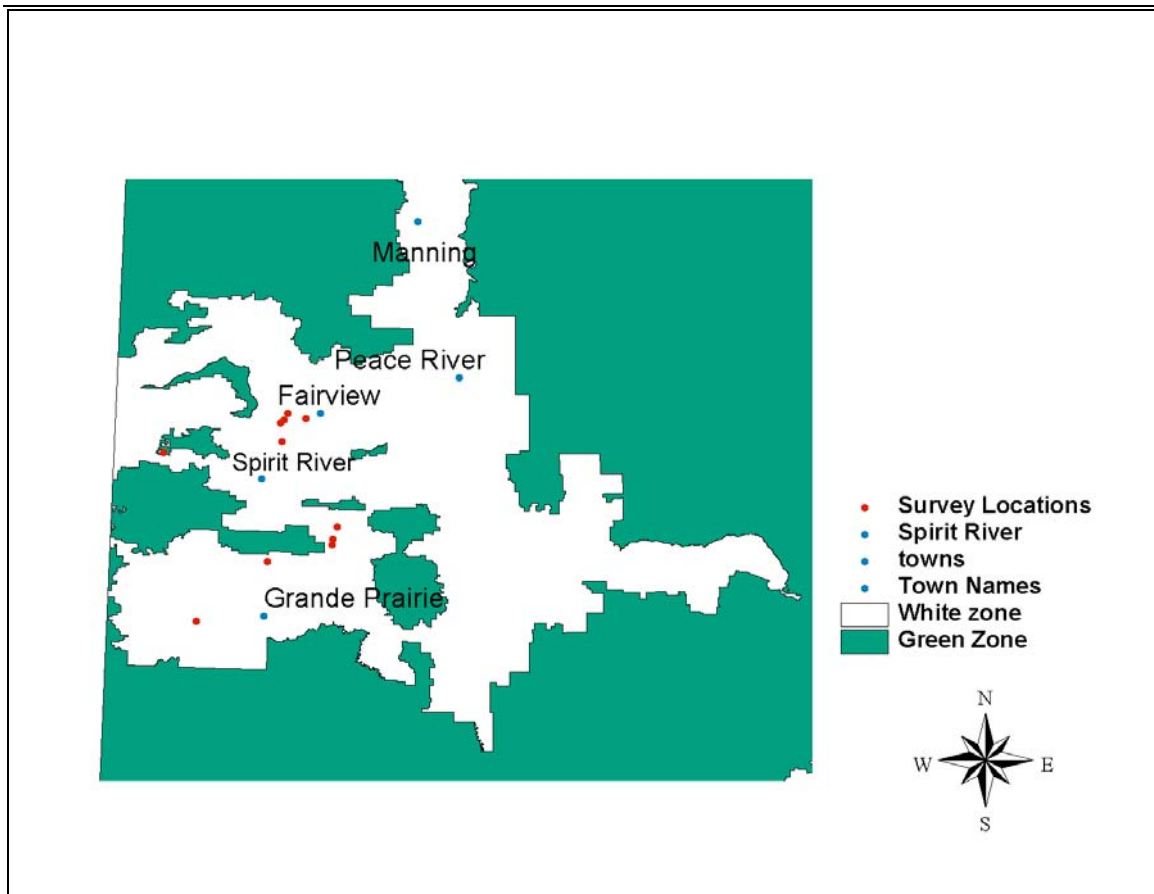


Figure 1: Distribution area of the survey

3.0 Methods

Surveys were distributed between May and August, 2002, to the landowners the summer crew met with. They were either completed in the presence of the summer crew, or were mailed to the Alberta Conservation Association's office in Peace River. A total of eleven surveys were completed.

The survey questions were developed from Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation, Nature Conservancy Canada and ACA surveys. The survey results were summarized and recommendations have been made accordingly.

4.0 Results

Each question posed in the landowner survey and the results are listed below.

4.1 LANDOWNER PROFILE INFORMATION

1. What type of farm do you operate?

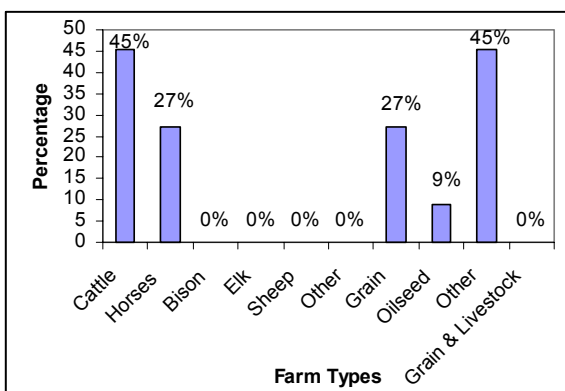


Figure 2: Percentage of the various farm types (n = 11 for each category)

Answers given that fell within the "Other" category include Acreage, Smooth and Meadow Brome, Hay, Retired, and Legume and Grass Seed. Cattle and "Other" farm types were the most common among our respondents, each totaling 45% of the farm types.

2. How many years have you, or a family member, owned your land?

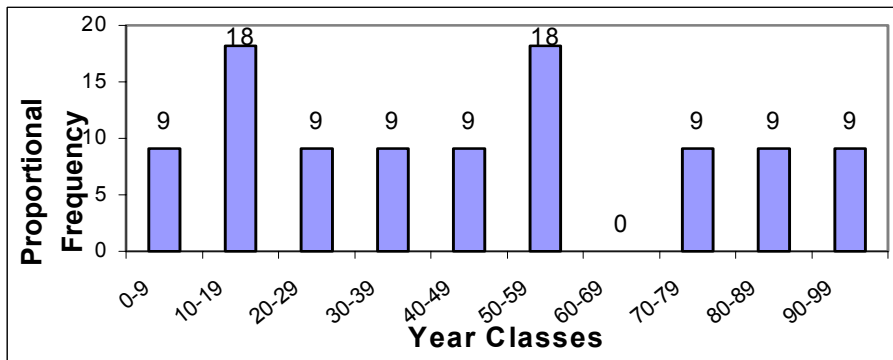


Figure 3: The proportional frequency of years farmed (n=11)

Most landowners have owned land, or have had family members that have owned land for ten to nineteen years, or fifty to fifty-nine years.

4.2 MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

3. If you graze livestock, please check all the statements that apply to your pasture management.

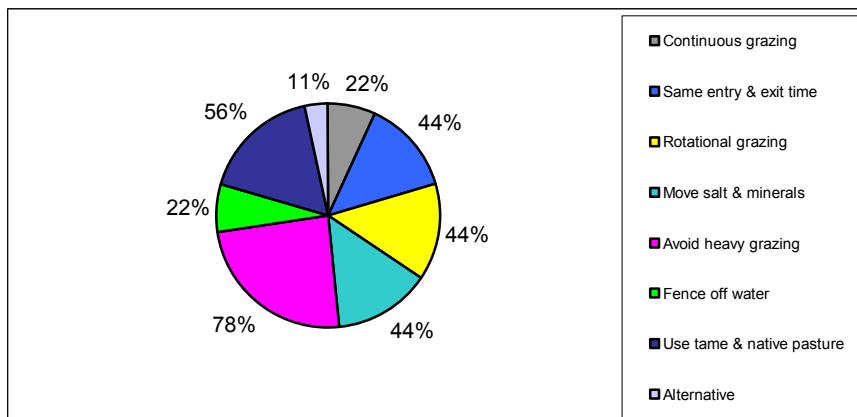


Figure 4: Various pasture management options and their percent usage (n = 11 for each category)

There was one alternative given: *Leaf Cutter bees were used in July and August.*

The majority of landowners (78%) avoid heavy grazing, most use the same entry and exit time each year (44%), practice rotational grazing (44%) and move salt and minerals around their pastures (44%). Only 22% practice continuous grazing or fence off water sources and pump water up to their troughs.

4. Briefly describe your short-term and long-term management plans.

Some did not respond to this question. The comments made by those who did follow.

- Stock moved at 2 week intervals
- To leave the land in an improved state and to farm in such a way as to not erode the land.
- Protect the environment to the best of my abilities and see that my descendants do the same.
- Continuous or delayed grazing.
- Take care of the land
- Leaving the land untouched
- Rotate with grassland legumes for seed and hay

5. Do you take any of the following factors into account when adopting a land use practice?

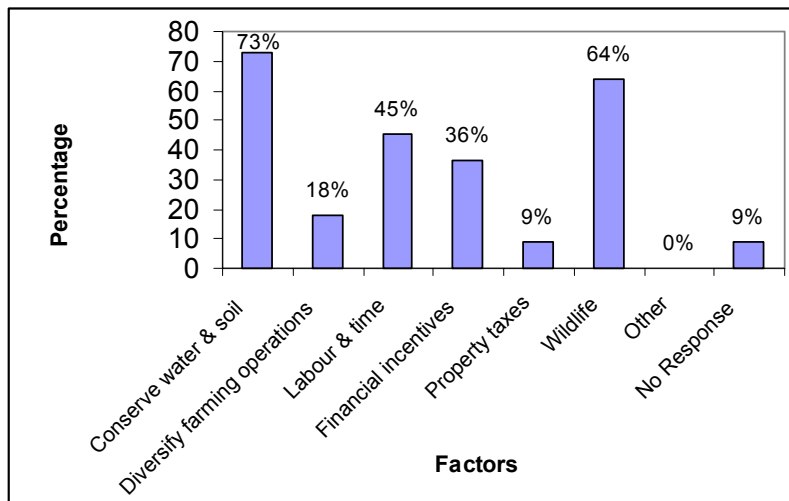


Figure 5: Percent of each factor taken into account when adopting a land use practice (n = 11 for each category)

The conservation of water and soil was taken into account when adopting a new land use practice by 73% of the landowners surveyed, with the impact on wildlife second, at 64% of the landowners. Labour and Time was also important to landowners, accounting for 45% of the landowners, as were financial incentives, which accounted for 36% of the landowners. Only 9% of the landowners considered the impact on property taxes.

6. Do you use native grasslands for any of the following activities?

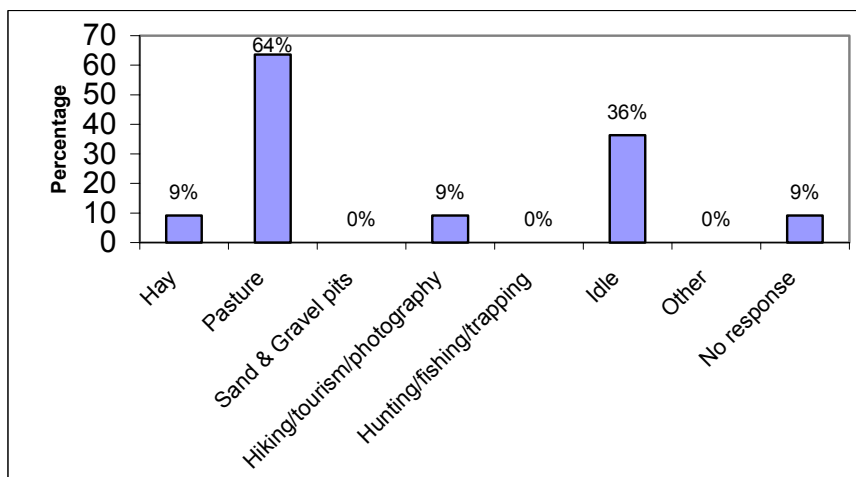


Figure 6: Percentage of each activity that native grasslands are used in (n = 11 for each category)

The majority of landowners use the native grassland as pasture, while no landowners use native grassland for sand and gravel pits, hunting, trapping or fishing.

7. On your native grassland, have you noticed an invasion of perennial weeds or cultivated species, tree or shrub encroachment, increased pasture sage, a change in native plant species present, or any other changes?

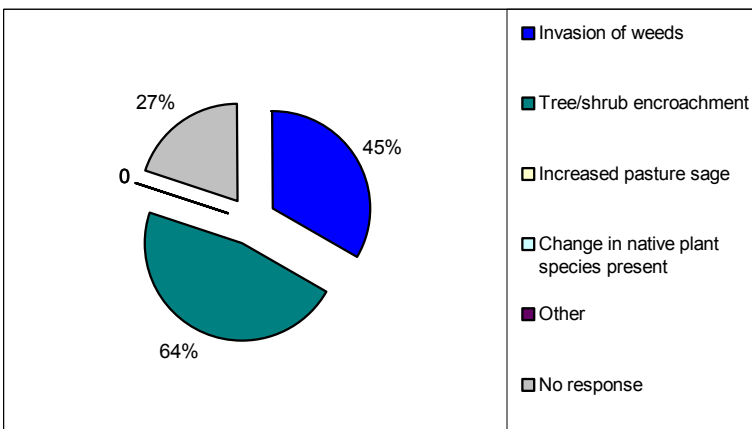


Figure 7: Changes in native grasslands and the percentages of each being noticed (n=11 for each category)

The majority of landowners surveyed, noticed tree and shrub encroachment on their native grasslands (64%), or invasion by weeds (45%).

8. What habitat management methods are you interested in practicing on your native grasslands?

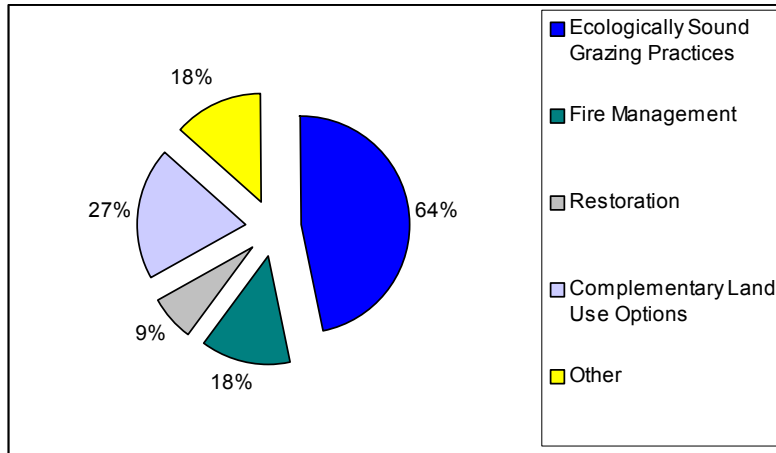


Figure 8: Habitat methods and percentages of people who are interested in utilizing them (n = 11)

Protection of native species and Leave as is, were recorded in the “other” category.

The overwhelming majority of landowners are interested in practicing ecologically sound grazing practices, such as delayed and rotational grazing (64%). Restoration was the practice that landowners were the least interested in (9%).

4.3 NATIVE GRASSLANDS

9. Having native grassland on my land is important to me/my family.

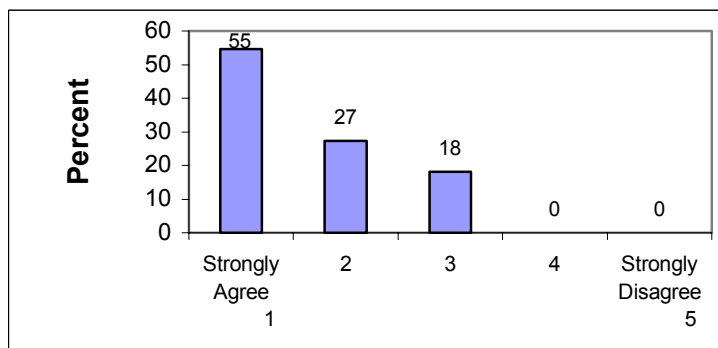


Figure 9: Degree of importance landowners hold having native grassland and the percentage of each (n=11)

Most landowners strongly agree that having native grassland is important to them (55%), while no landowners disagreed or strongly disagreed.

10. In your opinion, does having native grassland increase or decrease the value of you land?

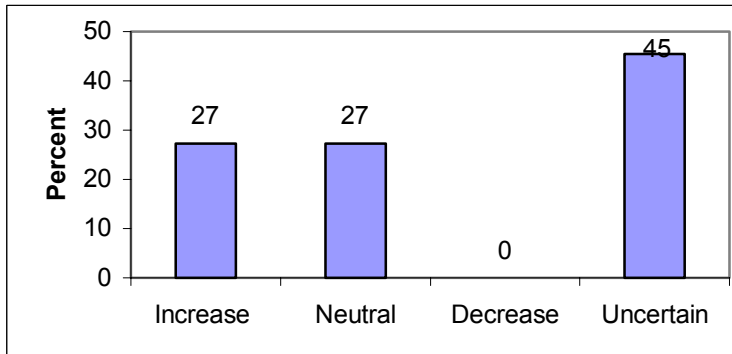


Figure 10: Percentage of landowners who consider native grasslands to increase or decrease the value of their land and the percentage of landowners who were uncertain or neutral on the issue (n = 11)

Most landowners are uncertain whether having native grasslands increases or decreases the value of their land (45%). The remaining landowners, who responded to the survey, were either neutral on the issue (27%) or felt that native grasslands increase the value of their land (27%).

11. In your opinion, is conserving native grasslands important? (n=11)

Yes	91%
No	9%

Nearly all landowners (91%) believe that conserving native grasslands is important.

Why is it important or unimportant?

Some did not answer this question. The answers received are as follows.

- There are not many natural areas left untouched; it is important to protect the natural areas and their biota from extinction.
- Biodiversity is being threatened by current agricultural practices that result in the monoculture of grass species.
- More land is becoming cultivated; native grassland is becoming scarce.
- The aesthetics of an undisturbed area

12. Have you discovered any historical (wagon trails or home sites) or heritage sites (teepee rings or medicine wheels) on your native grasslands? (n=11)

Yes	27%
No	73%
Uncertain	0%

While the majority of landowners have not discovered any historical or heritage sites on their land (73%), a few landowners have (27%) and one account of personal historical observation of early settlement was recorded in the course of conducting the survey.

4.4 STEWARDSHIP OPTIONS

13. I am interested in maintaining native grasslands on my land.

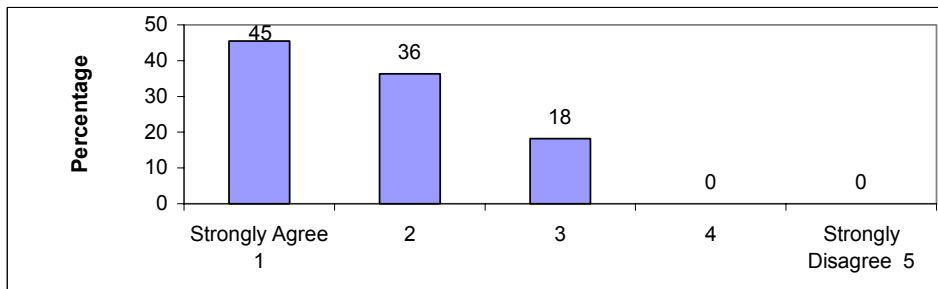


Figure 11: Percentage of Landowners interested in maintaining native grasslands on their land (n = 11)

A large proportion of the landowners surveyed were interested in maintaining native grasslands on their land (45%). It is encouraging to note there were no landowners who disagreed or strongly disagreed to this.

14. Is any of your land currently enrolled in a conservation program? (n=11)

Yes	0%
No	100%

None of the landowners surveyed have land that is currently enrolled in a conservation program.

15. Below are listed general categories of conservation options available to Albertans and the percentage of landowners that have heard of them.

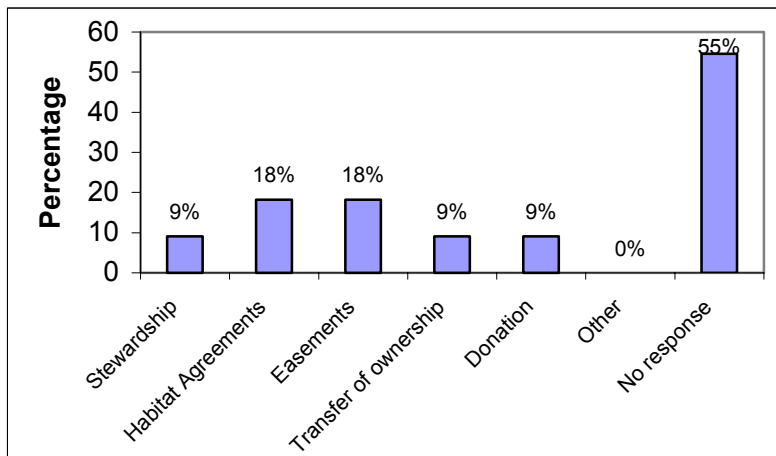


Figure 12: Categories of conservation options that are commonly known and their percentages (n = 11 for each category)

The majority of respondents did not respond to this question (55%), however it is clear that habitat agreements and easements are the most commonly heard of conservation options.

16. When considering land conservation options, which features are important to you?

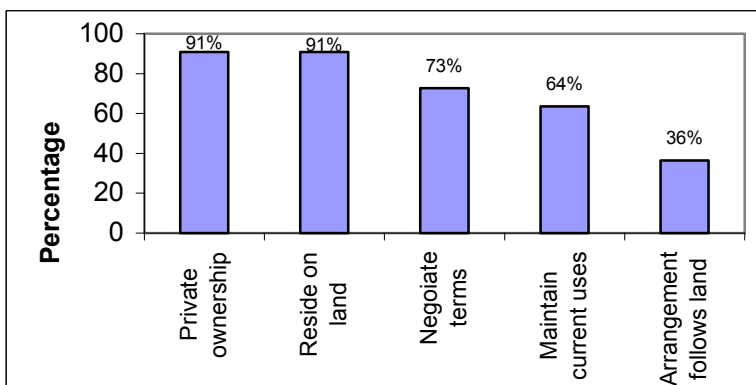


Figure 13: Important features considered when viewing land conservation options, and their percentages (n = 11 for each category)

Maintaining private ownership and being able to continue to reside upon the land are the two features that were the most important to landowners when considering land conservation options (91% each). The least important feature was the perpetuation of the agreement after transferring the land title (36%).

17. What incentives might motivate you to conserve native grasslands on your land?

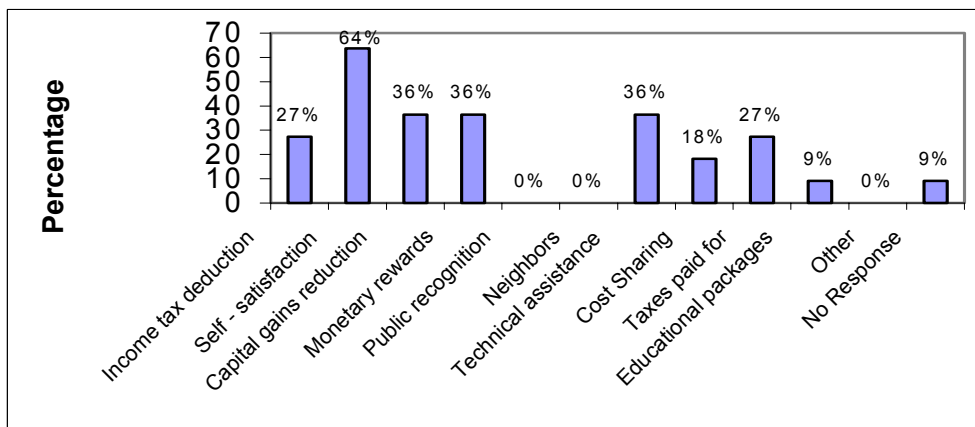


Figure 14: The percentage that each incentive may motivate landowners to conserve native grasslands (n = 11 for each category)

Sixty-four percent of the landowners indicated that the self-satisfaction of conserving native grasslands was the most motivational, while public recognition and having neighbours who are willing to enter into agreements were the least (zero percent). Incentives that were moderately ranked were capital gains reduction (36%), monetary rewards (36%), technical assistance (36%), taxes paid for annually (27%) and income tax deduction (27%).

18. What factors might discourage you from conserving native grasslands on your land?

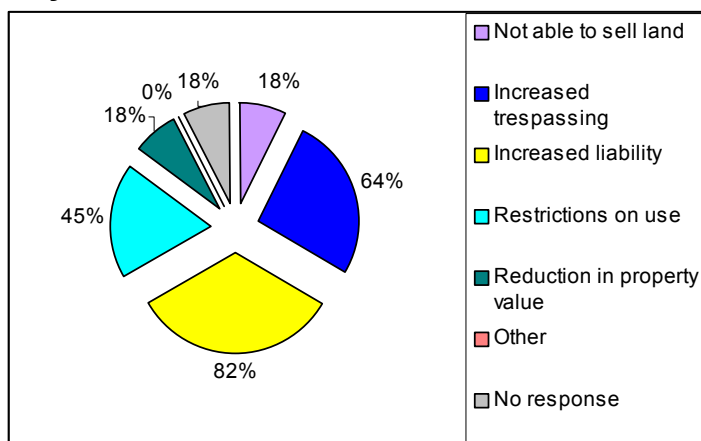


Figure 15: Factors that may discourage landowners from conserving native grasslands, and their relative percentage (n = 11 for each category)

The greatest feature of conservation options that may discourage landowners from conserving native grasslands was the increased risk of liability due to trespassers (82%), with increased trespassing ranked second (64%).

19. Would you be willing to work with a conservation organization on management techniques, such as grazing regimes & prescribed burns, to support your efforts to conserve native prairie?

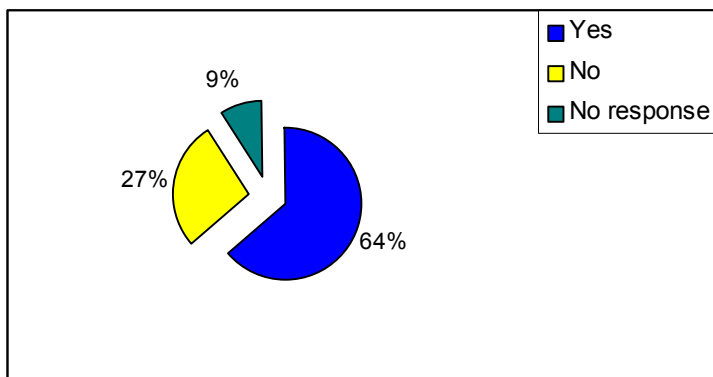


Figure 16: Percentage of landowners willing to work with a conservation organization to conserve native grassland (n = 11)

An overwhelming majority of landowners would be willing to work with conservation organizations to conserve native grassland (64%).

If yes, do you have a preference for any organization?

Most people did not respond to this question, however the ones that did are as follows.

- Ducks Unlimited 18%
- No Response 82%

20. Are there other habitats or wildlife on your property that you would like to conserve or want more information about?

Some did not respond to this question, but those who did are as follows.

- Number of deer, moose and wolves in area 18%
- Sharp tailed Grouse 9%
- Beavers 9%

4.5 FURTHER INFORMATION

21. What would you like to receive more information on?

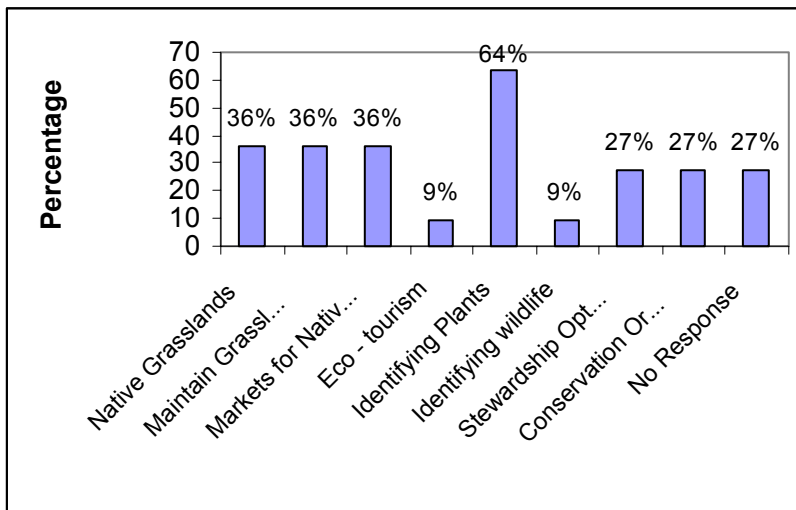


Figure 17: The percentage of each subject on which landowners would like to receive more information (n = 11 for each category)

Identifying plants (64%), the value of native grasslands (36%), management options to maintain native grasslands (36%), and markets for native plant material (36%) were the most sought after subjects, while eco-tourism and identifying wildlife (9% each) were the least.

22. Would you like to be put in contact with people interested in collecting and/or marketing native plant material?

Yes	45%
No	36%
No Response	18%

Just under half of the landowners surveyed would like to be put in contact with collectors and/or marketers of native plant material (45%), while 36% would not.

5.0 Highlights of the Results

Many landowners in the survey area have cattle farms (45%) or farms that fall in the “other” category (45%), with a total of 72% who have livestock. Most have been farming for well over ten years. Of the landowners who were surveyed, 64% of them use their native grasslands for pasture and 78% avoid heavy grazing on their pastures.

Surveyed landowners are aware of native grasslands to some extent and wish to protect them, in a manner that is complementary to their farm type. The majority of people surveyed believe that conserving native grasslands is important (55%), and are interested in practicing ecologically sound grazing practices (64%), but are unsure of whether native grassland increases or decreases the market value of their land (45%). Over half of the landowners surveyed have noticed tree or shrub encroachment on their native grassland and 45% have noticed perennial weeds or cultivated species invading their grasslands. Little is commonly known about local conservation organizations and there may be a correlation between this and why none of the landowners are currently involved with a conservation organization. When landowners consider land conservation options, maintaining private ownership and the ability to reside on their land (each 91%) were indicated to be the most important features, while an arrangement that will follow the sale of the land was considered the least important (36%). The survey indicated that the greatest motivation for conserving native grasslands is the self – satisfaction of doing so (64%), while the largest deterrent is the increased risk of liability from trespassers (82%). Sixty-four percent of the respondents indicated that they would be interested in working with a conservation organization to conserve native prairie.

It is interesting to note that the impact on wildlife was cited as one of the main factors taken into consideration (64%) when adopting a new land use practice (second only to the conservation of water and soil, 73%). However, it was the least requested subject to receive more information on (9%); plant identification was the subject that most respondents were interested in receiving more information about (64%).

It should be noted, that due to the nature of the survey, that there is an inherent bias. There is a strong possibility that the respondents to this survey were the landowners that had an interest in conserving native grasslands, leaving the landowners with little or no interest in native grassland conservation poorly represented.

6.0 Recommendations

The research provided by the survey indicated that the greatest motivation to conserve native grasslands was that of self-satisfaction. It is recommended that monetary funds may be better used if put towards educational purposes, rather than incentives. The survey has indicated a need for educating landowners about stewardship options and conservation organizations that they can contact. The lack of response to these questions may be an indicator that more education is needed in regards to promoting native grassland conservation as well as different conservation organizations. It was also noted that there was a strong response to receive further information on a variety of subjects, with the majority of respondents asking for plant identification information. This further suggests that education on specific topics is wanted by the landowners, and may prompt them to consider conserving the native grasslands on their land.

7.0 Appendix A: Tabulated Results

		Totals	Percentage
LANDOWNER PROFILE INFORMATION			
What Type of farm do you operate?			
	Cattle	5	45
	Horses	3	27
	Bison	0	0
	Elk	0	0
	Sheep	0	0
	Other	0	0
	Grain	3	27
	Oilseed	1	9
	Other	5	45
	Grain & Livestock	0	0
How many years have you, or a family member owned the land?		Please see Appendix B	
MANAGEMENT OPTIONS			
If you graze livestock, please check all the statements that apply to your pasture management.			
	I practice continuous grazing (spring and fall)	2	22
	I use the same entry & exit time each year	4	44
	I practice rotational grazing	4	44
	I move salt & minerals around the pasture	4	44
	I avoid heavy grazing of my pasture	7	78
	I fence off water sources & pump water up to my troughs	2	22
	I use tame & native pasture	5	56
	Alternative	1	11
	1 alternative given		
Briefly describe your short - term & long-term management plans.		Please see Appendix B	
Do you take any of the following factors into account when adopting a land use practice?			
	Opportunity to conserve water & soil	8	73
	Opportunity to diversify farming operations to include livestock, etc.	2	18
	Labour & time required to implement practice	5	45
	Financial incentives available	4	36
	Impact on property taxes	1	9
	Impact on wildlife habitat	7	64
	Other	0	0
	No response	1	9
Do you use native grasslands for any of the following activities?			
	Hay	1	9
	Pasture	7	64
	Sand & Gravel pits	0	0
	Hiking/tourism/photography	1	9

Hunting/fishing/trapping	0	0
Idle	4	36
Other	0	0
No response	1	9
On your native grassland, have you noticed		
Invasion of perennial weeds or cultivated species	5	45
Tree or shrub encroachment	7	64
Increased pasture sage	0	0
Change in native plant species present	0	0
Other	0	0
No response	3	27
What habitat methods are you interested in practicing on your native grassland?		
Ecologically Sound Grazing Practices	7	64
Fire Management	2	18
Restoration	1	9
Complementary Land Use Options	3	27
Other	2	18
NATIVE GRASSLANDS		
Having native grassland on my land is important to me/ my family		
Strongly Agree	1	6
	2	3
	3	2
	4	0
Strongly Disagree	5	0
In your opinion, does having native grassland increase or decrease the value of your land?		
Increase	3	27
Neutral	3	27
Decrease	0	0
Uncertain	5	45
In your opinion, is conserving native grasslands important?		
Yes	10	91
No	1	9
Why is it Important or unimportant?		
Please see Appendix B		
Have you discovered any historical (wagon trails or home sites) or heritage sites (teepee rings or medicine wheels) on your grasslands?		
Yes	3	27
No	8	73
Uncertain	0	0
STEWARDSHIP OPTIONS		
I am interested in maintaining native grasslands on my land.		
Strongly Agree	1	5
	2	4

	3	2	18
	4	0	0
Strongly Disagree	5	0	0
Is any of your land currently enrolled in a conservation program?			
	Yes	0	0
	No	11	100
If so, what program is this?			
Not Applicable			
Below are listed gneral categories of conservation options available to Albertans. (Please check all options that you have heard of.)			
	Stewardship recognition programs	1	9
	Habitat Agreements	2	18
	Easements (conservation easements & related common law tools)	2	18
	Transfer of ownership to a land trust through the sale or donation	1	9
	Donation of assets to generate conservation funds	1	9
	Other	0	0
	No response	6	55
When considering land conservation options, which features are important to you?			
	Maintaining private ownership	10	91
	Ability to reside on your land	10	91
	Ability to negotiate the terms	8	73
	Being able to maintain current uses of land	7	64
	An arrangement that will follow the sale of the land	4	36
What incentives might motivate you to conserve native grasslands on your land? (Please check all applicable)			
	Income tax deduction	3	27
	Self - satisfaction of contributing to conservation	7	64
	A capital gains reduction (if land is sold)	4	36
	Monetary rewards/payments	4	36
	Public recognition through signs and awards	0	0
	Neighbors were willing to enter into agreements	0	0
	Technical assistance & labour	4	36
	Cost sharing	2	18
	Taxes paid for annually	3	27
	Educational Packages	1	9
	Other	0	0
	No response	1	9
What factors might discourage you from conserving native grasslands on your land?			
	Not being able to sell the land for subdivision/development	2	18
	Increased Trespassing	7	64
	Increased liability risk from trespassers	9	82
	Restrictions on future land use & management options	5	45
	Reduction in property market value	2	18
	Other	0	0
	No response	2	18

Would you be willing to work with a conservation organization on management techniques, such as grazing regimes & prescribed burns, to support your efforts to conserve native prairie?		
Yes	7	64
No	3	27
No response	1	9
If yes, do you have a preference for any organization?	Please see Appendix B	
Are there other habitats or wildlife on your property that you would like to conserve or want more info about?	Please see Appendix B	
FURTHER INFORMATION		
What would you like to receive more information on?		
Value of native grasslands	4	36
Management options to maintain native grasslands	4	36
Markets for native plant material	4	36
Eco-tourism opportunities	1	9
Identifying Plants	7	64
Identifying wildlife	1	9
Stewardship options	3	27
Organizations who may be interested in working with me to conserve my native grassland	3	27
No response	3	27
Would you like to be put in contact with people interested in collecting &/or marketing native plant material?		
Yes	5	45
No	4	36
No response	2	18

8.0 Appendix B: Non Numerical Results

These are the results that could not easily be tabulated. Many of the open ended question results will be found here.

How many years have you or a family member owned the land?

20 years	13 years	Up to 50 years	92 years
37 years	74 years	8 years	82 years
47 years	58 years	10 years	Average: 44.6 years

Briefly describe your long and short term management plans.

Long Term Management Plans	Short Term Management Plans
	Move stock at two week intervals
Leave the land in an improved condition	
Educate descendants to do protect the environment	Protect the environment
Uncertain	Continuous or Delayed Grazing
	Rotate with legumes for seed and hay
Keeping the land pristine	
Care for the land	
No Response	37%

Would you be willing to work with a conservation organization on management techniques to support your efforts to conserve native prairie and if yes, do you have a preference for any organization?

64% of the respondents replied that they would be willing to work with a conservation organization. Within those respondents, 29% reported to have a preference to work with Ducks Unlimited Canada. No other organizations were reported.

Are there other habitats or wildlife on your property that you would like to conserve or want more information about?

Number of Deer, moose and wolves in the area
Ungulates (deer, moose, elk)
Sharp tailed grouse
Beavers

