

# CENTRAL GRASSLANDS ROADMAP

## Guiding us toward resilient and sustainable grasslands and human communities

### VISION

When we look out at the landscape, we witness diverse grasslands with thriving Indigenous and rural communities, millions of acres of connected land under various types of conservation, profitable working land with livestock and regenerative agriculture, flourishing ecosystems of soil, plants, and wildlife, and rivers and wetlands supporting aquifers, wildlife, production, and people.



## 2020

### Collaborators

- Indigenous Communities & First Nations
- Province & State-level Agencies
- Industry
- Private Land Managers & Producers
- Academia
- NGOs
- Foundations & Funders
- Federal Governments of Canada, U.S. & Mexico

This roadmap enables the collaboration of 8 sectors to see how we can gain traction on unified initiatives for policy and funding, how more local strategies can be connected across the Flyway, and how we can share and leverage best practices, research, and funding to make scaling great work more straightforward. The Roadmap will enable us to save what we have left, restore and improve what we can, and support biodiversity and resiliency across the landscape.



### THE ROADMAP

How We'll Get There

The Roadmap is a collaborative guide to increase conservation of North America's Central Grasslands, which span 500 million acres across Indigenous Lands, Canada, the United States and Mexico. By bringing together 8 diverse sectors, the Roadmap identifies common principles and collaborative priorities for the many people and organizations living, working on and influencing the Central Grasslands.



### THE CHALLENGE

Why This Matters

Disparate efforts are not adding up, and measures of wildlife populations, grassland acres, human community health and sustainability are down, and continue to decline. We have to think, act and do differently, and that starts with us working together to get on the same map, agreeing to the directions we need to go that focus on what we need to do more of, what we need to know more about, and what new

## How to Read this Roadmap: ANNOTATED TABLE OF CONTENTS

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### GRASSLANDS SCORECARD ..... P. 4-5

The Scorecard provides a method to measure the progress of the Roadmap by breaking down the vision statement on the cover page into four result statements. There are a number of metrics that could be used to measure progress, so what comes under each result statement is not necessarily a comprehensive list but will directly help measure the priorities identified later in the document. A Performance Measure is also included in the Scorecard, which is a meta-measurement to determine the success of the Roadmap as a collaborating entity. More explanation of these terms can be found in Appendix A (p. 17).

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### GUIDANCE (CRITERIA) FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION ..... P. 6

Likely the most important statements in the entire Roadmap, these are informed by the Delegates and the Summit process, and help focus the Roadmap's three strategy areas and twelve priorities, to help remain within the intended scale and context. If work is happening on the Central Grasslands it should at the very least honor this guidance.

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### THREE STRATEGY AREAS ..... P. 7 - 16

- Strategy Area 1: Partnerships & Engagement ..... p. 7
- Strategy Area 2: Policy & Funding ..... p. 10
- Strategy Area 3: Research & Evaluation ..... p. 13

These three strategy areas are an organizing tool for big buckets of work that need to be accomplished. Each strategy area includes overarching objectives, principles of practice, and priorities that include output activities, defined respectively as:

- **Overarching Objectives:** found under each strategy area to further define and clarify that bucket of work.
- **Principles of Practice:** during the Roadmap Summit process, a plethora of concepts arose that were not specific priorities or actions, but that offered further guidance or even universal truths. The Roadmap makes a recommendation that no matter what priority actions are taking place on-the-ground these Principles of Practices for each Strategy Area be utilized as common best practices and considerations.
- **Priorities:** these are used to break down each strategy area into concrete and specific recommendations. Each of the 12 priorities are at a high enough level to be implemented in a variety of regions within the Central Grasslands. Some priorities stand-alone while others are interrelated within or across the three strategy areas. There are four priorities in each Strategy Area.

- **Output Activities:** to achieve each identified priority, these output activities offer more specific actions, which might not be applicable in all contexts and regions, but when achieved will help meet the vision of the Roadmap. These actions were brainstormed in the Delegate Survey and during Summit Workgroups in 2020.

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**ROADMAP STRUCTURE** ..... P. 17 - 19

This figure explains the structure of the overall Roadmap scope of work, using a Constellation Governance model and creating reporting, communication and diversified leadership processes.

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**DRAFT SUMMARY DIAGRAM** ..... P. 20

## How to Read this Roadmap:

### ADDITIONAL TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Sustainable Grasslands:** Shorthand for sustainable, resilient, and thriving wildlife, ecosystems, soil, and water even with variability in climate.

**Sustainable Human Communities:** Shorthand for sustainable, resilient, and thriving economies and communities within Indigenous/First Nations, rural towns, and other land-based communities.

**Rangelands and Grasslands:** used interchangeably by different sectors and different groups of Delegates. The Roadmap predominantly uses grasslands, but rangelands is appropriate to indicate 'working lands' that emphasize grazing and livestock production. Other terms, such as prairies, which are distinct to geographic locations or distinct conditions (such as the Mississippi Valley), are only used in those specific situations.

**Landowner, Land Stewards, Land Managers, Producers:** there is no single term that encompasses everyone included in this incredibly important sector, so these terms are used interchangeably throughout the document. What is intended is to elevate the voice of those working and living on or from the land, and/or those who are charged with managing and caring for the land.

**Ejido:** a land tenure system in Mexico, in which the land is communally held mainly used for agriculture including farming and ranching. Ejidos own over 50% of the land/natural resources in Mexico. Community members in ejidos are called "ejidatarios." Ejidatarios farm and own designated plots and collectively own and maintain communal holdings. Ejidos vary in size and number of ejidatarios.

**Cultivated Land:** A spectrum of definitions which will be further defined as part of this effort.



## Grasslands Scorecard

### **Result Statements (bold) and Indicator Measures to Track Progress (questions)\***

\* All indicator questions are asked with the preamble "on an annual or bi-annual basis ..."

#### **Thriving Indigenous and rural communities**

*INDICATOR MEASURES UNDER CONSTRUCTION*

#### **Diverse Grasslands under various types of conservation, including profitable working land with livestock and regenerative agriculture**

*INDICATOR MEASURES UNDER CONSTRUCTION*

#### **Flourishing ecosystems of soil, plants, and wildlife.**

*INDICATOR MEASURES UNDER CONSTRUCTION*

#### **Rivers and wetlands supporting aquifers, wildlife, production, and people.**

*INDICATOR MEASURES UNDER CONSTRUCTION*



## Collaborative Performance Measure

**There is successful on-going collaboration to mobilize impactful strategies.**

*INDICATOR MEASURES UNDER CONSTRUCTION*



## Guidance and Criteria for Collaborative Action:

### HOW WE WANT TO COLLECTIVELY FOCUS OUR EFFORTS

This guidance was developed throughout the Roadmap process by delegates, speakers, and leaders, and it highlights fundamental approaches to **the Roadmap's Central Grasslands strategy that improves conditions to enable conservation (such as public perception and policies), and provides support to scale effective practices (such as knowledge sharing and sustainable ranch management programs).**

Priorities were established and should be implemented through the lens of these five criteria. **In short, if involved with work on the Grasslands, consider this guidance first and foremost:**

1. Combined, collaborative priorities **respect and honor diverse voices** including Traditional Ecological Knowledge, cultural strategies, and generations of experience of Indigenous/First Nation communities, ranchers, private landowners, and ejidos.
2. Combined, collaborative priorities are **science-based** and draw upon up-to-date research that is informed by on the ground practices and needs.
3. Combined, collaborative priorities **sustain human populations and improve the health of the land and water to support ecosystem processes**, while helping the individual producer or working lands communities (such as ejidos in Mexico) to maintain their way of life and enhance their livelihood and well-being through **innovative practices**.
4. Combined, collaborative priorities **keep as many large tracts of native grassland habitat intact** while enhancing adjacent grasslands, **improve biodiversity on cultivated lands, conserve water, and increase the habitat and quality overall** for declining grassland species to arrest, and eventually reverse, declining population trends.
5. Combined, collaborative priorities **meet needs of the eight sectors** and **inspire mutually reinforcing activities** that are applicable on a North American scale after being **developed at the grassroots** level regionally and locally.



## Strategy Area 1:

### CREATE AND ENRICH STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

#### Overarching Objectives for Partnerships & Engagement

- Sustain trusted, expansive, and long-term commitment among a multitude of stakeholders to achieve the Roadmap vision and inspire buy-in from those with decision-making power.
- Catalyze partnerships, engagement and implementation from a broad and diverse audience across scales including county/regional collaboratives to Indigenous lands to states and provinces to countries.
- Develop a consistent process to ensure on-going collaboration, networking, information sharing, expansion of the network and its impact, and ample space for innovation.

#### 7 Principles of Practice for Building Partnerships & Engagement

We want to recognize and emphasize that no matter what priorities and output activities for partnership and engagement are taking place on-the-ground now or in the future, it is recommended that these *Principles of Practices*, identified by delegates from across sectors during the 2020 Summit, be considered as common best practices, and updated over time.

- Recognize that when building partnerships and collaborations, we are “working at the speed of trust.”
- Build trust through open dialogue focused on commonalities through bottom-up processes among organizations, individuals and communities that need to work together (the 8 sectors represented in this Roadmap).
- Encourage the development of community-based ideas at all steps in the process: honor and meaningfully include land-based community contributions and wisdom, including Indigenous, rancher, and naturalist perspectives.
- Understand that finding agreement and working collaboratively will likely involve changing culture, skill sets, behavior and potentially even profitability.
- Establish shared goals, messages, and diverse approaches to bringing people and organizations into collaborative processes.
- Keep in mind that collaborative action now will help inform continued collaborative action in the future: don't be afraid to take the first step.
  - Despite the complexity of collaborative processes, maintain the momentum of the Roadmap network and collaborative whenever possible.



## Collaborative Priorities and Actions for Partnerships and Engagement

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### PRIORITY 1: BROADEN COMMUNICATIONS TO INCREASE SUPPORT FOR GRASSLANDS

Work with partners across sectors and regions to establish a shared understanding of the importance of grasslands, co-creating a unified vision and message about the importance of grasslands to share broadly in rural and urban settings.

**Output Activity 1:** Craft a media package ([one example](#)) that everyone within the Roadmap network can use in their outreach and collaborative efforts, this might include a Grasslands-focused film such as the one [produced for sagebrush](#). This could also include a storytelling series based off "Our Amazing Grasslands," hosted by NRCS in South Dakota.

**Output Activity 2:** Support a Grasslands Declaration that can be used across sectors and nations in the Central Grasslands to elevate the importance of Grasslands in policy, funding

**Output Activity 3:** Connected to Strategy Area 3 (Research and Evaluation), further explore the human dimensions side of this messaging work, using social sciences to understand what public values and wants, validating and modifying the **potential topics to highlight in messaging currently include:** *human health, clean air, clean water, climate resiliency, ecosystem services, water sustainability, recreation access and opportunities, beauty, job creation, food (beef) supply chain and its security, societal value for grasslands and economic viability for rural communities in a broad sense, including producers and other community members, Western heritage and cultures.*

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### PRIORITY 2: SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND RESOURCES ACROSS CULTURES

Develop opportunities and systems to share science, databases, success stories, best practices, trainings, and learning across the Central Grasslands. Potential resources that would be shared include: GIS layers, databases and science integration through technology transfer, success stories (proof that being directly involved is a tangible asset to land managers and owners) in real time, speakers, best practices, and sustainability models.

**Output Activity 1:** Develop an Extension Bureau with speakers, mentors/coaches and trainers serving communities in Mexico, United States, and Canada to increase understanding and application about how sustaining biodiversity is in a ejido's/landowner's/manager's short and long-term financial interest, **(mentorship with first-hand, ground-up knowledge is really important to build capacity for conservation and better ranch management).**

**Output Activity 2:** Continue to utilize the Summit website as a clearing house for an exchange of ideas, resources, and diverse toolkits. Identify additional forums to help connect landowner led efforts and initiatives.

**Output Activity 3:** Align work with the North American Grasslands Conference.

**Output Activity 4:** Catalogue and celebrate current landowners' and producers' efforts.



### PRIORITY 3: CREATE STRONGER PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS SECTORS & SCALES

Increase bringing together agriculture, ranching, industry, Indigenous communities and private entities with conservation organizations, agencies and funders.

**Output Activity 1:** Utilize public lands, existing grass banks and local collaboratives, (and catalyze collaborations where needed), to deepen engagement with landowners, and to engage with new ranchers, farmers and indigenous communities

**Output Activity 2:** Provide new opportunities for Indigenous partners such as assisting with barriers to land access and management resources.

**Output Activity 3:** Further develop non-regulatory approaches to conservation and promote innovation through pay-for-results (not process) agreements with producers, (e.g., payments for ecosystem services).

**Output Activity 4:** Utilize Conservation Easements where viable, and create new tools including additional options for short term easements.

**Output Activity 5:** Implement innovative approaches by leveraging private dollars to fund effective programs that can influence and inform future federal programs (e.g., assistance from private dollars for cost sharing on conservation delivery).

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### PRIORITY AREA 4: BUILD COLLECTIVE ACTION

Overall, strengthen existing collaborative work and foster collaboration where there are gaps or innovative opportunities.

**Output Activity 1:** As described earlier in Priority 1, support the effort that the World Wildlife Fund has convened to create and endorse the Grasslands Declaration.

**Output Activity 2:** As will be described later in the Policy and Funding strategy, support and influence the effort led by the National Wildlife Federation to create an International Grasslands Conservation Act.

**Output Activity 3:** Support regional collaboration and planning work led by Joint Ventures, landowner collaboratives and other similar initiatives; catalyze collaborations where there are gaps.

**Output Activity 4:** For Collective Action in Research, determine “bottle necks” and inspire organizations and sectors involved in the Roadmap Collaborative to commit a portion of their resources to the bottleneck until it is no longer the weakest link. **Examples:**

- Wintering grounds in Northern Mexico ... find a way for partners to contribute resources to northern Mexico even if they do not normally work in that region.
  - The Chestnut-collared Longspur population has declined by 85%, with a 20-year conservation half-life; action needs to be taken now before the bird crosses a no recovery threshold.
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## Strategy Area 2:

### REFINE EFFECTIVE POLICY & FUNDING INITIATIVES

#### Overarching Objectives for Policy & Funding

- Build policies which support cross-boundary grassland conservation efforts that make investments in rural economies, resiliency and human well-being.
- Provide a solid, stable, and flexible funding framework, using a variety of funding mechanisms, both private and public.
- Include consistent and reliable voluntary programs and financial incentives to Indigenous/First Nations, private landowners, ejidos and other land-based communities to participate in conservation initiatives and ground-up, peer-to-peer training on sustainable practices that sustain grasslands and human communities.

#### 7 Principles of Practice for Building Policy & Funding Priorities

We want to recognize and emphasize that no matter what priorities and output activities for policy and funding are taking place on-the-ground now or in the future, it is recommended that these *Principles of Practices*, identified by delegates from across sectors during the 2020 Summit, be considered as common best practices, and updated over time.

- Re-envision policies that collaborate with Indigenous, and First Nations based on their cultural values and knowledge of the land and uphold treaties.
- Re-envision policies that provide for local flexibility and account for local variation in soils, water, land prices, and land practices.
- Recognize the need for Mexico, Canada, U.S., Indigenous/First Nations, state/province, and municipal applications or adaptations of policies.
- Attract the interest of private foundations and philanthropic industry partners through well-planned projects and initiatives using these Principles of Practice.
- Base policies and funding on clear interventions with measurable conservation changes needed for wildlife populations and habitat; monitor interventions overtime to determine impact, ROI and viability.
- Focus on voluntary and incentive-based policies, as these are most approachable for producers and landowners.
- Create at least some public and private funding streams that provide additional flexibility and reduce restriction, such as:
  - sources that are not contingent on matching contributions, but contingent on meeting performance standards
  - removing geographic barriers
  - extending project timelines (beyond 5-year funding windows to allow proper planning, better conservation work and monitoring)



- adapting responsive feedback loops
- allowing for grantees to shift their direction as conditions change.

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### **PRIORITY 1: STRENGTHEN EXISTING POLICIES TO BETTER SUPPORT GRASSLANDS AND HUMAN COMMUNITIES:**

Improve and reinforce current policies to ensure economic sustainability and grassland conservation at the local, tribal, state/province, and federal levels; increase support for international partnership programs and efforts affecting critical grasslands.

**Output Activity 1:** Create a cross-sector team to analyze and evaluate the Farm Bill to recommend changes for: improved grasslands conservation and outcomes, increased technical assistance provided to land owners regarding sustainable and economically viable conservation, address caps on CRP, and secure a grassland priority area designation across the Central Flyway, which can all be supported at the 2021 Roadmap Summit. **Capitalize on the influential power of elevating unified voices across sectors which specifically support landowners and conservation goals.**

**Output Activity 2:** Elevate and support the work of the Canadian Wildlife Service regarding its mandate to develop a national agriculture sector action plan for wildlife and habitat conservation with a big focus on grassland birds and the Northern Great Plains. Use the principles determined throughout the Roadmap to help influence this plan.

**Output Activity 3:** Elevate impact investment, ecosystem service-based markets, and market-based solutions that leverage available federal resources:

- **In Mexico:** through the Secretary of Environment & Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR), or CONABIO
- **In Canada:** through government programs such as the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, the Pan-Canadian approach to transforming species at risk conservation, and the Canada Nature Fund.
- **In the U.S.:** through the Farm Service Agency and NRCS and Farm Bill.

**Output Activity 4:** Bolster support for *Working Lands for Wildlife Grassland Initiative* and align with programs to achieve land conservation metrics including RCPP, ACEP, and EQIP.

**Output Activity 5:** Develop a new partnership and engagement model designed to support Indigenous/First Nations land management and associated economic/environmental sustainability efforts.



## PRIORITY 2: DEVELOP NEW MAJOR LEGISLATION TO SUPPORT GRASSLANDS CONSERVATION

**Output Activity 1:** As cited in the *Collective Action* priority earlier, support a North American Grasslands Conservation Act which would serve as a multi-national grasslands conservation effort, under new or expanded legislative authority.

**Output Activity 2:** Advocate for and support Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA).

**Output Activity 3:** At the local, regional, and state/provincial scales in all three countries, identify additional opportunities to incentivize conservation and develop ecological, economic and social resilience, while also accounting for contextual needs, (e.g., renewables siting needs to be encouraged in some places and not others).

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## PRIORITY 3: FOCUS FUNDING TO SCALE PROVEN PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS:

Direct funding towards incentivizing grassland conservation for producers and land stewards, in addition to increasing personnel in technical assistance, research, and extension.

### **Output Activity 1: Identify and quantify the true economic value of Grasslands.**

Develop long-term security and predictability to make grasslands conservation economically viable by incorporating wildlife, ecosystem services and land and water conservation into working lands.

#### **Example:**

Consider a "Meadowlark Dividend" to reward the agricultural sector for providing conditions that enable successful reproduction of grassland birds ... funding sources and verification protocols would need to be established.

**Output Activity 2:** Fund resource gaps of Indigenous Protected Conservation Areas ... build ground-up momentum and encourage connecting grassland landscapes and returning to Indigenous methods of stewardship for the area.

**Output Activity 3:** Further scale Sustainable Grazing and Conservation Ranching programs spearheaded by The Nature Conservancy, the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, World Wildlife Fund, National Wildlife Federation, Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever and Audubon; **increase resources for ranch management** and identify opportunities within the beef supply chain and within public knowledge and consumer-demand to increase the impact of these programs.

**Output Activity 4:** Identify gaps in personnel, (whether landscape scale partnership coordinators, researchers, monitors or extension programs), **and seek out funding to get more boots on the ground where most needed.** **Note:** There could be opportunities to use this work to support economic recovery post-COVID 19 and additionally, meet a huge rural community need of retaining/attracting younger people in small, rural communities through the grasslands initiative (countering "youth flight") ... market Grasslands-specific jobs to younger people and provide skilled training and coaching to them by people with a high degree of experience in building and supporting collaborative efforts.



## Strategy Area 3:

### FOCUS ON RESEARCH TO IMPROVE CONSERVATION

#### Overarching Objectives for Research & Evaluation

- Identify the crucial information gaps in wildlife and ecosystems that scientific research can and should be addressing.
- Focus on research and evaluation that directly supports and drives conservation efforts through understanding biological, social, economic, geographical, and political factors that drive conservation (or the lack thereof), as well as establishing overall methods for integration of mapping tools, models, and databases.

#### 7 Principles of Practice for Focusing Research & Evaluation

We want to recognize and emphasize that no matter what priorities and output activities for research and evaluation are taking place on-the-ground now or in the future, it is recommended that these *Principles of Practices*, identified by delegates from across sectors during the 2020 Summit, be considered as common best practices, and updated over time.

- Incorporate human and economic dimensions early in the research design and monitoring including local, cultural, producer, and Indigenous dimensions.
- Through existing and forthcoming research, determine which programs, interventions, and strategies are most needed, and which have been most successful at achieving grasslands sustainability and overall biodiversity: **efforts should help translate research into on-the-ground conservation.**
- Utilize monitoring to understand species' responses to restoration and management practices, and to assess the value of different conservation management action tools that work for landowners, consumers, and supply chains.
- Research should help define the benefits of grassland ecosystems and biodiversity to strengthen public awareness efforts that will enable policy and funding initiatives to happen.
- Seek to share common methods and best practices for specific types of research.
- Contribute to creating data and making results more accessible, such as the ability to query for particular data (i.e., vegetation, bird, etc.).
- Research programs, systems and models should ideally scale: identify contextual differences through place-based research while understanding best practices and necessary conditions for adoption.



### **PRIORITY 1: ADDRESS RESEARCH NEEDS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE GRASSLANDS AND HUMAN COMMUNITIES:**

Increase access to existing research to avoid duplication and prioritize new research that addresses knowledge gaps in wildlife, ecosystems, human dimensions and limiting factors.

**Output Activity 1:** Related to the second priority area in *Partnerships and Engagement*, develop a comprehensive, continental, and multilingual mechanism to share information, data, important outcomes, and take-home messages from research so that future work can be more focused. While there are questions about access, dispersal methods, and incentives for participation, this was seen as a universal priority across workgroups in Summer 2020.

**Output Activity 2:** Focus on research to better understand Indigenous/First Nations and land-based cultures and values.

**Output Activity 3:** Develop a list of research gaps that when filled in will improve knowledge about species populations at risk (there is much we still don't know about why populations are declining), **AND** a list of research gaps that when filled in will improve knowledge about grasslands ecosystems and biodiversity, (identify areas of particular sensitivity and potential mitigation strategies). **Examples:** grassland birds and population-level studies of other grassland animals \* **full annual cycles of migratory birds** \* overall health of plants and habitat \* **monitoring of poorly-studied taxonomic groups that provide ecosystem services** \* water recharge, river flows, and aquifer systems \* **adaptive feedback loops that link biological outcome and land conservation practices** \* ecosystem services that support conservation practices in agriculture \* **carbon neutral animal operations** \* carbon sequestration vs. tree planting \* **soil health, durability, reclamation, and restoration.**

**Output Activity 4:** Confirm key stressors to Grassland Systems under climatic variability and simultaneously identify potential interventions so that the land remains productive. **This might include:**

- Quantifying carbon sequestration rates for intact grasslands and set targets/goals for getting to a carbon neutral environment?
- Establishing climate change vulnerability assessments, both in terms of populations at risk and for producers and other people living in the region.
- Human and economic impacts of climate change, including impacts to food systems
- Practices that will mitigate risks in the context of shifting distributions of grasslands

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### **PRIORITY 2: INTEGRATE COMMUNITY-CENTERED APPROACHES IN GRASSLANDS RESEARCH:**

Co-produce research and learning between researchers and land managers, producers, Indigenous/First Nations, and other working lands communities; increase trust between researchers and communities in existing collaborative research by using the Principles of Practice identified in the Partnership and Engagement and Guidance sections.

**Output Activity 1:** Co-produce research questions that honor Indigenous/First Nations, producers, and land-based cultures and understanding.



**Output Activity 2:** Develop a task force to study and improve communication mechanisms between researchers, communities, and government agencies.

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### **PRIORITY 3: CONSTRUCT SUSTAINABILITY MODELS TO SUPPORT SCALING CONSERVATION PROGRAMS IN GRAZING, REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE, AND INDUSTRY:**

Models are informed by research and proven best practices to then be adapted for varying contexts and local conditions, and developing industry standards for supporting grassland communities.

**Output Activity 1:** Develop a geo-spatial model by using already available GIS data and social layers to identify and prioritize landscape-level areas that can be conserved or restored to reduce fragmentation and support high levels of biodiversity. Identify areas that are vulnerable, have the greatest likelihood of conservation success, are in need of more research, are large landscapes, or are able to promote connectivity for birds and other species.

**Output Activity 2:** Develop Industry Standards that reflect grassland conservation and restoration. Include commitment to low impacts on the ground, minimizing fragmentation, promoting carbon sequestration, native restoration of reclaimed areas, community investment, and land stewardship investments and research.

**Output Activity 3:** Prioritize and begin work on other current model ideas including ...

- A prairie model for agriculture (grass-based and regenerative)
- Management practices for invasive grass
- Highly efficient water usage
- Systematic spatial planning, which includes spatial configurations
- Decision-making criteria to ensure thriving native species, connectivity, and land uses (even in the face of climate variability, and other socio-economic threats)
- Mechanisms for production that guarantee conservation and restoration
- Cost/benefit/ecological impact of bison vs cattle
- Cost/benefit/ecological impact of grass grazing vs pasture and high chemical inputs
- Necessary factors for transition to sustainable grazing and regenerative agriculture
- Cost effective restoration methods for fragile soil in low precipitation

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### **PRIORITY 4: REFINE SHARED CORE MONITORING STANDARDS**

Apply data to inform evaluation and strengthen existing standards including biological, ecological, and socio-economic factors; ensure conservation activities address threats.

**Output Activity 1:** Develop best practices for specific types of monitoring that can be used at various scales (noting these will need to be taxon- and research-goal-specific). Co-create these monitoring



practices with landowners and community members, with a focus on issues important to landowners and community members.

**Output Activity 2:** Ensure that monitoring is more accessible in terms of cost and effort, as well as access to data, while balancing landowner privacy concerns and sensitive species location information.

**Output Activity 3:** Use long-term monitoring of key socio-ecological factors to establish a baseline and measure the progress of the Roadmap's vision and strategy and to provide adaptive feedback loops (see the *Grasslands Scorecard* earlier in this document).

**Output Activity 4:** Share monitoring needs with technology companies to allow for expanding monitoring methods and practices, ranging from use of facial recognition equipment to ID species to platforms for citizen monitoring programs.



# CENTRAL GRASSLANDS ROADMAP

## Constellation Governance Model

Empowering ownership, diverse leadership and equitable collaboration to solve very complex challenges  
 Roles within this governance model are constantly evolving.

**Steering Committee**

- Diverse representation across sectors
- Hub for reporting on Roadmap metrics, stewards, Roadmap outcomes and measures
- Advises/directs overall work and pulse of roadmap

Integrates workgroup progress into the Roadmap

- Sub-committee communicates progress to Delegate community
- Helps plan and coordinate Summit meetings

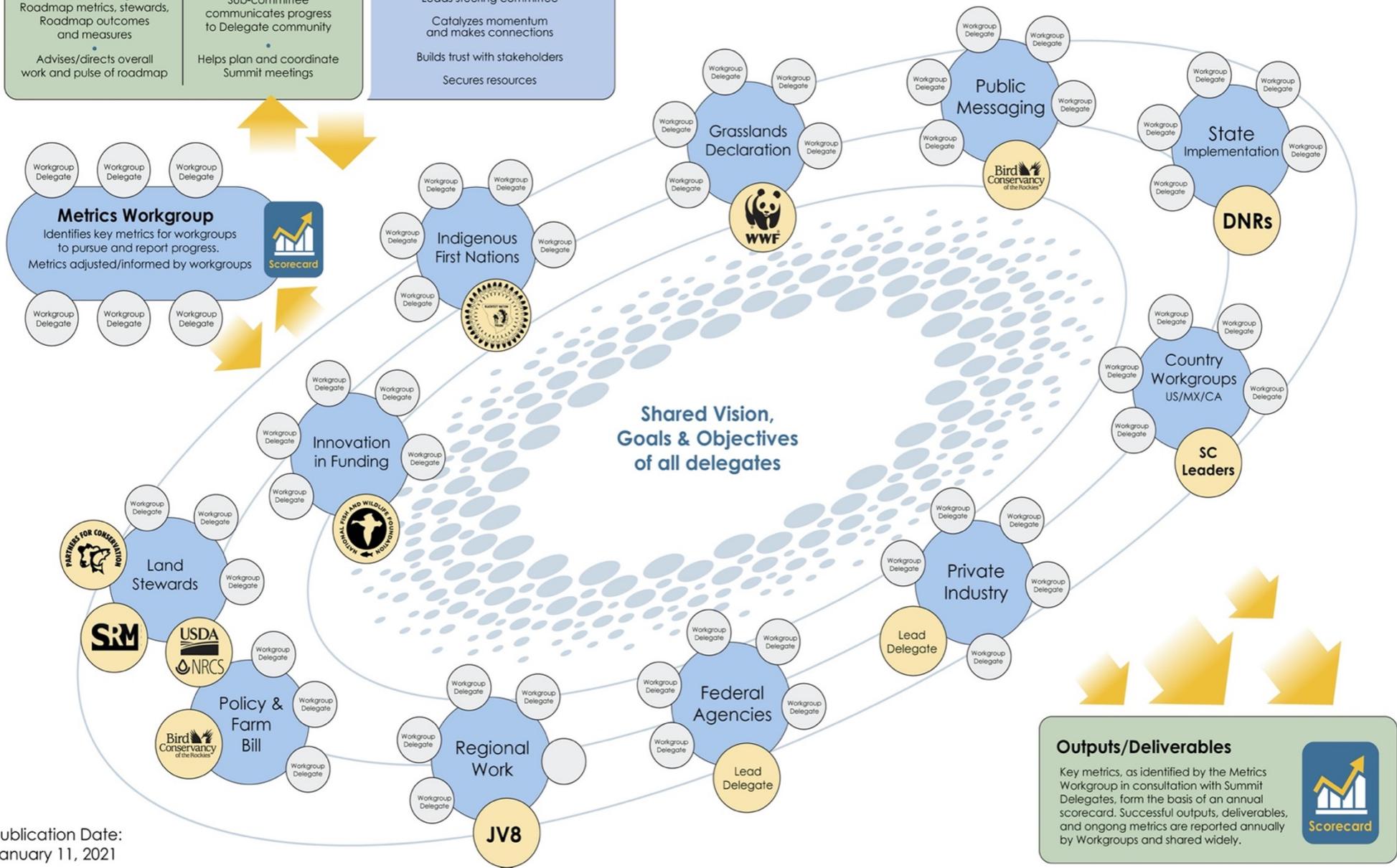
**Convening Organization**  
 Bird Conservancy of the Rockies (2021)

Guides facilitation team & coordinator

- Leads steering committee
- Catalyzes momentum and makes connections
- Builds trust with stakeholders
- Secures resources

Workgroups are organic and formed as needed. They may focus on a single large initiative/project to completion, or a broader delivery of tasks that are ongoing.  
 Workgroup Leads/Co-Leads may be from the Steering Committee, Convening Organization or other leaders/organizations that wish to take the lead on specific actions.

Yellow circle = Workgroup Lead or Co-Lead  
 Grey circle = Workgroup Delegate



### Diagram and Constellation Governance Overview

The Central Grasslands Roadmap is built on the best practices of Collective Impact. Highly collaborative, cross-sector efforts such as the Roadmap demand a structure that is well-organized, yet also invites decentralized leadership to ensure that effective, mutually reinforcing activities are happening across the entire Roadmap effort. **The figure above explains this type of structure using a Constellation Governance model.**

The **Constellation** model is a complexity-inspired **governance** framework for multi-organization collaboration. It is a way of organizing a group of interested parties to meet a need without having to create a new organization, and it has already proved fruitful for the Central Grasslands Roadmap.

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#### PART 1: ON-GOING STRUCTURE

Towards the top of the diagram, you'll see the entities of Constellation Governance that are on-going and consistent: 1) A steering committee (sometimes referred to as a Stewarding Committee) with its sub-committees, and 2) the Backbone Organization.

**The Steering Committee** should be comprised of diverse representation, ensuring equitable, accessible input and leadership across organizations and sectors that are involved in the Roadmap effort. **The Steering Committee is charged with:**

- Helping to plan and coordinate the Summit (or other type of gathering as needed)
- Advising and guiding the overall work of the Roadmap, and being aware of the "pulse" of collaboration
- Tracking the progress and helping to catalyze work groups when needed
- Managing two sub-committees:
  - A hub for reporting Roadmap metrics using the forthcoming **Grasslands Scorecard** as a means to measure outcomes and progress on Roadmap priorities, strategies and actions.
  - A communication committee focused on reporting back out to the Delegate Community regarding progress through monthly emails and/or quarterly newsletters, as well as updating the website and resources; building robust communication networks is critical

**The Backbone Organization** is currently the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, but it is possible for the backbone organization to rotate through Steering Committee members and other leaders. Ideally, the Steering Committee and its sub-committees, take on the bulk of the collaborative effort. It is critical though in Collective Impact for an organization to take on a facilitative and collaborative leadership role as chair of the Roadmap, not be a directive authority. **The backbone is charged with:**

- Supporting the Steering Committee and guiding the facilitation team, coordinator or other hired support to meet the needs of the collective effort
  - Ensuring that momentum continues and that key connections are made across sectors
  - Building trust amongst stakeholders
  - Securing resources in collaboration with the Steering Committee to support the collaboration
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### **PART 2: EMERGENT WORKGROUPS AND LEADERS**

The bulk of the diagram shows the constellation of workgroups that emerge and the leaders that step up to guide action, which over time should not by any means be limited to the Steering Committee or Backbone organization. Through these workgroups, a Constellation Governance structure empowers ownership, diverse leadership, and equitable collaboration to solve incredibly complex challenges. It is important that delegates feel welcome to join and eventually lead a workgroup. Leading workgroups depends on collaborative, facilitative leadership that seeks consensus, group process, and innovation, **not** power, command, or control.

#### **Workgroups ...**

- Can focus on a single issue, action, or strategy until it is achieved
- Be an on-going initiative such as on research or public messaging

#### **Current Workgroups Include ...**

- Multiple connections to landowner collaboratives through a landowner/steward/rancher leadership advisory team
- Indigenous/First Nations Workgroup
- Canada Workgroup
- Mexico Workgroup
- Metrics Workgroup
- Funders Workgroup
- Industry Workgroup
- State Workshop led by State Advisory Team
- Federal Partners
- Farm Bill Exploration
- Communications and Public Messaging Team
- Planning Committee
- Leadership Advisors
- Executive Committee

**Watch for updates to the workgroup list in upcoming newsletters and on the website; in the current formation state of the Roadmap, it is evolving rapidly so this list is not necessarily comprehensive.**





# CENTRAL GRASSLANDS ROADMAP



## 2020-2030: LOGIC MODEL TO SUCCESS

2030 VISION 	MAJOR CHALLENGES	CRITERIA for SOLUTIONS	PRIORITIES for COLLABORATION 	MEASURES of SUCCESS 
<p><b>Large tracts of healthy thriving grassland supporting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thriving rural and Indigenous communities including healthy and profitable working land</li> <li>• Flourishing grassland ecosystems of regenerative soil, plants, and wildlife</li> <li>• Rivers and wetlands that dot our grassland landscape sustaining aquifers, wildlife, production and people</li> <li>• Conservation and development that is sustainable for natural and human communities</li> </ul>	<p>Depletion of aquifers and water supply for all, competition for supply</p> <p>The value of grasslands to ecosystem health, cultural heritage and our economy is understated.</p> <p>Current policies do not fully support public, tribal and private grassland conservation</p> <p>Inadequate funding to support conservation and protection of private and public lands</p> <p>Financial incentives are not far reaching enough and applicable to all lands</p> <p>Gaps in research and knowledge-base due to inadequate funding and unclear priorities</p> <p>Habitat fragmentation and loss.</p>	<p>Science based</p> <p>Honor diverse voices</p> <p>Utilize generations of experience of indigenous communities and private landowners</p> <p>Improve health of the land and water</p> <p>Support ecosystem processes</p> <p>Sustain resilient human communities</p> <p>Help producers and working lands communities, including ejidos, maintain their way of life and livelihoods</p> <p>Support biodiversity and arrest declining wildlife population trends</p> <p>Collaboratively meets the needs of all eight sectors</p> <p>Applicable at North American Scale but adapted to region</p>	<p><b>Partnerships &amp; Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broaden Communications to Increase Support for Grasslands</li> <li>• Share Knowledge and Resources Across Cultures</li> <li>• Create Stronger Public/Private Partnerships Across Sectors &amp; Scales</li> <li>• Build Collective Action</li> </ul> <p><b>Policy &amp; Funding</b></p> <p>Strengthen Existing Policies to Better Support Grasslands &amp; Human Communities</p> <p>Develop New Major Legislation to Support Conservation Across the Continent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Funding to Scale Proven Programs &amp; Support Innovative Solutions</li> <li>• Identify &amp; Quantify the True Economic Value of Grasslands</li> </ul> <p><b>Research &amp; Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address research needs to support sustainable grasslands, wildlife, and human communities</li> <li>• Integrate Community-Centered Approaches into Grasslands Research</li> <li>• Construct Sustainability Models to Support Scaling Programs in Grazing, Regenerative Agriculture, and Industry</li> <li>• Refine Monitoring Standards and Apply the Data to Inform Evaluation</li> </ul>	<p>Millions of acres of land actively managed for grassland conservation</p> <p>Grassland economics reflects ecosystem services</p> <p>Aquifer recharge rates are doubled and community water availability extended</p> <p>Billions of dollars dedicated to roadmap priorities</p> <p>Legislation adopted that supports grassland conservation</p> <p>Grassland bird declines cut in half in 10 years and stabilized in 30</p> <p><b>Grassland conversion rates are reduced by 90%</b></p> <p>National/international recognition for grasslands and commitment</p> <p>Grassland roadmap endorsement and application</p>