

## **Conservation Trust Funding Helps Sustainability of Prairie Ecosystems in Manitoba's Community Pastures**

by Wayne Hildebrand

Manitoba Conservation Trust program funding has granted over one million dollars to the Association of Manitoba Community Pastures (AMCP) to help maintain prairie grasslands and biodiversity in Manitoba's Community Pastures.

"The Manitoba Conservation Trust was pleased to partner with AMCP," said Stephen Carlyle, Chief Executive Officer for Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC). "The Trust funding supports range management projects to provide healthy grazing land for local beef producers, as well as to protect and sustain natural prairie ecosystems."

AMCP operates 19 Community Pastures, totalling over 300,000 acres of rangelands across four ecoregions in Manitoba. "Conservation Trust funding helped immensely to support grassland habitat diversity and rangeland sustainability in the Community Pastures," said AMCP Board Chair Greg Genik. "The Community Pastures provide essential species-at-risk habitat across the Province. The recent Trust announcement of \$400,000 for 2022 builds on three years of successful project work and is integral to promoting strong habitat stewardship."

Trust-funded activities in Community Pastures are geared to projects that improve rotational grazing systems and livestock distribution. Projects include new water sources, cattle crossings, brush management controls, and new cross-fencing.

"Well managed grazing lands deliver a number of benefits including good forage production, resiliency during drought, improved habitat for species at risk, improved biodiversity, healthy soils, and good water quality," said Genik. "

"The Association of Manitoba Community Pastures provides grazing services to over 43,000 head of livestock annually," said Barry Ross, General Manager of AMCP. "The grazing lands also support some of the largest tracts of remaining mixed and tall grass prairie ecosystems in the Province."

Prairie is one of the most endangered habitats in Canada. "There is less than one percent of the original tallgrass prairie left in Manitoba and less than eighteen percent of the original mixed grass prairie," said Rachel Whidden, Project Manager, AMCP. "As a result of habitat loss, research shows grassland dependent wildlife species have experienced overall population declines by forty four percent."

"Last year 14,000 acres of Community Pasture rangelands were enhanced through the support of Conservation Trust funding," Whidden said. "In 2022, the AMCP has projected another 20,000 acres of pasture rangelands will benefit from Trust-program investments."

AMCP's Community Pastures are located throughout Manitoba: Alonsa, Bield, Birch River, Cote-San Clara, Ellice-Archie, Ethelbert, Gardenton, Pansy, Langford, Lenswood, Libau, McCreary, Mulvihill, Narcisse, Spy Hill-Ellice, Sylvan Dale, Turtle Mountain and Wallace.

The Conservation Trust Fund is held by The Winnipeg Foundation and revenues are managed by MHHC.

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