

Prairie Grasslands Action Plan

NATURE CONSERVANCY CANADA

THE UNSUNG HERO

Canada's Prairie grasslands are our unsung heroes. Grasslands absorb and store billions of tonnes of carbon, provide protection from flooding and drought, and help purify our water.

They are also culturally significant, being home to Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial and serving as a working landscape for millions of Canadians.





CANADA'S PRAIRIE GRASSLANDS

Prairie grasslands are essential for humans, but also for the numerous species that rely on the ecosystem to survive — like swift fox, ferruginous hawk and burrowing owl.

Once covering much of southern Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Canada's Prairie grasslands represent the northern extent of North America's Great Plains region, a rich and varied landscape sprawling across more than 10 per cent of the continent. What remains is home to thousands of plant and animal species, including many found only in these remaining grasslands.

Although the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has contributed to the conservation of over 300,000 hectares of grasslands in the Prairies, more continues to be lost every day, and a significant acceleration of our efforts must be achieved to preserve what remains.

CANADA'S PRAIRIE GRASSLANDS NEED OUR HELP

< 20%
Remains intact

> 70
Federally listed species at risk

60,000
Hectares lost every year, an area the size of Edmonton

6%
Considered protected and conserved

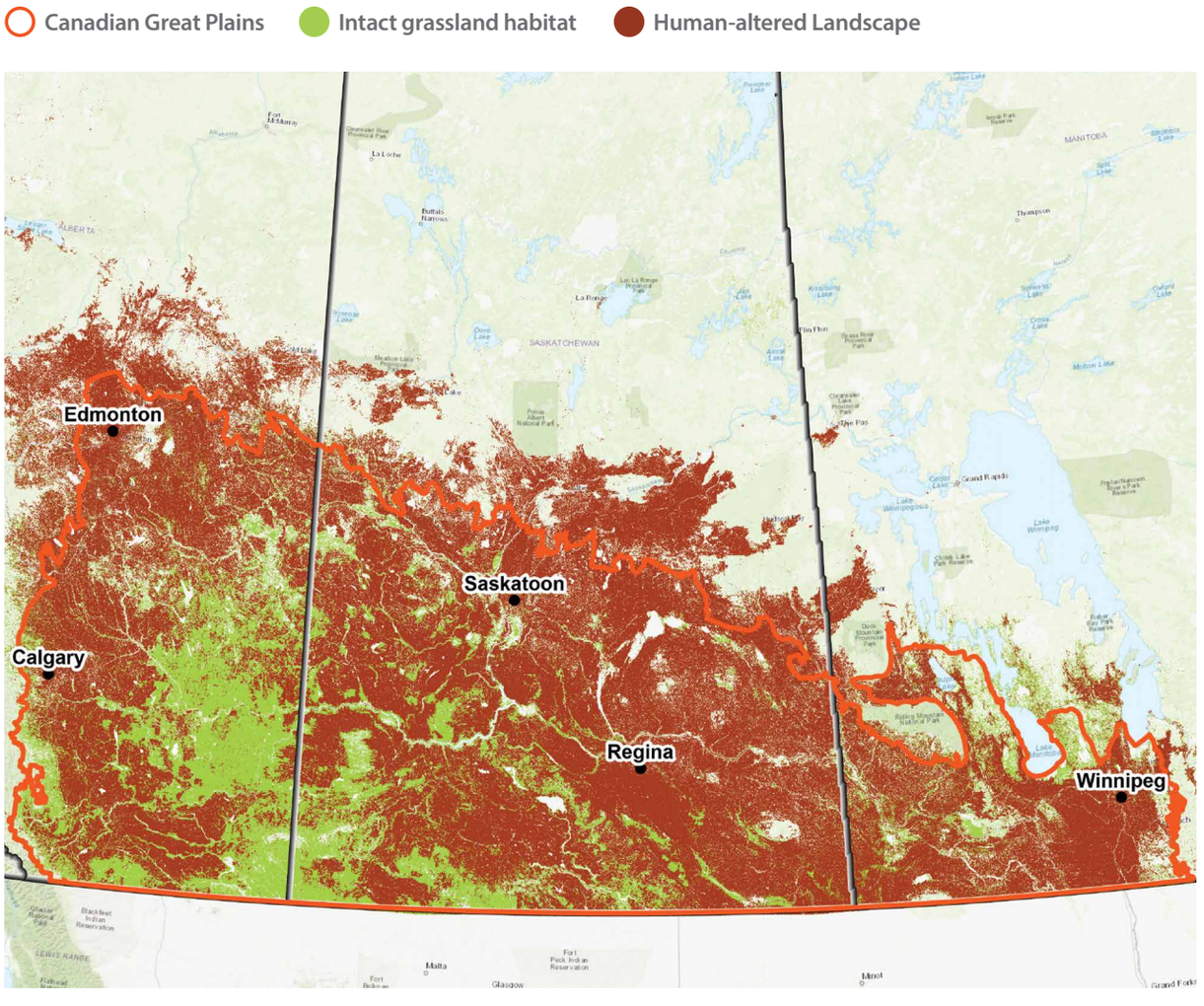
4x
Prairie grassland loss compared to Amazon rainforest



VANISHING ACT

Prairie grasslands are lost, degraded and fragmented by:

- direct land use changes, mostly for human purpose
- invasive species
- intensive land use practices
- climate change



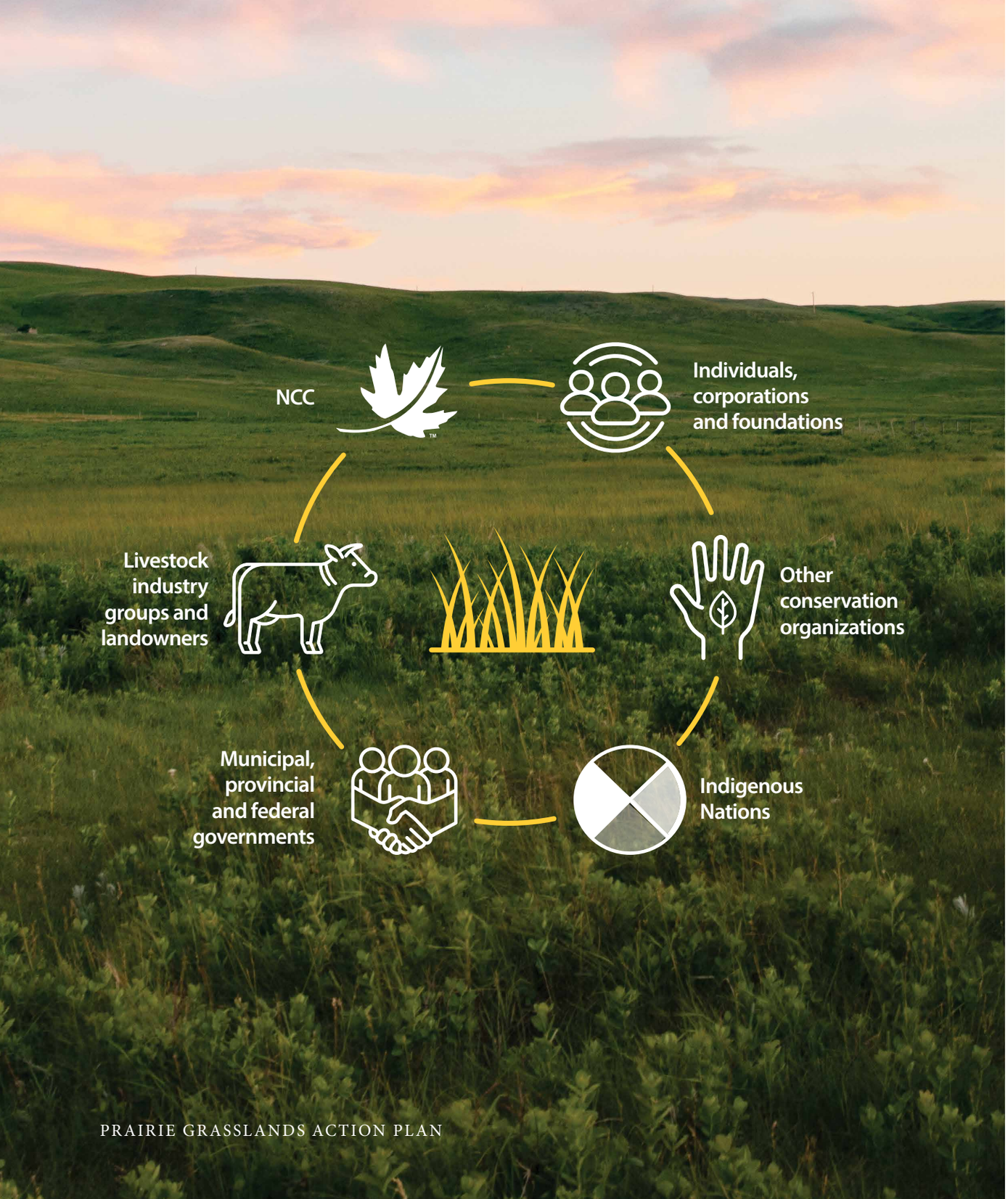
WHY NCC?

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is the country's unifying force for nature. We seek solutions to the twin crises of rapid biodiversity loss and climate change through large-scale, permanent land conservation. As a trusted partner, we work with individuals, organizations, Indigenous Nations and local communities, businesses and governments to protect and care for our most important natural areas. Since 1962, we have brought Canadians together to conserve and restore more than 15 million hectares.



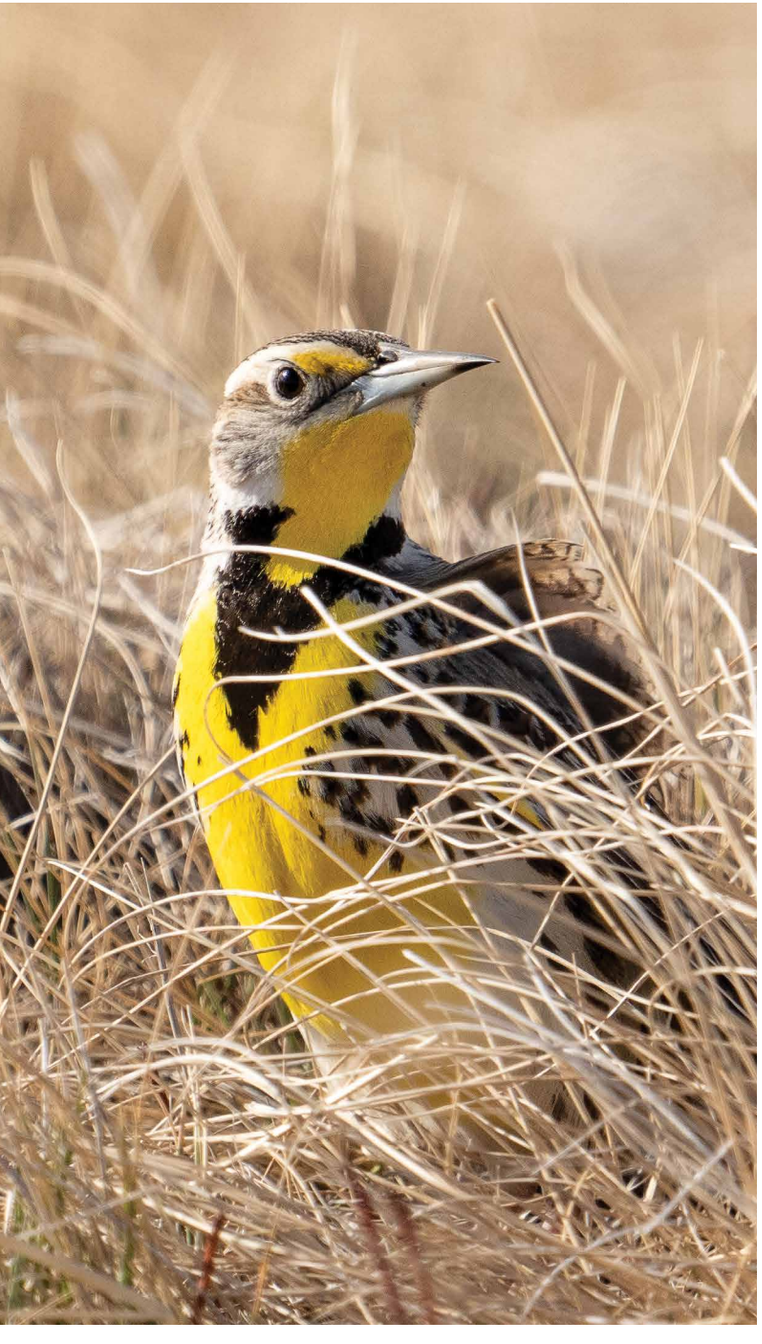
WHY NOW?

Public awareness around the importance of our Prairie grasslands and the dangers they face is growing, but direct and immediate action to ensure their conservation is needed. Grasslands continue to have ecological, cultural, spiritual and economic significance. Only by working together can we make a real change and conserve what remains, forever.



PARTNERSHIP AT ITS HEART

NCC is working with local communities, livestock producers and grazing groups, Indigenous Peoples, industry, government and local conservation organizations to ensure the grasslands remain a foundation for thriving communities. Because when nature thrives, we all thrive.



THE PLAN

CONSERVE 500,000 HECTARES OF GRASSLANDS BY 2030

Four strategies will be actioned with our partners:

1. **Enable** protected and conserved areas on public lands.
2. **Facilitate** Indigenous-led conservation and foster collaboration to heal relationships with the land.
3. **Establish** incentives and remove barriers to private land conservation.
4. **Build** resilient landscapes through land stewardship and restoration.

NCC is confident that the Prairie Grasslands Action Plan is both achievable and worthwhile. These strategies are built on a knowledge-driven foundation and our experience conserving more than 15 million hectares across Canada, creating results you can walk on.

To support the Prairie Grasslands Action Plan, we will raise $500 million.



STRATEGY 1

Enable protected and conserved areas on public land

- Using NCC's technical expertise and prioritization tools, identify high-impact conservation opportunities on public lands.
- Expand relationships with regulating authorities to enable the recognition of protected and conserved areas.
- Enable durable conservation practices on public lands.



STRATEGY 2

Facilitate Indigenous-led conservation and foster collaboration to heal relationships with the land

- Establish meaningful relationships with Indigenous Nations, be an ally and partner in conservation.
- Ensure Indigenous rights, roles and responsibilities are recognized and respected in our work.
- Support Indigenous-led conservation efforts through multiple pathways.
- Facilitate reconnection to the land:
    - Support the formation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs).
    - Enable traditional/ceremonial practices and harvesting on NCC lands.
    - Work with Indigenous Peoples to identify and protect significant sites on NCC properties.
    - Seek and enable opportunities for Indigenous stewardship of the land.



STRATEGY 3

Establish incentives and remove barriers to private land conservation

- Identify and deploy attractive opportunities and incentives that accelerate the rate of private land conservation.
- Develop new funding that supports landscape resiliency.
- Strengthen and expand relationships with landowners and regulating authorities to enable new conservation.

STRATEGY 4

Build resilient landscapes through land stewardship and restoration

- Identify and deploy the highest-impact stewardship and restoration actions for NCC lands.
- Maintain or increase the resiliency of conservation lands.
- Grow capacity for partners to undertake stewardship and restoration.



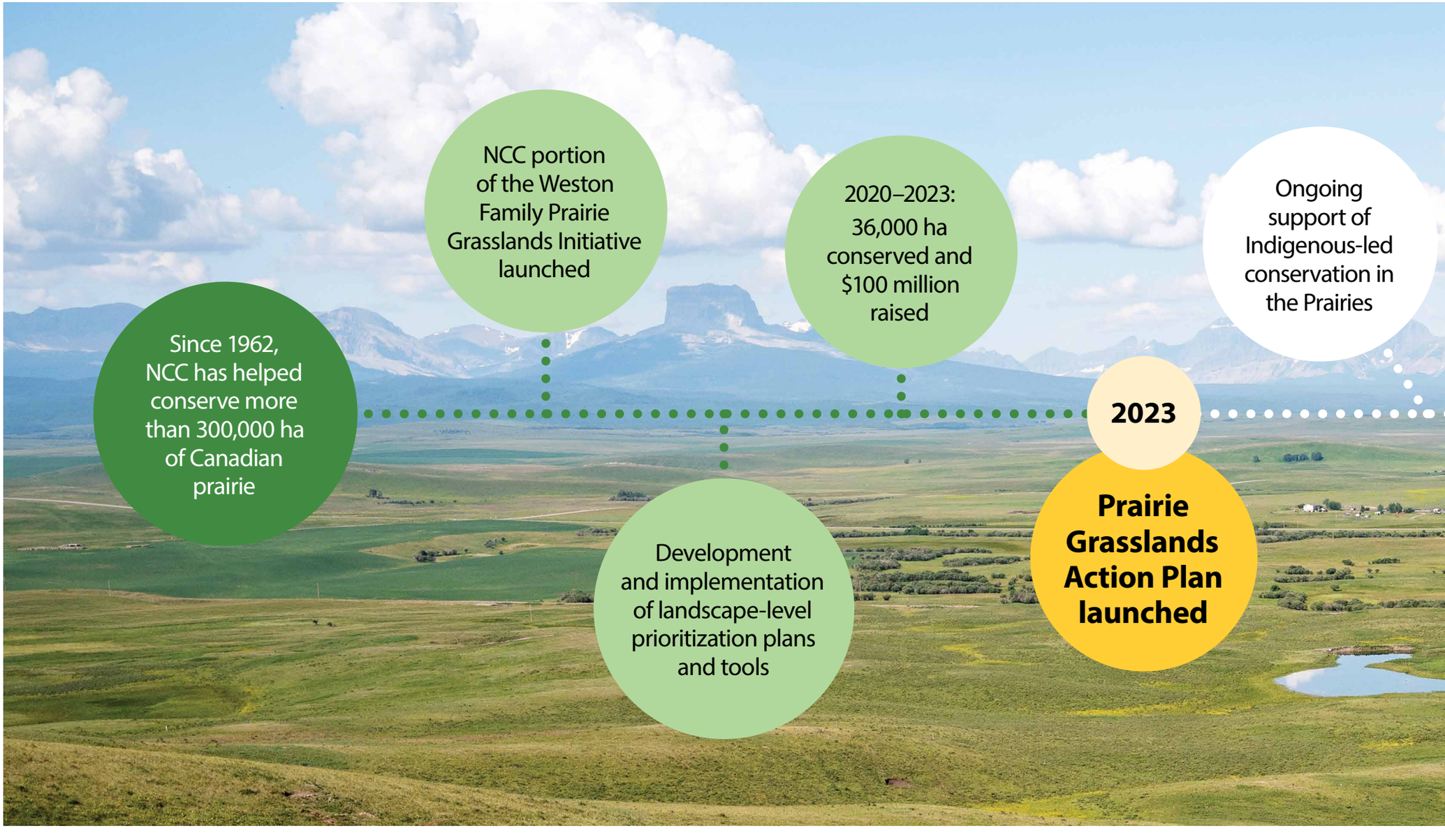


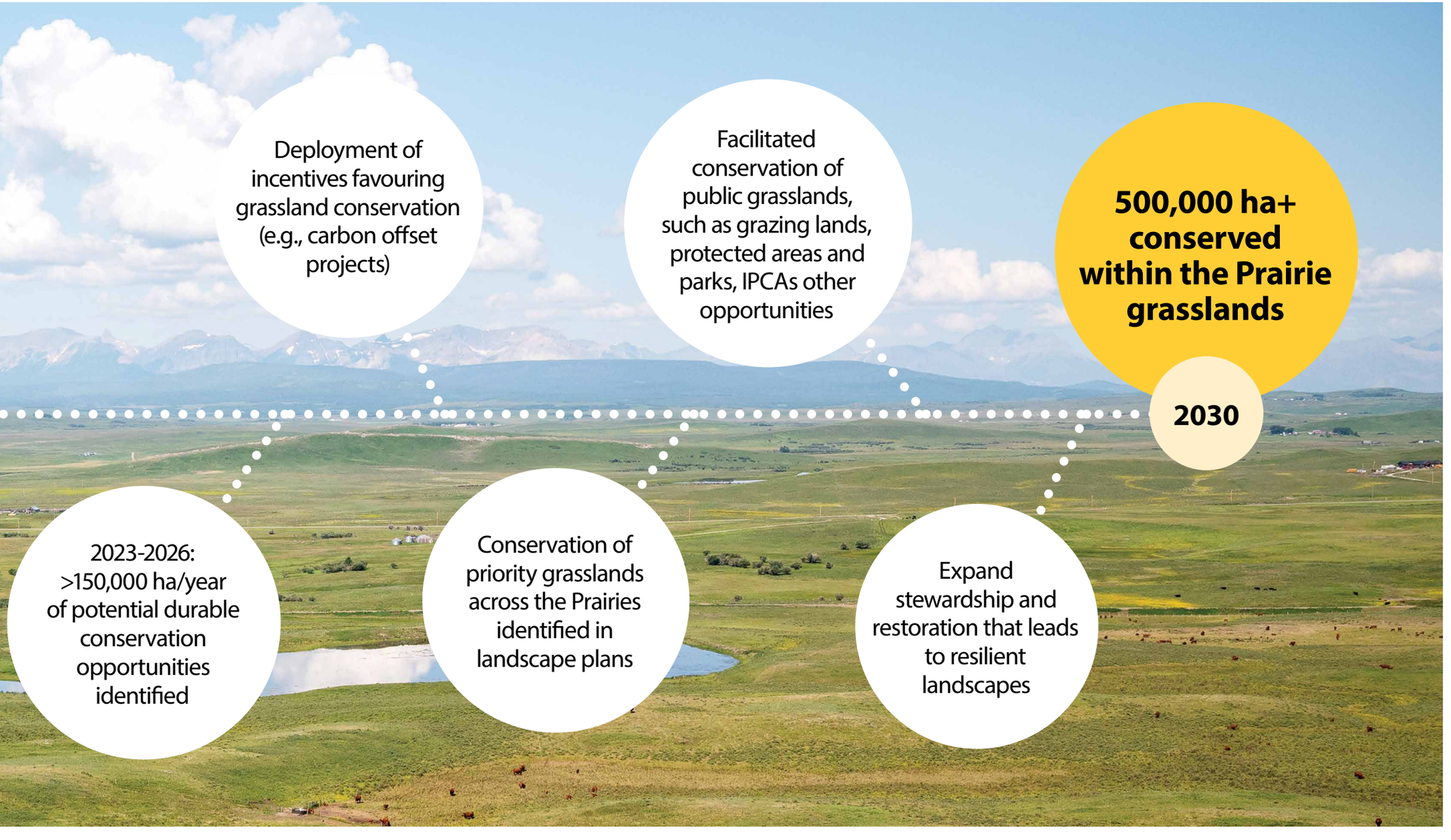
THE PRAIRIE GRASSLANDS ACTION PLAN BRINGS HOPE

While 500,000 hectares of grassland conservation is ambitious, and far beyond the historical pace of conservation in the Canadian Prairies, it is possible to enable this action plan through working together.

Enthusiasm is growing and the tools to unlock solutions are available, but we will continue to permanently lose our remaining Prairie grasslands without direct action. This year, NCC and partners completed the largest private land conservation project in Canadian history, and we're ready to do more, faster.

THE PATH TO 500,000 HECTARES




Deployment of incentives favouring grassland conservation (e.g., carbon offset projects)
Facilitated conservation of public grasslands, such as grazing lands, protected areas and parks, IPCAs other opportunities
500,000 ha+ conserved within the Prairie grasslands
2030
2023-2026: >150,000 ha/year of potential durable conservation opportunities identified
Conservation of priority grasslands across the Prairies identified in landscape plans
Expand stewardship and restoration that leads to resilient landscapes

TOGETHER, WE WILL ENSURE CANADA'S PRAIRIE GRASSLANDS THRIVE



PHOTOS: P1: LETA PEZDERIC/NCC STAFF. P2: SEAN FEAGAN/NCC STAFF. P3-P4: LETA PEZDERIC/NCC STAFF. P5: NCC. P6-P8: LETA PEZDERIC/NCC STAFF. P9: SEAN FEAGAN/NCC STAFF. P10: NCC. P11: KYLE MARQUARDT. P12: BRENT CALVER. P13: THOMAS FRICKE. P14: SEAN FEAGAN/NCC STAFF. P15: LETA PEZDERIC/NCC STAFF.

NATURE CONSERVANCY CANADA

Charitable Registration Number: 11924 6544 RR0001

The time is now. Learn more about how you can take action to care for Canada's iconic Prairie grasslands at **prairiegrasslands.ca**