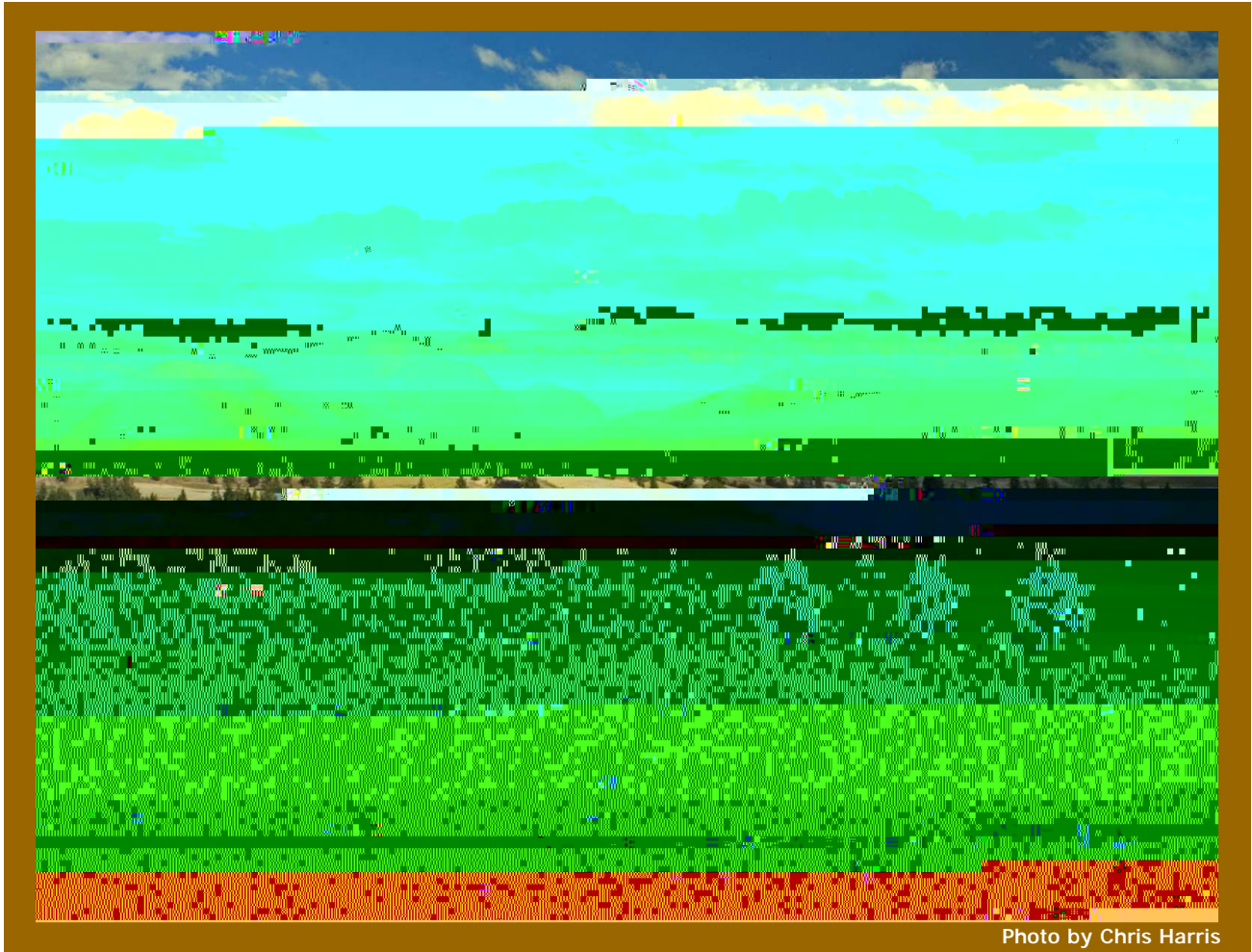


# Life in a Working Landscape: Towards a Conservation Strategy for the World's Temperate Grasslands



## A Record of The World Temperate Grasslands Conservation Initiative Workshop Hohhot, China - June 28 & 29, 2008

Prepared by  
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August 2008



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Temperate grasslands occupy ~8% of the earth's terrestrial surface and are now considered the most altered and beleaguered ecosystem on the planet, with only 5.5% protected. Temperate grasslands used to be home to some of the greatest assemblages of wildlife on earth.

In 2005, the J.M. Kaplan Fund invited expressions of interest designed to enhance international communication and cooperation for the protection and conservation of the world's temperate grasslands. The Grasslands Protected Area Task Force of the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) submitted a proposal and was awarded a grant, as a result the Temperate Grasslands Conservation Initiative (TGCI) was born.

The TGCI scheduled a workshop on June 28-29, 2008 in Hohhot, China, in conjunction with the joint International Grasslands Congress and the International Rangelands Congress, and invited 35 grassland specialists to attend, to develop an action plan with the following purpose and outcomes.

**Purpose:** To reverse the trend of biodiversity loss and degradation of the temperate grassland biome by promoting both the designation and sustainable management of representative protected areas, and the widespread use of sustainable management practices beyond protected area boundaries, with the goal of at least doubling the current level of protection by 2014.

**Outcomes:** To establish a global strategy and to inspire the value of regional-specific action plans world wide throughout 2008-2009, by:

- Producing a communications document that describes the global role, values and purpose of the temperate grasslands initiative.

The workshop was deemed a success and a series of r

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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The Temperate Grassland Conservation Initiative and any progress that we have made to date would not be possible without the generous funding support of the J.M. Kaplan Fund.

# Life in a Working Landscape<sup>1</sup>: Towards a Conservation Strategy for the World's Temperate Grasslands

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 The Status of Temperate Grasslands

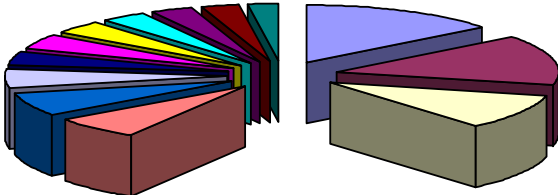
Temperate grasslands are one of the world's great biomes - or at least they used to be. Temperate grasslands are now considered the most altered and beleaguered ecosystem on the planet. The temperate grasslands biome occupies about 9 million sq. km., or ~ 8% of the earth's terrestrial surface. These grasslands occur on every continent except for Antarctica and are now the most endangered ecosystem on most of them, especially the prairies of North America, the pampas of South America, the lowland grasslands of southeast Australia and the steppes of Eastern Europe. Temperate grasslands used to be home to some of the greatest assemblages of wildlife the earth has ever known.

Temperate grasslands have been modified by human activity to such a degree that little remains today in a natural state, and even less in some form of long-term protection. Globally over 40% of temperate grasslands have been converted from their indigenous state. An alarm was sounded when the United Nations' 1993 List of Protected Areas estimated that only 0.69% of the temperate grassland biome was protected.

It was with this knowledge of the high rate of conversion and low level of protection for temperate grasslands that in 1996 the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) of the World Conservation Union (IUCN)<sup>2</sup> created the Grasslands Protected Areas Task Force with Bill Henwood approved as the Lead. The general purpose of the Task Force was to work toward raising the level of protection for grassland ecosystems generally - with a clear and immediate priority on temperate grasslands. The Task Force was established as the primary vehicle for facilitating international cooperation and communication on the conservation and protection of grasslands.

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and cultural identity. These organizations are pursuing the concept of Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas, which are a promising avenue for the conservation of temperate grasslands.

**3. The Species Survival Commission (SSC).** There is a strong tie among food security, economic development and conservation. As the world is under increasing pressure to serve the needs of the increasing population the concern for the future of specific plants, animals and habitats is well documented in temperate grasslands. As we move forward with our strategy it is essential that we develop a strong link with the various conservation strategies being developed for species. An examination of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species points out that many identified species find their home in temperate grasslands.

**4. WCPA: Transboundary Conservation Task Force (TCTF).** There are an ever increasing number of transboundary protected areas throughout the world: Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park on the Canada-United States border set aside in 1932 being the first. The rationale for transboundary conservation is broad ranging and includes efforts at both the large-scale ecosystem-wide approaches, and much smaller-scale focused interventions. This 'transfrontier' approach seeks to address the fundamental cause of loss of biodiversity, namely habitat destruction and fragmentation at the landscape scale. Transboundary temperate grasslands conservation would focus on the migration patterns of the wide-ranging fauna, common water resources and shared ecosystems.

As we move forward it is essential that we try to balance governance, equity, rights, conservation and protection, and we will need the support and advice of these programmes to do so.



## 2.2 Participants

To confirm direction and purpose a 'face to face' meeting was essential during the initial stages of the initiative. Since many grassland experts from around the world were planning to attend the joint XXI International Grassland Congress and VIII International Rangeland Congress in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia China (June 29-July 5, 2008) it was decided to take advantage of this opportunity and hold the TGCI Workshop immediately prior to the Congress.

It seemed appropriate to have participation from each of the following priority grasslands regions:

Prairie, intermontane and desert steppe grasslands of North America.

Pampas and campos grasslands, high elevation Central and Northern Andean paramo grasslands and the Patagonia steppe in South America.

Steppes of Eastern Europe.

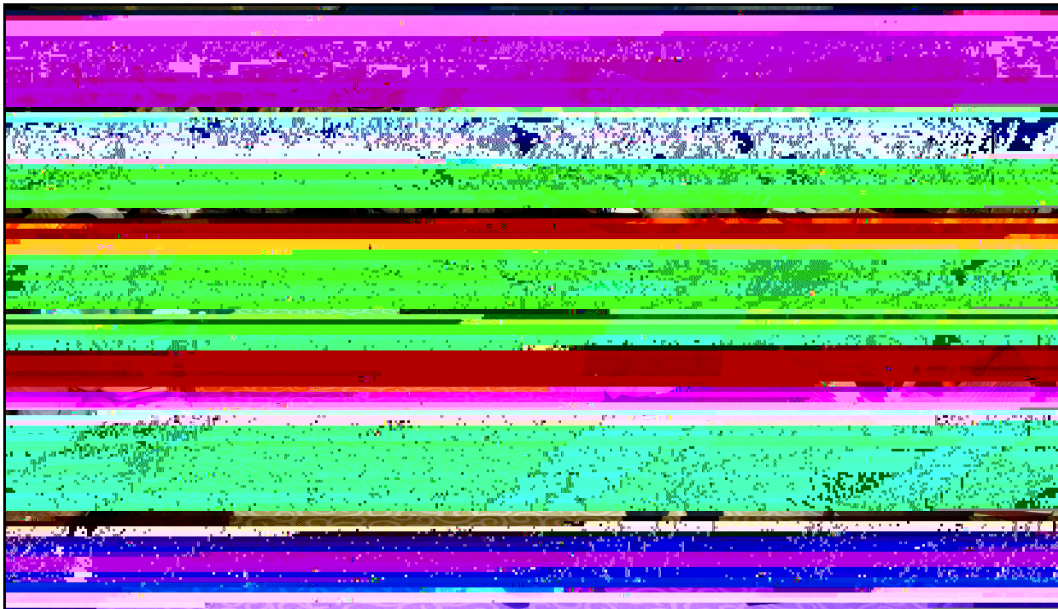
Steppes of the Black Sea -Kazakh.

Daurian Steppes of East Asia (Mongolia, China, Russia).

Veldt of southern Africa and high elevation grasslands of tropical eastern Africa.

Lowland grasslands of southeastern Australia.

Tussock grasslands of N 0 Td ( )Tj /R9 11.5426(")7.(c)5.64154(a)5.64154(l)6.63531(-)iaT)a.



## **2.3 Regional Template Summaries**

The Project Team felt it was important to provide initial inventory and status information on the priority

### **3. THE HOHHOT WORKSHOP: SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS**

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#### **3.1 Workshop Goals and Agenda**

The workshop agenda is attached as Appendix Three. The first agenda item was to clarify the purpose of the workshop - all present agreed to the following specific workshop goals:

1. To establish a global strategy and two regional-specific action plans for increased protection by 2014.
2. To develop a mechanism for improving international communications and cooperation for the continued conservation, protection and management of the world's temperate grasslands.
3. To establish a Steering Committee to help guide the Project Team and implement the global strategy and region-specific action plans.
4. To confirm South America and East Asia as the two priority pilot regions for the project.
5. To discuss the potential for and benefits of transboundary protected areas.

#### **3.2 Governance**

During the workshop there was much discussion of what was termed as 'who is we?', whenever there was reference to the Temperate Grasslands Conservation Initiative. The participants agreed to an initial approach to project governance (Figure Four).

This structure illustrates the necessity for the TGCI to clarify and strengthen its official connections with the IUCN and WCPA, for both financial and program reasons. There is a strong social and political element to what the TGCI is undertaking and the IUC

**Figure Four: Temperate Grasslands Conservation Initiative Project Governance**

**Project Title**

### 3.3 Common Threats

There was much discussion during the workshop about the past and current threats to the temperate grassland biome. The focus was on the low level of actual legal protection and the existing management challenges, such as: widespread livestock grazing and agricultural intensification (or crop production), the introduction of exotic species, fire management and in a number of cases, the continued loss of grasslands through urban and forest encroachment.

Upon analyzing the descriptions in the various regional templates a clear pattern of the common threats emerged (Figure Five). The primary overarching threat was global climate change. The impact of climate change on the interactions amongst native and exotic species under different disturbance and grazing regimes is largely unknown, particularly at the local level where temperature and precipitation will be less stable. Climate change also leads to





### 3.4 Financing and Fundraising

For the current TGCI project the J.M. Kaplan Fund has approved \$US320, 000 over two years. To date, \$US160, 000 has been received and negotiations are underway for the release of the remainder. There is a need to raise additional funding as the Kaplan Fund expects the TGCI to raise a minimum of 50% of the funds provided - beyond any in-kind contributions. A number of points were raised during the workshop about the potential funding for projects such as the TGCI:





### 4.3 The Management of Temperate Grasslands

The message is clear that temperate grasslands must be better managed if the trend toward habitat loss, fragmentation, loss of diversity, integrity and ecosystem services, degradation and desertification is to be reversed.

It is important to differentiate between the current management patterns and the driving forces behind them. Driving forces can be political, economic, societal, environmental and/or technological - and they can be of a positive or negative nature. A more effective long-term approach is to develop strategies that influence the drivers rather than focusing energy directly on the current threats.

Suggestions for improving the management of the temperate grassland ecosystem were raised:

- Expand the number and size of protected areas, conduct research within their ecosystems and improve their current management.

- Develop and/or clarify standards that would facilitate better management, perhaps leading to a 'tool box' of best management practices.

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## 5. REVIEW OF WORKSHOP GOALS

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The workshop was without a doubt a success. However to meet expectations and to continue to accomplish the stated purpose there needs to be a transition from a Project Team-led initiative to one with more directed funding and a minimal staffing level.

**1. To establish a global strategy and two regional-specific action plans for increased protection by 2014.**

Although a global strategy wasn't established *per se* there were a number of decisions made and recommendations put forward in this report that will lead to the formation of such a strategy. In particular there were conversations about the need to undertake a global inventory and assessment of existing temperate grassland protected areas to document their location, size, characteristics, etc., their



## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

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### 6.1 Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION ONE:** That the Governance Structure as outlined in Figure Four be adopted.

**RECOMMENDATION TWO:** That the TGCI clarify and strengthen its official partnership with the IUCN and WCPA: in particular, Nik Lopoukhine (Chair, WCPA) and David Sheppard (Head of the Protected Areas Programme, IUCN). Generally, technical/administrative advice and support for fundraising comes from the IUCN, whereas the WCPA provides more specific direction on the Termser r4.027(g)-0.98

## 6.2 Next Steps



## **APPENDIX ONE: PARTICIPANTS INVITED AND IN ATTENDANCE**

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### **In Attendance:**

Elizabeth Juliana Jacobo, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina  
Ulises Martinez, Fundacion Vida Silvestre, Argentin

## **APPENDIX TWO:**

## APPENDIX THREE: TGCI HOHHOT WORKSHOP AGENDA

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### World Temperate Grasslands Conservation Initiative: Planning for a Decade of Progress

Hohhot, China, June 28 & 29, 2008  
Room 315, International Conference Centre

*(Sponsored by: World Commission on Protected Areas (WPCA) - Grasslands Protected Areas Task Force  
with the generous funding support of the J.M. Kaplan Fund)*

#### **Saturday June 28: 830am -1200**

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Purpose of Meeting and Agenda approval (Bill Henwood)   | 10 minutes |
| Introduction of Project Team and Bob Peart, Facilitator | 10 minutes |
| Meeting Logistics and Format (Bob Peart)                | 10 minutes |
| Participant Introduction (Bob Peart)                    | 50 minutes |
| TGCI Overview (Bill Henwood)                            | 20 minutes |

#### **Coffee Break (20 minutes)**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Regional Template Overviews (10-12 minutes allotted for each) | 1.5 hours |
|---|-----------|

LUNCH PROVIDED

#### **Saturday June 28: 100pm - 430pm**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Regional Template Overviews (conclude) | 1.5 hours |
|--|-----------|

#### **Coffee Break (20 minutes)**

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Discussion and Questions                                   | 30 minutes |
| Ecosystem-Transboundary Approach to Grassland Conservation | 20 minutes |
| Patterns/Issues --- Discussion of Key Threats and Status   | 30 minutes |
| Prepare June 29 morning agenda                             | 20 minutes |

DINNER NOT PROVIDED --- ON YOUR OWN

#### **Sunday June 29: 830am - Noon**

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| Strategy Discussions (Bob Peart)                        | 1 hour |
| - Global  |        |
| - Regional: Confirm East Asia and South American Pilots |        |
| - Ecosystem-Transboundary Approach to Conservation      |        |

#### **Coffee Break (20 minutes)**

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Action Plan (Bob Peart)                        | 1.5 hours  |
| - Steering Committee                           |            |
| - Next Steps                                   |            |
| Conclusion and Closing Comments (Bill Henwood) | 30 minutes |