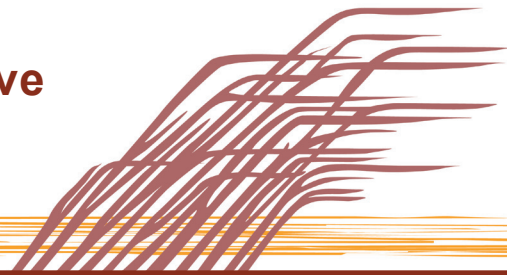


# Temperate Grasslands Conservation Initiative

Newsletter 3 – January 2010



## Taking Global Action: Towards a Conservation Strategy for the World's Temperate Grasslands

photo: Ilya Smelansky

Since the Hohhot workshop in June 2008, the Temperate Grasslands Conservation Initiative (TGCI) has been focused on getting indigenous temperate grasslands included more formally on the global agenda, initiating the development of four regional action plans, developing a world temperate grassland map and locating funding support. Fundraising continues to prove difficult. The J.M. Kaplan Fund recently informed us that they will continue to provide funding support into 2010; however, they have also let us know that this donation will be their final tranche of funding. The importance of finding other funding sources therefore cannot be overstated.

Temperate grasslands are one of the world's great biomes. After cradling our needs for centuries, indigenous temperate grasslands are now the most altered and endangered ecosystem on the planet. Indigenous temperate grasslands occur on every continent (except Antarctica) and occupy about 8% of the earth's terrestrial surface. Of this 8%, only 5% of it is currently protected within the global system of protected areas.

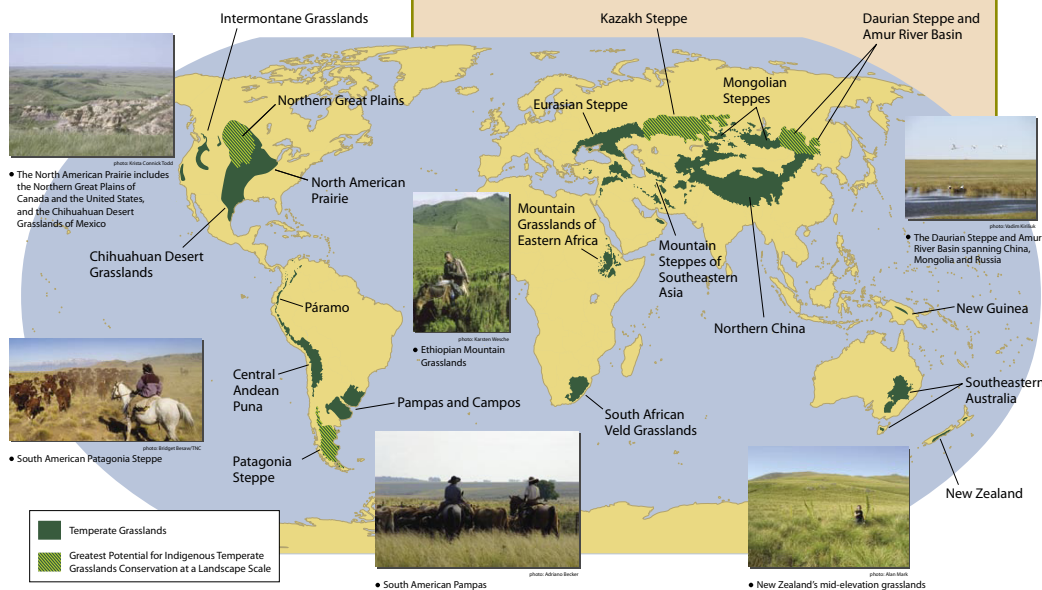
Temperate grasslands have been converted for crop production, forest plantations, urbanization and other land uses such as energy and mining development. Much of the remainder is subject to intensive grazing. These practices have led and are continuing to lead to habitat loss, declining biodiversity, desertification and fragmentation. In addition, the specter of climate change is of ever-increasing concern.

It is essential that we increase the level of conservation and protection of temperate grasslands, and minimize the threats to these important landscapes, if we are to ensure their future health and ecological viability. Although the past few decades have seen impressive gains in the protection of nature in tropical rainforests, coral reefs or mountain landscapes, temperate grasslands have not been a visible part of the global conservation agenda. The level of communications and international cooperation that exists for many other biomes simply has not been present for temperate grasslands.

Temperate Grasslands Conservation Initiative (TGCI) was created to serve as the center point for international communications and collaboration for the improved conservation and protection of the world's indigenous temperate grasslands. Our goal is to double the current level of protection for these grasslands by 2014 and promote sustainable land use practices throughout the biome. **Bill Henwood, Project Director**

### Where are These Grasslands?

The TGCI has prepared a map illustrating the location of the world's temperate grasslands. This map also highlights the four regions of the world where there remains the greatest potential for indigenous temperate grassland conservation at a landscape scale: the Kazakh steppe of Central Asia, the Patagonia steppe of South America, the Great Plains of North America and the Daurian Steppe – Amur River Basin of East Asia.



## Making a Difference!

### Temperate Grassland Conservation Strategy Developed

The conservation and protection of the world's indigenous temperate grasslands requires the dual focus of site-specific protection of representative areas AND the fostering of sustainable land use practices throughout the biome. To achieve this mandate the TGCI has identified five priorities:

1. Conduct a global inventory and gap analysis of temperate grassland protected areas.
2. Develop a global strategy and four regional specific action plans to double the level of protection for temperate grasslands by 2014.
3. Develop guidelines for sustainable land use practices that promote the maintenance of ecological and biodiversity values as well as socio-economic values of indigenous grasslands.
4. Develop mechanisms for improved international communications and collaboration, and general public awareness.
5. Support research that improves the understanding of the total economic value of intact indigenous temperate grasslands to society and human health.



### What are Temperate Grasslands Worth?

A recent exhaustive literature review, sponsored by TGCI, found no studies that specifically addressed the economic value of indigenous temperate grasslands. It is traditionally assumed that when grasslands are treated as a 'commodity and sold on the market place' their economic value has been measured and reflected in the subsequent dollar amount exchanged. However, we now know this is not true! In a biome with the highest Conservation Risk Index globally, we have found that our understanding of the value of all goods and services provided by indigenous temperate grasslands is virtually non-existent.

### Regional Conservation Action Plans

The potential for improved conservation and protection of indigenous temperate grasslands varies widely around the world. Our current focus lies in the potential for large landscape level conservation in the Daurian steppe – Amur River Basin of eastern Mongolia, China and Russia; the Kazakh steppe; the Patagonia steppe; and the Northern Great Plains of North America. In North and South America the coordination of local conservation planning is being assisted by the TGCI, whereas the East Asia and Kazakh efforts are in the process of being established. The goal in each region is to develop a ten-year conservation action plan that focuses on the identification of candidate protected areas, legal protection opportunities and sustainable management.

As biologically important as large landscape conservation is, those indigenous temperate grasslands that have been modified and fragmented in various regions of the world deserve equal attention. On these grasslands, we must ensure the maximum retention of biological diversity, their long-term potential for connectivity and the ability for indigenous people to retain their culture and livelihood. In those grasslands that have been highly modified (where less than 5% of the original ecosystem remains) the urgency for legal protection cannot be overstated. These include for example, the steppes of eastern Europe, the tall grass prairie of North America and the lowland grasslands of south-eastern Australia and New Zealand. For these and the more moderately modified grasslands, such as those in the pampas of Argentina, the veldt in South Africa or the steppes of China, the TGCI will provide support for a host of regional programs already underway, and encourage new initiatives, by governments and non-government organizations.

### Guidelines and Best Practices for Sustainable Land Use Planning

The ecological health and viability of the temperate grassland biome cannot be dependent on protected areas alone. Most unprotected grassland ecosystems are in an altered condition and many are managed by local pastoralists. If temperate grasslands are to continue to provide the full range of ecological and socio-economic goods and services that humans require, the management of temperate grasslands throughout the biome needs to be guided by a comprehensive set of best land use practices that focus on conservation, the maintenance of biodiversity and the interests of the indigenous people who depend on these lands. To this end, the TGCI is actively fundraising to support the development of overall guidelines for sustainable land use practices on temperate grasslands. Once developed, these guidelines will be widely distributed to temperate grassland users and managers.

Temperate grasslands are in all likelihood the least understood biome in the world in terms of their value to sustainable economic uses, ecosystem goods and services, and their contribution to human health. If our economy is not fully able to provide an accurate picture of the net benefit of temperate grasslands, poor land-use and investment decisions will result, and the important values of these grasslands will be lost to society.

We are currently raising money to help us undertake research to determine the value of the goods and services associated with temperate grasslands and carbon credit conservation funding.

## What's New?

- **In Kazakhstan:** In Kazakhstan: The Kazakh Steppe Conservation and Management Project, recently funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), is scheduled for 2009-2014 to develop a landscape level conservation management system for the Kazakh steppe that links protected areas with conservation compatible land-uses. For more information: [www.TheGEF.org](http://www.TheGEF.org)
- **In South America:** Regional action plans are being developed for the pampas and campos, Patagonia steppe, puna and paramo ecosystems following the highly successful November 2008 workshop.  
Contact: Andrea Michelson, [andrea.michelson@iucn.org](mailto:andrea.michelson@iucn.org)
- **In East Asia:** A letter was sent to the Chinese and Russian governments expressing concern about plans for water diversion that would have harmful effects on the Daurian Steppe. In addition, a coordinated regional action plan is being developed with a focus on the Daurian Steppe and Amur River Basin.  
Contact: Gemma Phelan, [gemma@iucn.org](mailto:gemma@iucn.org)
- **In North America:** The 1.3M acre Janos Biosphere Reserve, Mexico's first federal protected area specifically for grasslands conservation, was recently declared (<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/mexico/work/art15209.html>). In October 2009 black-footed ferrets were reintroduced to the Canadian Great Plains – they were last seen here in the early 1900's. An informal North America temperate grasslands group has been formed to discuss mutual conservation interests. They recently sent a letter to the Mexican, United States and Canadian governments requesting that *The Hohhot Declaration* be endorsed as a framework for temperate grassland conservation on the continent.  
Contact: Bill Henwood, [bill.henwood@pc.gc.ca](mailto:bill.henwood@pc.gc.ca)

## Upcoming Meetings

- **The VI Southern Connection Congress** being held in Bariloche, Argentina February 15-19, 2010 has a special one-day symposium on indigenous temperate grasslands.  
Contact: Dr. Alan Mark, [amark@otago.ac.nz](mailto:amark@otago.ac.nz)
- **The 9th Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference** ([www.pcesc.ca](http://www.pcesc.ca)) is being held in Winnipeg, Canada February 25-27, 2010.  
Contact: Michelle Yaskowich, [pcap@sasktel.net](mailto:pcap@sasktel.net)
- The IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) together with the Hustai National Park Trust (HNPT) of Mongolia are organizing an **international conference in Mongolia on steppe management and climate change** for September 10-12, 2010. Contact: Munkhbat Tarav takhi@hustai.mn, or [munkhtolui@yahoo.com](mailto:munkhtolui@yahoo.com)
- The upcoming **Convention of Parties meeting - COP10** - in Nagoya, Japan October 18-29, 2010 will have important discussions of the program of work for protected areas and the importance of indigenous temperate grasslands.



photo: Serdar Yagci

## How You Can Help

In particular we would appreciate receiving any specific information, research or studies that you have related to socio-economic research and the value of temperate grasslands. We would also appreciate you letting us know if you are holding a conference, workshop or symposium related to temperate grasslands so that we are aware of your progress.

The TGCI materials mentioned in this newsletter are available on our website (NOTE: this is a new link):

[http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/wcpa/wcpa\\_what/wcpa\\_conserving/wcpa\\_grasslandstf/](http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/wcpa/wcpa_what/wcpa_conserving/wcpa_grasslandstf/)

If this link doesn't work go direct to the World Commission on Protected Areas website [www.iucn.org/wcpa](http://www.iucn.org/wcpa). Under the 'what we do' link choose 'connectivity-biomes' and then 'grasslands'.

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## Acknowledgements

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

photo: Ilya Smelansky