

Conserving BC's Heart of Gold

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Nature Conservancy of Canada and New Gold Work Together to Protect BC's Grasslands

British Columbia's grasslands are a rarity in the midst of a province typified by forest, mountain and coastline, accounting for less than one percent of BC's natural environment. And yet, despite their small footprint, an impressive diversity of plants and animals has come to rely on grasslands habitat for at least part of their life cycle.

Grasslands are also a magnet for humans — we are attracted to their agriculture potential, ease of development and aesthetic qualities. Because of this, our impact on these landscapes has been extensive, however we can make choices that help to balance our footprint in these important areas.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has partnered with New Gold on many conservation initiatives in the Nicola Valley that aim to conserve the grassland habitats that countless unique plants and animals need for their ongoing survival. New Gold contributed directly to the creation of the Warner Philip Conservation Area (2011) and Napier Lake Ranch Conservation Area (2014), which together permanently conserve close to 800 hectares (close to 2,000 acres) of natural grasslands and important associated ecosystems.

New Gold's support for conservation in the southern interior helps NCC with the ongoing stewardship and management of these precious lands. These activities span managing invasive plants, fencing wetland areas and monitoring their recovery, working with ranchers to allow for cattle grazing in a rotation that respects biodiversity values, and creating a sustainable approach to public access.

NCC is also pleased to support conservation research on our conservation areas in order to contribute to the growing body of knowledge about ecological processes, wildlife populations along with best management practices for ecological restoration and habitat enhancement. This research engages students from Thompson Rivers University, independent conservation scientists and provincial biologists, with information being shared throughout the conservation industry.

“New Gold has been a leader in demonstrating how industry and conservation can work together. By providing both targeted and unrestricted funding, New Gold has enabled NCC to effectively pursue and manage unique opportunities,” says Barb Pryce, Southern Interior program director for NCC. “Thanks to this partnership, thousands of acres of native grasslands in the Nicola Valley have been conserved for nature, for now and forever.”

By helping to create real, on-the-ground conservation results, New Gold is taking steps to offset their mine activities that result in disturbance of former grasslands on the mine site. There is more conservation to be done in this region. NCC is in confidential negotiations for additional direct land conservation, and we hope that when these projects move to a public phase, many will be inspired to follow New Gold’s lead and support the conservation of BC’s rare and important grasslands.

Find out more at www.natureconservancy.ca/bc.

Submitted by the Nature Conservancy of Canada