

# NEW HOPE FOR GRASSLANDS NATIONAL PARK

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## The New Agreement

For over 30 years the Saskatchewan Natural History Society (SNHS) has been a steadfast and strong advocate for protection of the original mixed grass prairie habitat of southwestern Saskatchewan through creation of a national park. In June 1981 an agreement was reached between the provincial and the federal governments to create such a park and land acquisition began. Two ranches totalling 140 km<sup>2</sup> were purchased in the Frenchman River area. However, governments were unable to reach consensus on such issues as oil and gas exploration and water management. Land purchase ceased while officials from the Federal Government and the Province dealt with very basic disagreements.

On 23 September 1988 Federal Environment Minister Tom McMillan and Saskatchewan Minister of Parks, Recreation and Culture Colin Maxwell signed a new document, a unique agreement under which Saskatchewan will retain control of watercourses within the park but will cooperate with the Federal Government to ensure that standards are compatible with those in surrounding park lands. This compromise resulted in large part from the efforts of a coalition of nongovernment conservation organizations, in which the SNHS was a major player.

The new park will ultimately consist of two blocks, totalling some 900 km<sup>2</sup>. The proposed East Block includes the Killdeer Badlands and the West Block the Frenchman River country immediately southeast of Val Marie. Only a 340 km<sup>2</sup> core area will be acquired immediately; the remaining lands are currently privately owned or leased and thus cannot

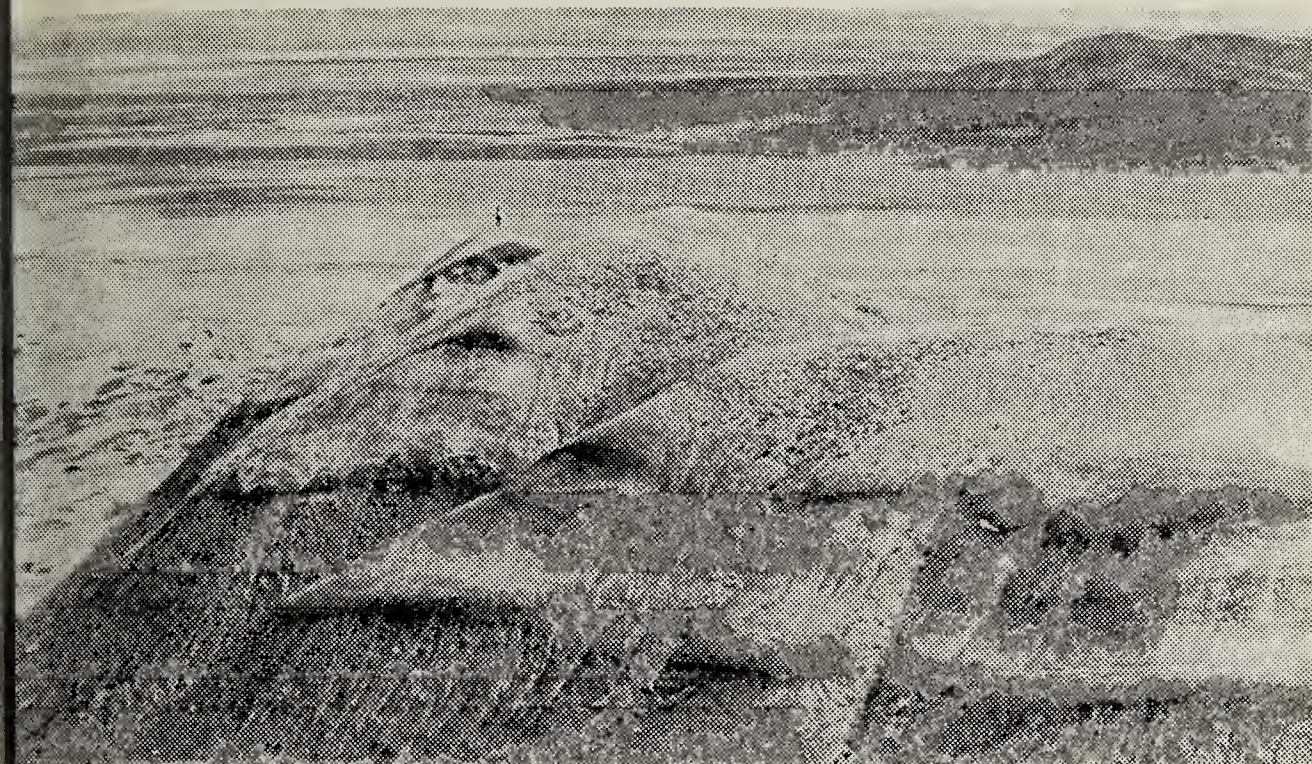
be protected. The Saskatchewan government passed enabling legislation in August 1989, making it possible for acquisition to begin. Lands are acquired on a willing-seller/willing-buyer basis over a period of some years. By mid-August 26 landowners had requested property appraisals and several had begun negotiations to sell. A superintendent and chief warden are in place in Val Marie.

There are issues still to be resolved and discussions continue among interested government and nongovernment agencies and individuals. Interim guidelines will delineate a strategy for integrated management of park lands during the initial period; SNHS and other interested parties will closely monitor their effectiveness.

## Grasslands Trust Fund

At the September signing ceremony in Regina, Mr. McMillan announced enthusiastic acceptance by the Federal Government of a proposal made jointly by the Canadian Nature Federation (CNF) and the Nature Conservancy of Canada to establish a trust fund for land acquisition within the new park. According to Paul Griss, Executive Director of CNF, this "experiment in cooperation among the private sector, the Federal Government and nongovernment agencies" will secure donations to be used for speeding up land purchase. All money raised will be used to purchase land—nothing will be spent on administrative or other costs. Every dollar raised by the Fund will be matched by the Federal Government.

Lands acquired will be within the approved park boundary but outside



Prairie Dog Butte, overlooking SNHS Prairie Dog Sanctuary,  
Grasslands National Park

Fred Lahrman

al core area and thus not otherwise  
under immediate consideration for  
protection. The Canadian Parks Service  
promote and publicize the project for  
a two-year period, CNF will undertake to  
obtain contributions, the Nature Conser-  
vancy will administer the fund and ar-  
range transfer of lands. Brochures have  
been placed in all national parks and a  
poster produced for sale.

A \$2050 donation by SNHS, money  
from the Endangered Species Confer-  
ence of January 1989 and from member  
contributions, officially launched the Trust  
Fund in August 1989. The Honorable  
Jean Bouchard, Minister of the Envi-  
ronment, was quick to extend his thanks  
to the Society for its response. His letter  
reads:

I want to congratulate the members  
of the Saskatchewan Natural History  
Society on their very generous contribu-  
tion to the Grasslands Trust Fund, which  
was presented at the annual meeting of  
the Federal-Provincial Parks Council in  
Ottawa. The Society's charter donation  
of \$2,050 is a clear statement of support  
for the protection of mixed-grass prairie  
and the establishment of Grasslands  
National Park.

The Trust Fund is an innovative, co-  
operative project of the Canadian Parks  
Service, the Canadian Nature Federa-  
tion and the Nature Conservancy of  
Canada. It is designed to test the willing-  
ness of the public to contribute finan-  
cially to the national parks system, and to  
raise awareness of the plight of one of  
Canada's most endangered habitats.  
Your early and substantial support can  
only enhance the ability of the program  
to meet those objectives."

Donations are being received from  
across Canada as individuals and groups  
become increasingly aware of the deci-  
mation of prairie habitats. Quick to help  
preserve rain forests in Costa Rica, Brazil  
and elsewhere, Canadians are now tak-  
ing advantage of this unique opportunity  
to contribute directly to the protection of  
one of the most fragile and most endan-  
gered habitats in this country and on this  
continent.

**Readers may contribute to the  
Grasslands Trust Fund through the  
Canadian Nature Federation, 453  
Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1N  
6Z4. Contributions are tax-deduct-  
ible and a receipt will be issued.**