

THE SASKATCHEWAN CONSERVATION DATA CENTRE: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION AND PROGRESS SUMMARY REPORT.

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Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre Overview:

In October 1991, the Saskatchewan government signed an agreement with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Nature Conservancy U.S.A. to develop a Conservation Data Centre for the province. In April 1992, four staff began setting up the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre (SKCDC). The SKCDC represents a comprehensive information management technology developed specifically to guide the conservation of biological diversity. Similar Data Centres have been established in all 50 U.S. states, 13 Latin American nations, as well as British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Québec. As such, the SKCDC is a provincial node for an international network of permanent information-gathering institutions. This enables the synthesis of biological data on an ecological scale that transcends political jurisdictions.

Data on the location of rare and endangered species and plant communities are plotted on 1:50,000 scale topographic maps. Spatial information is also stored in an electronic form compatible with Geographic Information System applications. Information assembled and managed by the Data Centre focuses on: ecosystems and species, their biology, habitats, locations, conservation status and management needs; managed areas such as Provincial and

National Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, watersheds; and data sources.

To implement a provincial policy of sustainable development while conserving biological diversity it is necessary to put sound biological data into a socio-economic context. The combination of biological and non-biological information assembled and organized in the database provides a decision support system which will enable the province to meet its conservation commitments.

Progress to Date:

- Over **2,000** element occurrences (specific locations of rare plants, animals, and plant communities) have been computerized into standardized data files and mapped.
- Information is computerized and available for:
 - 8,559** literature references
 - 3,383** species
 - 139** plant communities
 - 748** managed or protected areas
- Over **600** data requests fielded from:

56% Conservation and Research Groups

23% Provincial and Local Government Agencies

16% Corporations, Landowners & Consultants

5% Federal Agencies

Cooperative Research Projects:

- **Saskatchewan Biological Survey:** a 10-year strategy to systematically inventory Saskatchewan's natural biological diversity by ecological regions. Results will provide sound recommendations for protected areas planning and land management decisions.
- **Protected Areas Study:** inventory and map information on protected land designations & to assess the ecological representation.
- **Ecological Land Classification:** to develop a standardized ecological classification system for the province in cooperation with Environment Canada.
- **Canadian Council on Ecological Areas Grasslands Project:** to develop guidelines for determining ecological representation.

In addition, cooperative research and data exchanges are ongoing with the Canadian Parks Service, Central Surveys & Mapping, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Agency, Regina Natural History Society, Royal Saskatchewan Museum, Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (Wildlife, Parks & Protected Areas, Policy & Partnerships, Fisheries, Sustainable Land Management),

Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Saskatchewan Research Council, University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan and others.

The Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre is indebted to numerous individuals willing to share information to further the conservation of Saskatchewan's biological heritage. We would especially like to recognize Vern Harms, Wayne Harris, Dale Hjertaas, Stuart and Mary Houston, Paul James, George Ledingham, Keith Roney, Karyn Scalise, Al Smith, and Frank Switzer for their exceptional generosity. Volunteers Martin Bailey, Jill Forrester, Tim Howie, Amy Jensen, and Robert Warnock have donated many hours of hard work.

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