

Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative

Media Release

Weston Family Foundation awards nearly \$25M in grants to support the conservation of biodiversity on the Canadian Prairie Grasslands

TORONTO, March 3, 2021 – Today, the Weston Family Foundation announces the launch of the Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative with nearly \$25M awarded to five organizations to collaborate on one of the largest prairie grasslands conservation efforts in Canadian history.

“The Canadian prairie grasslands are some of the most ecologically valuable and threatened ecosystems in the world and we have an opportunity now to protect them for future generations,” said Eliza Mitchell, Director, Weston Family Foundation. “We’re launching this initiative to bring together a diverse group of conservation and agricultural organizations to accelerate the adoption of sustainable approaches to protect and restore biodiversity in this unique landscape.”

Stretching across Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, the Canadian prairie grasslands are complex ecosystems that support critical biodiversity. They provide habitat for hundreds of species, including migration stops for millions of birds. Prairie grasslands provide food for Canadians by supporting soil health, offering grazing for livestock, and acting as habitat for pollinators. Native grasslands are resilient and play a key role in mitigating the effects of climate change, but once destroyed are difficult to restore.

The Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative will fund organizations working with local communities to advance ecologically and economically sustainable long-term solutions for this critical landscape. Despite a loss of more than 70% of the country’s prairie grasslands, there remains enough continuous grasslands intact to have a substantial effect on biodiversity in Canada if they are well managed.

“It’s exciting to see what can be accomplished by bringing Canadians together to find innovative and sustainable approaches to restoring and protecting biodiversity,” added Tamara Rebanks, Chair. “Our Foundation is committed to supporting landscape-level efforts to find solutions to our environmental challenges and, ultimately, improve the well-being of Canadians.”



Weston Family
Foundation

The Weston Family Foundation invests in innovation and learning in Health and Landscapes that deliver measurable impacts to the well-being of Canadians

Photo: Jason Bantle

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The five organizations receiving funding through the Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative are: Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Saskatchewan Stock Growers Foundation, Grasslands National Park (Parks Canada), and Meewasin Valley Authority. Total funding for this initiative will be distributed across these five organizations over a five-year period.

More information about the Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative can be found at westonfoundation.ca. Media inquiries can be directed to Jennifer Canham, Director of Communications at 416-807-0280 or by email at communications@westonfoundation.ca.

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About the Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative

The Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative is a five-year collaboration to celebrate, steward and protect one of Canada's most ecologically valuable and threatened ecosystems. Nearly \$25M has been committed by the Weston Family Foundation to five organizations to accelerate the implementation of sustainable practices and achieve landscape-level impact: Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Saskatchewan Stock Growers Foundation, Grasslands National Park (Parks Canada), and Meewasin Valley Authority. Each organization brings additional funding and in-kind donations for a total of \$70M going toward this collaboration over the next five years. The Initiative aims to improve species-at-risk habitat, enable wildlife movement, expand the amount of land protection in the prairies, and ultimately increase long-term ecological and economic stability. Dozens of partners will support this work that will affect nearly four million acres of priority native grasslands in one of the largest prairie grasslands conservation efforts in Canadian history.

About the Weston Family Foundation

At the Weston Family Foundation (formerly The W. Garfield Weston Foundation), more than 60 years of philanthropy has taught us that there's a relationship between healthy landscapes and healthy people. That's why we champion world-class health research and innovation with the same passion that we support initiatives to protect and restore biodiversity on our unique landscapes. We take a collaborative approach to philanthropy, working alongside forward-thinking partners to advance Canada and create lasting impacts. We aspire to do more than provide funding, to enable others to find transformational ways to improve the well-being of Canadians.

