

What are the swales?

- Old river bed, with hills, valleys, wetlands and native prairie grasslands
- Greater swale (including Northeast Swale): 26 km long, about 2800 ha
- Small Swale: core still being delineated
- Northeast Swale: southern 4-5 km of the greater swale (~ 300 ha), within Saskatoon city limits
- Could become one of the largest urban grassland “reserves” in Canadaⁱ
- 200+ species of plants, including rare crowfoot violet, rare plains rough fescue, and other culturally significant species
- 100+ species of birds, including threatened and at risk species, short-eared owl, common night hawk, Sprague’s pipit, loggerhead shrike
- Mammals, including deer, coyotes, jackrabbits, weasels, ground squirrels, and more!
- Amphibians, including rare northern leopard frog, vulnerable western tiger salamander
- Food and home for migratory and regional birds, a dancing ground for sharp tailed grouse

Why do they matter?

- Globally, temperate grasslands are most endangered ecosystem (less than 5% protected, usually converted to agriculture)
 - also “contain 18% of global soil carbon reserves, more than any other ecosystem except for forest ecosystems”ⁱⁱ
- In 2015, Canada committed to protecting 17% of terrestrial area by 2020
 - 2016 – 10.5% protected, half federally
 - Prairies, boreal and taiga plains least protected

- Only 5.9% of Canada’s prairie ecozone is protected;
 - Estimated decline from 21% of historical extent in 1994, down to 13.7% from 2015
- On average, Canadian grassland bird populations has dropped 40% since 1970ⁱⁱⁱ

Information about the Acts

Wildlife Habitat Protection Act (1981)

- 2014 – gov’t decided to reduce crown land holdings, offered protected land for purchase;
 - no consistency in requirement for continued ecological protection
- Of 3.5 million acres originally protected
 - 1.7m high value acres retained
 - 1.3m moderate value acres eligible for sale with easements.
 - 0.5m low value, for sale without restrictions
- Concurrent loss of public pasture protections with Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) divestment by province, though still counted in RAN as ‘protected’ area.^{iv}

National Accord for Protection of Endangered Species (1996)

- 15 principles for species at risk laws, including active designation and protection of species and habitat, develop and implement recovery plans, cooperation with other jurisdictions, consideration of species needs in development, monitoring, awareness, enforcement.

Representative Areas Network (~1996)

- “network of ecologically important land and water areas across the province”^v
- “sample or piece of a particular landscape which has been set aside to preserve natural and/or cultural features....reservoirs of biological diversity...protection of areas known

to contain species at risk...areas of high scenic value and unique physical features...recreational, educational and research opportunities”^{vi}

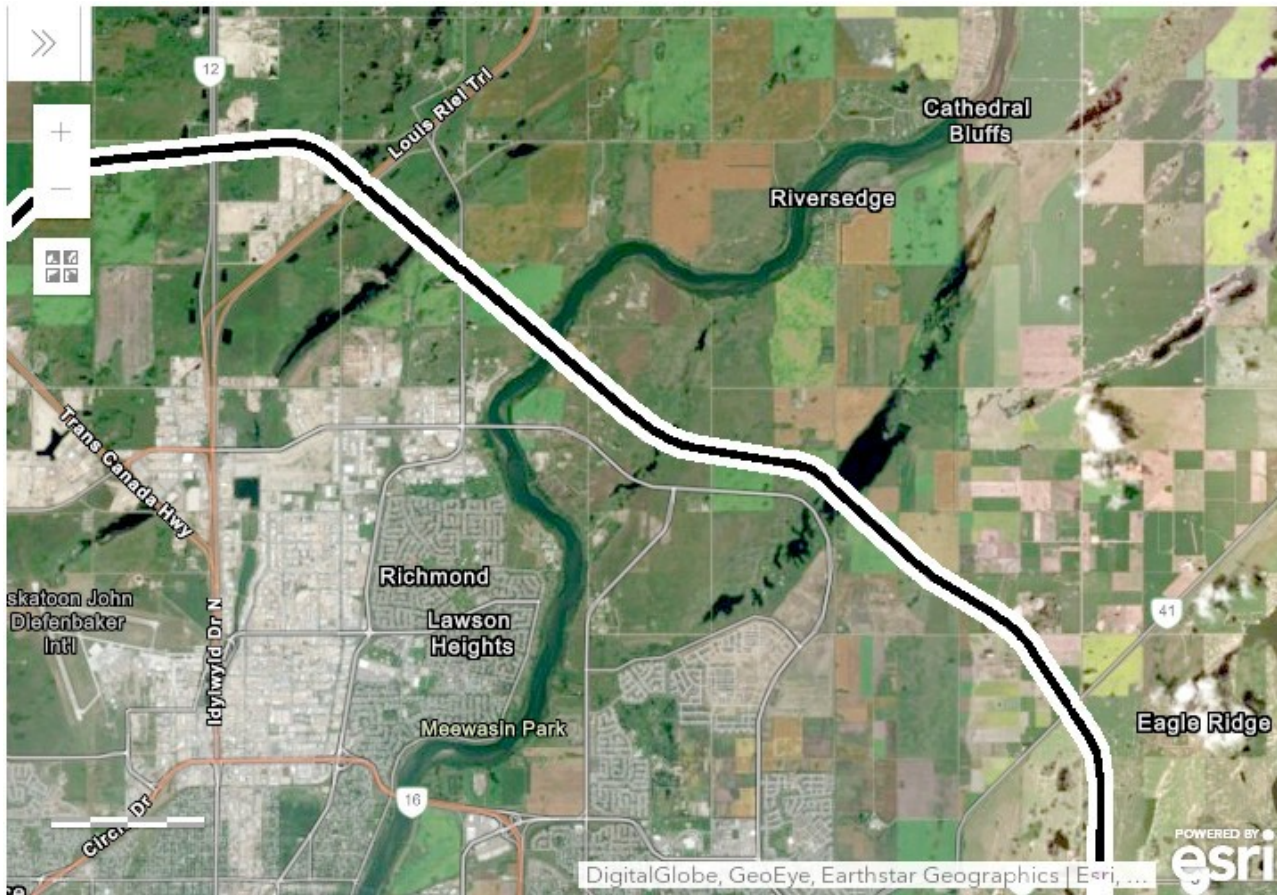
- Grassland conservation typically achieved through Parks (national, provincial; ~6% of protected area), ecological reserves (RAN and other), special management areas, and managed public pastures.
- Biodiversity Action Plan target of 12% in each of the 11 ecological regions^{vii}; 2005 update: 5.9% of moist mixed grassland protected
 - figures include former public pasture lands, which are not technically protected, nor open to public.
 - Limited connectivity between areas

Wildlife Act (1998)

Wild Species at Risk Regulations (1999)

- Legislation meets 4 of 15 previously agreed-upon criteria for species protection (National Accord)
- No other legislation for endangered species
- 15 species protected; no changes since introduced, even though federal committees added over 65 species, 18 in the last 6 years.
- Federal listing does not mean provincial protection, lack of listing means no protection: “Species that are not listed [in the Regulations] are not protected on Saskatchewan lands, including public and private lands...have [no] habitat designated or recovery plans written and implemented on their behalf in the province.”^{viii}

continues on other side



Highway information

- Planning from 1999 or before, multiple ‘functional’ studies since to ‘validate route’ but did not predict actual development in NE.
- 4 lanes, 110km/h, connects 11S to 16W as a bypass, and relief of Circle Dr. truck traffic
- \$2b price tag could rise to \$3b if P3, to include maintenance; much of this goes to land owners to purchase right of way
- No business case for the highway; planning is driven only by traffic modelling and ‘needs’ of trucking.

- No assessments of long or short term ecosystem impacts, valuation of environmental goods and services;
- No discussion of balancing costs and benefits for GHG emissions from construction vs traffic
- No modelling of impacts from pollution (noise and exhaust) on natural areas, wild species, or home owners

fact sheet assembled by
endangered grasslands alliance
<https://endangeredgrasslandsalliance.ca/>
follow on facebook or instagram

map from saskatoonfreeway.org,
modified for clarity,

Species listing comparison

Some NE Swale species that are listed federally but not provincially:

Birds - Threatened

Sprague’s pipit, barn swallow, loggerhead shrike, common nighthawk

Birds – Special Concern

Horned grebe, short-eared owl, rusty blackbird

Amphibians

Northern leopard frog, western tiger salamander

Mammals

American badger

and maybe more we don’t realize yet!

- Vegetation Survey of the University Chemical Landfill Remediation Site and Adjacent City of Saskatoon Buffer Lands, March 2004, Meewasin Valley Authority
- SK Prairie Conservation Action Plan 2003-2008*, https://www.pcap-sk.org/docs/PCAP_ActionPlan_2003-2008.pdf
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), *Sustainable Future for SK*, 2015 http://environmentalsociety.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Sustainable_Future_for_SK.pdf
- Trevor Herriot, “Protected area targets”, 2017, <http://trevorherriot.blogspot.com/2017/02/how-is-saskatchewan-doing-on-its.html>
- Representative Area Ecological Reserve Fact Sheet*, <http://publications.saskatchewan.ca/#/products/92915>
- SK Environment, *Saskatchewan Area Network FAQ*, <http://www.environment.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=f6946bd6-174f-437f-82b9-14bbbee9db8d>
- RAN land use planning update for mining <http://publications.saskatchewan.ca/#/products/82718>
- CCPA, Andrea Olive, “Under Threat”, 2018, <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Saskatchewan%20Office/2018/02/Under%20Threat.pdf>