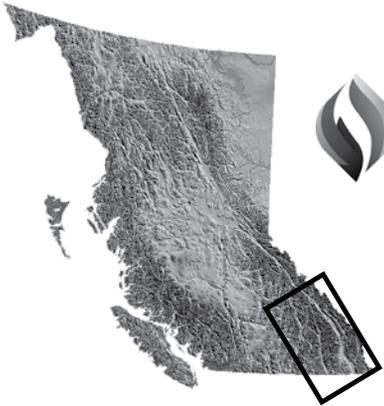


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Rocky Mountain Trench
Ecosystem Restoration Program

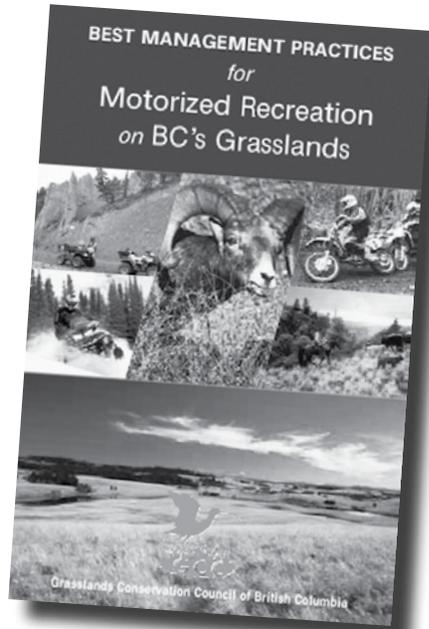
Restoring Nature's Balance.

Trench-ER.com



Content adapted from the handbook *Best Management Practices for Motorized Recreation on B.C.'s Grasslands*, published by the Grasslands Conservation Council of British Columbia. Based on *Best Management Practices for Recreational Activities on Grasslands in the Thompson and Okanagan Basins*, a document developed with input from over 40 organizations.

To download the handbook, visit trench-er.com/public/library/files/motorized-recreation-grasslands.pdf



We gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of these supportive regional organizations:



Respect 4 Grasslands

Name

> _____

School

> _____

Teacher

> _____

Date

> _____

Grasslands have value.

Biodiversity

Grasslands provide a home for more than 30% of B.C.'s rare and endangered species. **More species at risk are found in B.C.'s grasslands than in any other area of Canada!** Some of the species are found *nowhere else* in Canada. The special conditions found in B.C.'s grasslands—hot, dry summers and mild winters—allow many unique species to survive. Nearly all of the plant communities found within B.C.'s grasslands are threatened or endangered.



Protect the **BEES!**

Grasslands are important habitat to pollinating insects like bees. These species rely on grassland plants for their survival.

Recreation, Hunting + Ranching

People hike, bike, ski and ride through the park-like open forests and grasslands of the Rocky Mountain Trench. The landscape is beautiful, the sky is often sunny and you might see wildlife.

The Trench also supports domestic animals. Many hunters and ranchers, therefore, are active in habitat conservation.

They work together to ensure the bunchgrasses of the Trench are not overgrazed by wildlife or livestock, and are not damaged by erosion or displaced by invasive plant species. But they can only do so much.

If people's activities damage sensitive grasslands, it can take decades for the plant community to recover.

Respect 4 grasslands

1) Respect plants

If you see a well-established trail, take that one.

Making a new trail compacts soil particles so plant roots cannot get enough water.

This can kill plants that pollinators and grazers rely on.

Riding through wetlands, streams and puddles does irreparable damage. Refrain.

2) Respect animals

Pack out your garbage.

Think ahead and take a garbage bag with you.

Leave no trace.

3) Identify and report weeds

Learn to recognize a few key invasive plant species.

Have a smart phone? Download the free Report-a-Weed app.

Make sure you don't walk, drive or ride through weed infested areas.

One knapweed plant can have 20,000 seeds!

Avoid disturbing the plants unless you are removing them.

4) Respect gates and fences

Watch for the sign on gates. Most ranchers have signs posted. Close the gate!

Leave fences as you find them—don't cut through them or drive over them.

Human impacts on grasslands

1) Soil disturbance

Soil disturbance includes **compact soils**, **uprooted plants**, and **exposure**, which leads to **soil erosion by wind and water**. These impacts can last for decades.

The quickest way to damage soils is to drive vehicles over them. This removes the layer of humus and allows soils to wash away and invasive plants to move in.

2) Litter

The truth about litter is this: It doesn't disappear.

Metal, ash, garbage, plastic and other things can hurt wildlife.

Animals don't expect litter—if they eat or step on metal or poisonous materials, they can die slow and painful deaths. If your pet was suffering from a nail in its paw, you would care. Wild animals suffer, too.

3) Invasive Plants

Some of them might look pretty, but don't be fooled!

They didn't co-evolve with the species here and can take over because they:

- 1) Aren't from here
- 2) Reproduce rapidly
- 3) Have quick lifecycles
- 4) Have few enemies
- 5) Can be toxic to other plants and animals
- 6) Can out-compete other plants to form monocultures.

4) Disrespect

Gates and fences are there to protect plants from being overgrazed.

Ranchers do their best to make it easy for people to close gates. They even put signs on them asking people to close them between certain times of the year.

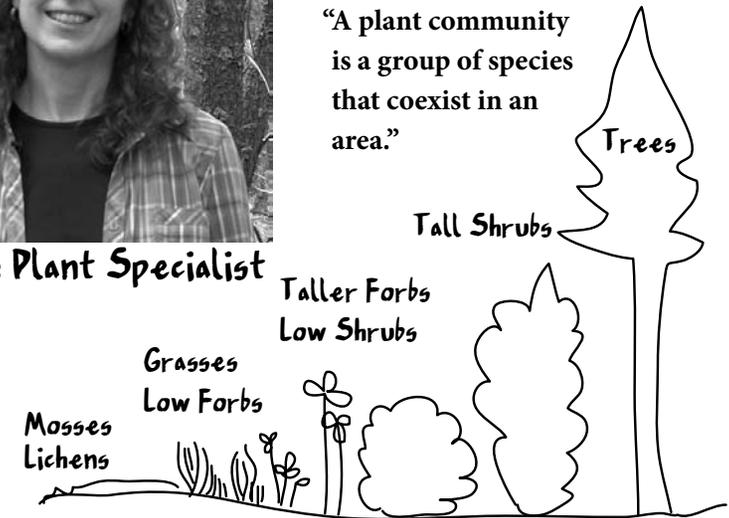
Still, some people prop gates open or tear holes through fences.



Leanne: Plant Specialist

Plants!

“A plant community is a group of species that coexist in an area.”



Grassland plant communities provide forage for livestock, as well as feeding, breeding and cover habitat for wildlife.

Looking after grassland plant communities is important to maintaining the natural diversity of grassland ecosystems.

Not very tough...

Sensitive environments in grasslands include wetland and stream (**riparian**) areas, rock faces, hoodoos, cliffs and slopes. Sensitive plants in grasslands can lose their ability to reproduce if crushed or partially uprooted.



A **forb** is a flowering plant that is not a **graminoid** (grasses, sedges and rushes). The term is used in biology and in vegetation ecology, especially in relation to grasslands and understory.

Riparian is a word that refers to the plant communities in and around streams and wetlands. These areas are often muddy and damage to them can be permanent. They are key habitat areas.

Invasive Plants!



Orange Hawkweed

Leucanthemum vulgare

Flowers:

- Cluster of 5 to 30 dandelion-like, showy, red-orange flower heads.

Leaves and Stems:

- Leaves darker green on top than underneath. Few to no leaves on stem.

Reproduction:

- By seed, roots, stolons or runners.
- Plant creates a dense mat which impedes other vegetation.

Habitat Preferences:

- Doesn't like heavy shade.
- Loves disturbed areas, pastures, meadows, wetlands, roadsides, grasslands and lawns.

To reduce the spread:

- Hand pull entire plant (including runners and roots).
- Cut below ground or cut flower seed head. Mowing prevents seed production but encourages spread by ground runners.



Spotted Knapweed

Centaurea maculosa

Flowers:

- A single, daisy-like flower head; yellow flowers in center surrounded by 20 to 30, notched, white ray petals on the end of each stem branch.

Leaves:

- Spoon-shaped, 5 to 12.7 cm long.

Seeds:

- Each plant can produce 500 or more seeds; seeds viable for 20 years.

Reproduction:

- Quickly forms dense populations that displace bunchgrasses.

Habitat Preferences:

- Invades a wide range of environmental niches.

To reduce the spread:

- Hand pull or dig entire plant before seed set; remove as much of the roots as possible to prevent regeneration.
- If flowers have gone to seed, pick flower heads, bag and remove.
- Do not mow during or after flowering (disperses seeds).



Bluweed

Echium vulgare

Flowers:

- Bright, purplish-blue, funnel-shaped flowers on the upper side of short arching branches. Five petals.

Leaves and Stems:

- First year leaves radiates from central point. Flowering stalks grow from rosette during the second year.
- Stem and hairs are painful to touch.

Seeds:

- Plants produce up to 2,800 seeds.

Reproduction:

- Most seeds fall close to the parent plant but also travel via water, animals and vehicles.

Habitat Preferences:

- Well-adapted to dry, rocky, sandy or shallow soils, like thos in the Trench.

To reduce the spread:

- Hand pulling or digging is effective; best done when soil is moist.
- Wear gloves, avoid skin contact. If any portion of flower is beginning to emerge, or if seed heads have formed, pick, bag, and remove.



Report a Weed

Mobile App:

Get the free **Report-a-Weed BC** app for iPhone and Android device.

You can report weed sightings anywhere in B.C. Your report goes to one of B.C.'s invasive plant specialists, who will coordinate follow-up activities to remove the weeds.

Online:

The **Report-a-Weed tool** lets you send a weed report directly to a database where it will be compared to known locations of the reported species, and then sent to a provincial invasive plant specialist for your area who will action the report.

The **Report-a-Weed tool** takes you through three easy steps to report a suspected new sighting of an invasive alien plant species in BC.



www.ReportaWeedBC.ca