



Saskatchewan Provincial Pastures Land

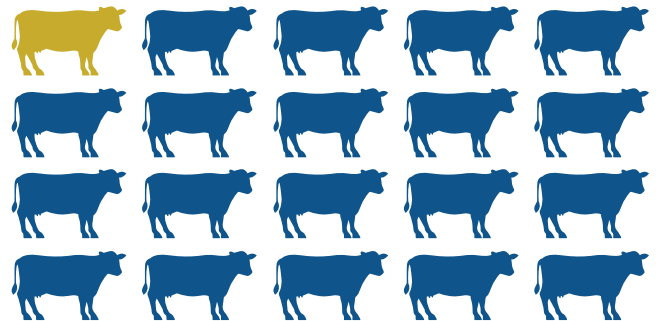
Purpose and Public Involvement

The Government of Saskatchewan recently announced the ending of the Saskatchewan Pastures Program (SPP). This program, created in 1922, was originally developed to help Saskatchewan's agriculture industry diversify and strengthen by providing assistance to small cattle producers. Since that time, the agriculture industry has become a strong driver of Saskatchewan's economy, and the program is no longer necessary. The SPP operates 50 pastures that, in 2015, supported approximately five per cent of the provincial cattle herd, representing 12 per cent (1,300) of Saskatchewan cattle producers (2011 census data).

The Ministry will be seeking input on the future management of the land. The government will be respectful of current SPP patrons throughout the process. This may mean giving patron groups preference to enter into long-term lease agreements, similar to the model adopted when the federal pasture program ceased. However, there are other options and variables that should also be considered. The same approach may not be the best approach for each of the 50 pastures.

The government is committed to engaging in an open dialogue about the future management of the land to help determine how the land best serves the agriculture industry in Saskatchewan.

Cattle in Saskatchewan



Approximately 5% of the 1.16M beef cattle are grazed on Saskatchewan Pastures Program land

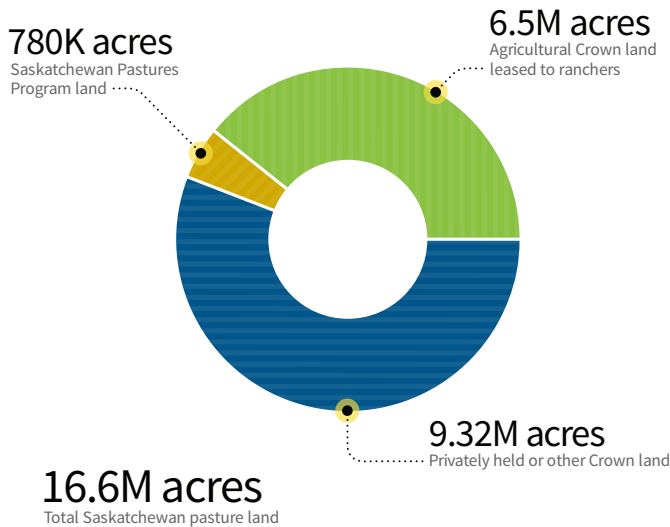
SOURCE: Statistics Canada/Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

Submit your feedback online at [Saskatchewan.ca/pastures](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/pastures)

The Land

SPP land consists of approximately 780,000 acres located at 50 sites throughout the province. This is in addition to the more than six million acres of pasture land, including more than five million acres of native prairie, the Ministry of Agriculture currently leases to Saskatchewan ranchers.

Pasture Land in Saskatchewan



SOURCE: Statistics Canada/Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

The SPP land includes native and tame grasslands and has varying economic, environmental and heritage value. Much of the land falls under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* (WHPA). Ecologically sensitive lands are protected by classifying it into three categories: High, Moderate or Low.

- Land that is classified as having High ecological value cannot be sold and must be retained by the Crown.
- Land that is classified as having Moderate ecological value can only be sold with a Crown Conservation Easement.
- Land that is classified as having Low ecological value can be sold without any restrictions.

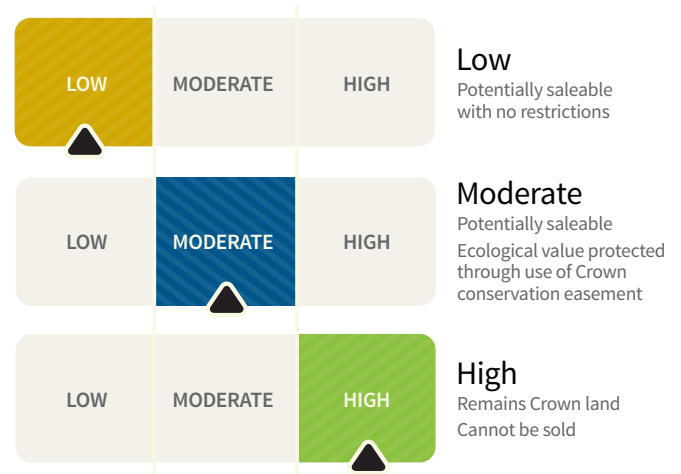
Land is classified using the Crown Land Ecological Assessment Tool (CLEAT). This model evaluates land based on its ecological value and risk associated with development. As much as possible, the results of CLEAT are verified by staff using historic records and in some cases by doing on the ground surveys.

Some preliminary evaluations have been completed; however, further assessment is required before determinations specific to any particular land parcel can be made. It is expected that approximately one-third of the land will be classified as having High ecological value and cannot be sold. The remaining acres will be designated as Moderate and Low, with the majority falling into the Moderate category.

For the most part, WHPA accommodates both public and private ownership by recognizing the uniqueness of each parcel of land and its surrounding area. However, a pasture, being large in size, is rarely only one type of classification. The same pasture can have ratings of High, Moderate and Low. This adds complexity to how the land should be managed, because while some of the land may be saleable, some must be retained, or sold only with a conservation easement.

Ecological Classifications of Crown Land

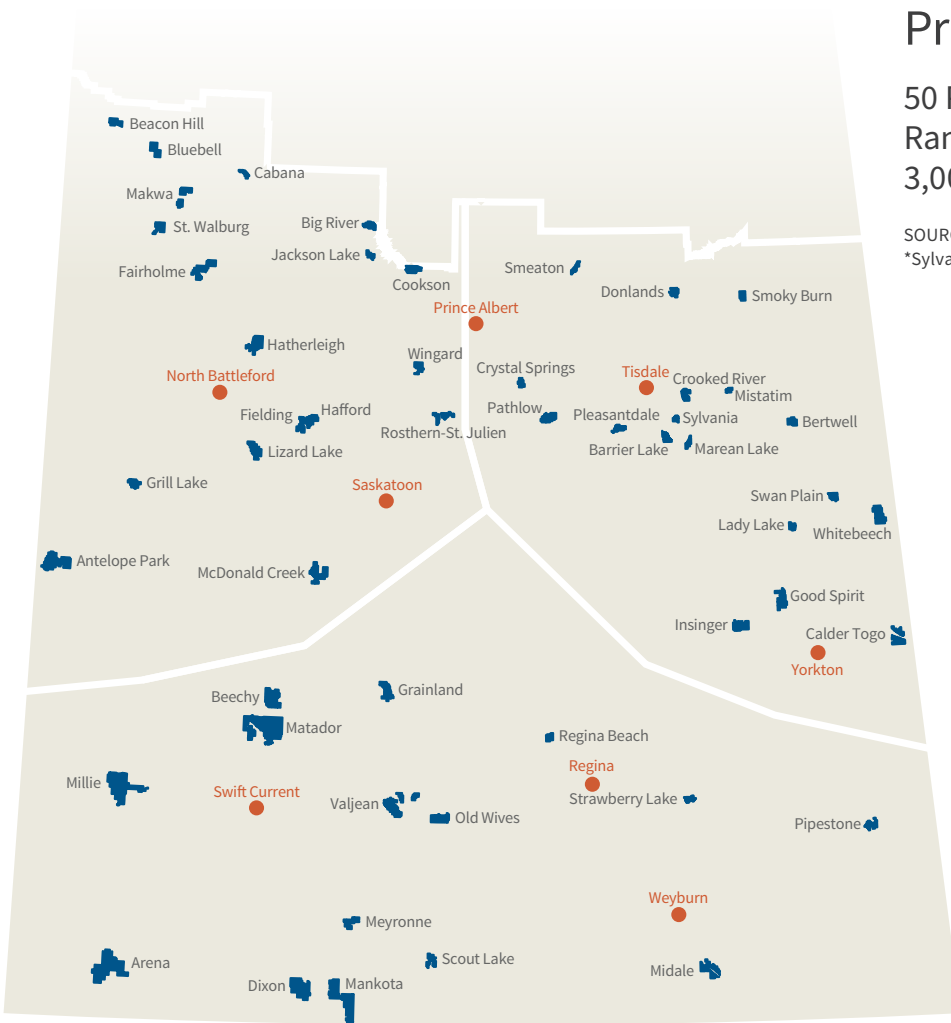
Wildlife Habitat Protection Act land can be classified into three categories:



Saskatchewan Pastures Program Locations

50 Pastures
Ranging in size from
3,000 to 76,000 acres

SOURCE: Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture
*Sylvania is managed with Crooked River/Mistatim locations



Options to Consider

There are many options worthy of consideration when it comes to the future management of the land. The role of consultations and engagements are to help determine how, and by whom, the land can be managed to best serve the people of Saskatchewan while maintaining its ecological integrity. It is important to remember that regardless of who owns or manages the land, ecologically important lands will continue to be protected under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* and *The Conservation Easements Act*.

Potential options to consider may include:

- Entering into long-term lease agreements with current patrons, similar to the model adopted when the federal pasture program ceased;
- Long-term leases to any interested individual or group;
- Selling eligible land to interested individuals or groups;
- A mix of lease and sales; or
- Dividing the land into smaller, more manageable units, often referred to as ranch units.

Considering the uniqueness of each pasture, such as its geographic location, ability to access and varying ecological make-up, it is unlikely that a one-size-fits all approach will work.

The Federal Model

When the federal government announced the ending of the PFRA program in 2012, much of the land reverted back to provincial control.

The Government of Saskatchewan made the decision to enter into long-term leases with the current patrons of the federal pastures. These leases are for 15 years and are at current agricultural Crown land rates.

To facilitate the transition, the patrons formed grazing companies or corporations to take over the management of the pastures. Managing the pastures includes purchasing or maintaining any improvements and fixed structures (such as houses), hiring staff to manage the land and look after the cattle and investing as necessary to keep the pasture sustainable. As of March 31, 2017, 43 pastures will have successfully transitioned. The remaining 19 pastures are set to transition by March 31, 2018.

Guiding Principles

Regardless of what decision is made on the future management of the Saskatchewan Pastures Program land, the government is committed to the following:

- Existing pasture patrons will be respected throughout the process;
- The ecological integrity of the lands is preserved, including the protection of environmentally sensitive parcels through the application of *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*;
- All land must be managed in a sustainable manner and land will only be severed into smaller grazing units where separation will not jeopardize ecosystem integrity;
- Farmland ownership rules of *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act* will be adhered to;
- The province will conduct its duty to consult and accommodate with relevant First Nation and Métis communities where there is the potential to adversely impact Treaty and Aboriginal rights and traditional uses;

- Current and potential social interests (i.e. heritage, tourism, hunting, etc.) be considered;
- Current and potential non-agricultural uses (e.g. oil and gas activity, sand and gravel reserves, etc.) that occur on these lands are recognized;
- All management options be based on a business model that is reflective of the value of the land and generates an appropriate revenue stream for the public;
- The disposition of improvements (i.e. corrals, fences, water development, etc.) is considered.

Definitions

Current patron – an individual who currently uses the Saskatchewan Pastures Program.

Crown Conservation Easement – Conservation easements are agreements between a conservation agency or government authority and a landowner that protect conservation values on private lands, even if the land changes ownership. Crown Conservation Easements are a class of easements that the Crown may grant to itself before sale and are held by the Ministry of Environment.

Long-term lease – a lease, usually 15 years or longer, between the government and an individual or group.

Other third parties – this could include any individual or group who is not a current patron of the Saskatchewan Pastures Program.

Ranch unit – The separating of a pasture into a manageable size that may be more suited for an individual/smaller operation. Most likely a ranch unit includes a mix of purchased land and land under long-term lease.

The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act – WHPA, the legislation that protects ecologically sensitive land from sale or development.