

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL STEWARDSHIP GRANTS

Supporting Young Professional and Aspiring Conservationists

The theme of the 10th Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference was ‘Engaging People in Conservation’ and what better way to encourage conservation and stewardship than to offer an opportunity to financially support projects on the landscape in Alberta, Saskatchewan or Manitoba. This year for the first time, young professionals or aspiring conservationists, were given the opportunity to apply for funding support for their projects. The Young Professional Stewardship Grant was looking for innovative proposals that advance the ‘engagement’ of people in conservation in Grassland and Parkland Natural Regions of the Prairie Provinces. Applications were received from across all three Prairie Provinces and judges made their final selections.

The Stewardship Grant winners were:

Saskatchewan: Stewards of Saskatchewan: Engaging Rural Landowners in Conserving Habitat for Species-at-Risk.

The Stewards of Saskatchewan (SOS) project engages landowners in voluntary stewardship to conserve habitat for plant and bird Species-at-Risk and other prairie species in southern Saskatchewan. The project comprises four voluntary conservation programs: Operation Burrowing Owl, Rare Plant Rescue, Shrubs for Shrikes, and Plovers on Shore. The main objectives are: habitat stewardship, site identification and population monitoring, and education and awareness. Organization – Nature Saskatchewan – Stewards of Saskatchewan (SOS) project www.naturesask.ca

Alberta: Trends in Grizzly Bear Conservation: The influences and Impact of the Social Landscape

Part of a PhD study, understanding how and why people think about and behave towards grizzly bears, as well as their relationships to landscapes and land uses, is vitally important to the development and implementation of bear management and land use policy in Alberta. Participation by Albertans from various walks of life including land owners such as ranchers or crop producers, mining, forestry and oil and gas industry, recreationalists and tourism operators (both off-road and on-road vehicle), environmental non-governmental organizations and governmental organizations (municipal, provincial and federal). This will include eliciting socio-demographic and economic variables from existing data and participants, to better understand how and where grizzly bears and their conservation affect livelihoods and what might be done to support various land users in Alberta. The information will be used to help inform the renewal, development and implementation of Alberta’s Grizzly Bear Recovery plan and guide the BearSmart program. Organization – The University of Alberta www.ace-lab.org/projects.htm

Manitoba: Prairie and Parkland Habitat Education for Youth

The goal of the project is to educate young people (ages 13-15) about the importance of preserving native flora in Birds Hill Provincial Park by actively involving them in stewardship activities. Working with

the park interpretive program, workshops on basic plant and habitat identification, supplemented with a field component, will be offered for free. We believe young people will leave these workshops and events with a greater appreciation of native flora, conservation science and management. Organization – Friends of Birds Hill Park Inc. <http://friendsofbirdshillpark.ca/> Funds raised from the Silent Auction at the conference went directly to assisting these professionals or aspiring conservationists to achieve success with prairie conservation and endangered species management.