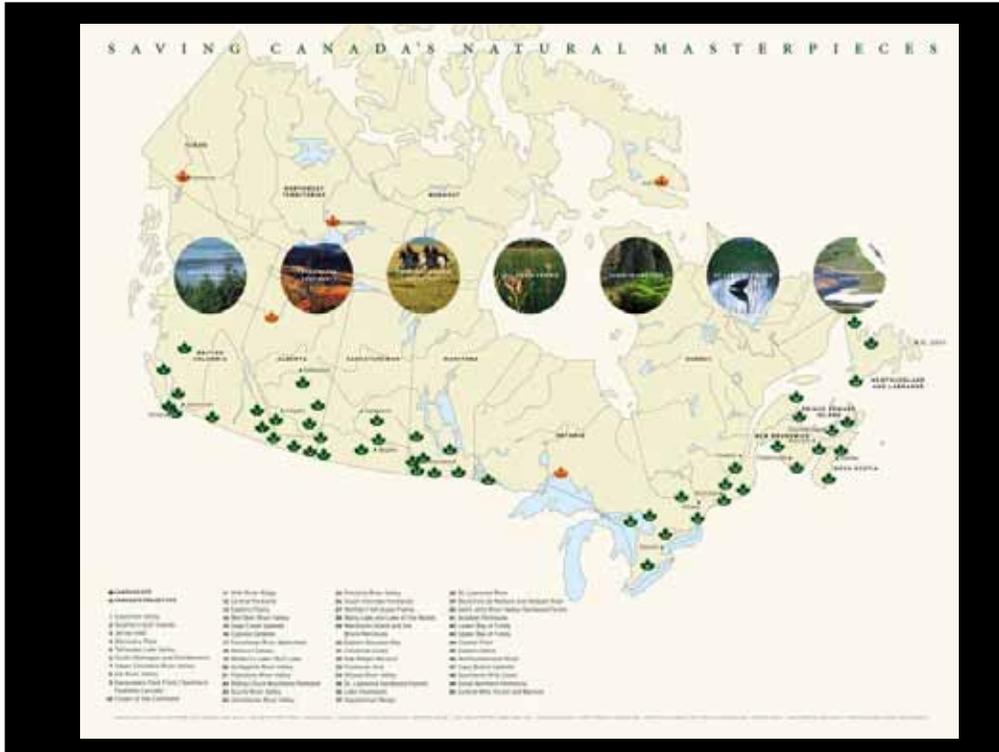


- Good morning
- It was a pleasure to be joined by many of you in the Belly River Valley during the field trip yesterday, and to share the work of the Nature Conservancy of Canada with you
- If you didn't attend the field tour, you have similarly visited the WPF project about which I am speaking; you passed through its rangelands as you entered WLNP
- Today, I will provide some similar background and elaborate on the WPF project and how we and our partners are furthering conservation on the doorstep of WLNP



A private, non-profit conservation organization working for the direct protection of Canada's biodiversity through the purchase, donation and placing of conservation easements on ecologically significant lands.

- First, a brief overview of the Nature Conservancy of Canada;
- A private, non-profit conservation organization working for the direct protection of Canada's biodiversity through the purchase, donation and placing of conservation easements on ecologically significant lands
- We are a completely separate organization from The Nature Conservancy, which is the largest conservation organization in the world – they do their work in the US and elsewhere around the world. We do similar work in Canada, but are not affiliated.



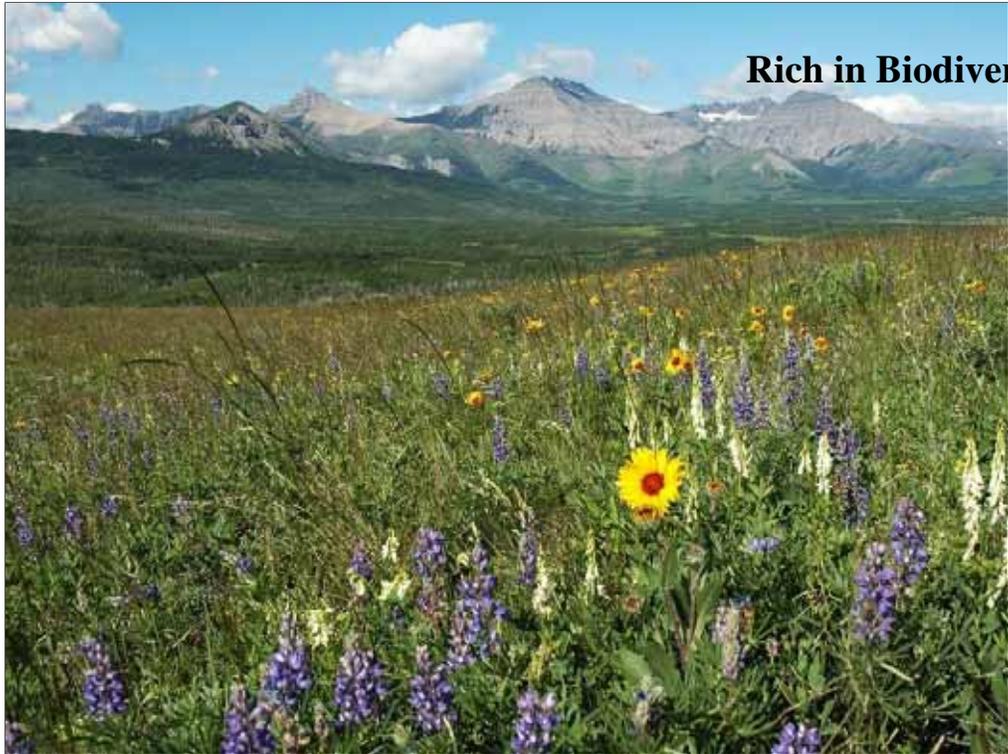
- NCC works proactively to conserve private lands with high conservation value across Canada.
- We work primarily in southern Canada, where development rates and threats to biodiversity are highest



- The Waterton Park Front Project, shown here in blue, and immediately adjacent to Waterton-Glacier IPP, is Canada’s largest private land conservation initiative
- ~30,000 acres have been conserved since 1997, resulting in about 80% of the project area being conserved. This has been accomplished through two primary means:
 - About 1/3 of the project area has been secured through the establishment of conservation easements, where landowners maintain ownership of their properties, but a caveat is placed on the property title that ensures a property’s conservation values are upheld. For example, no subdivision, draining of wetlands or cultivation of wetlands are allowed.
 - The remainder of the project area has been secured through purchase by NCC. We lease these properties back to local ranchers for cattle grazing, and co-manage the properties with them.



- One of the NCC's main goals of the WPF project is to keep ranchers on the landscape.
- Cattle ranching has been the dominant land use over the past century and has conserved the open nature of the landscape and its high level of biodiversity
- We are thus proud to be involved in maintaining this as a Working Landscape



- This southwestern corner of Alberta is a hotbed of biodiversity – together, WLNP and the adjoining CSMA host well over half of all the plants recorded in all of Alberta.
- Those areas are mostly high country, which is important in itself, but it's these lower elevation habitats – the grassland and aspen complex – that host the greatest diversity of plants and animals.



To accomplish our conservation goals in the WPF, NCC understands that, like the wires and posts that make up a good, strong fence, there has to be an active, engaged, viable community of people who continue to live here, make a living here and want to retain the unique features that make this a functional community.

We know from our own and others' experiences that decisions that conserve a community's natural and cultural assets are more effective and enduring when made and embraced by local people.



- In order to facilitate these synergies, I spend a large proportion of my time developing positive personal relationships with the 40 ranchers who have NCC leases or CEs; having coffee with them at their kitchen table, or wandering about in their pastures with them.
- We have recently established an advisory group with several of our on-the-ground WPF partners. The group will provide feedback to NCC on short- and long-term ways forward and will facilitate communication and garner further support within the community



...and hosting open houses and workshops where learning and sharing about land stewardship is combined with a chance to socialize.

- We hold annual open houses and other workshops where a session of learning about good land stewardship is combined with time to socialize with neighbours and NCC staff and board members.
- In holding these events, we are contributing in a positive way to the community, where social events have become a waning tradition. Folks just don't have the time to organize events like they used to. Such events are important for sparking discussions on important issues.
- These events always revolve around a meal. Ranchers are busy people, but even they have to eat, and we get good attendance anytime we offer up some good Alberta beef.



- We also recognize the importance of sharing our story with the public and garnering their support for our work
- Every spring and summer, we hold a series of Conservation Volunteers events, where members of the public are invited to learn about the WPF and its natural history, and then help us out with some stewardship work, such as picking weeds and cleaning up old fences.



Together, we are working toward exemplary stewardship, where the health of rangeland and riparian areas is maintained and enhanced.

•Together, we are working toward exemplary stewardship of the Waterton Park Front, where the health of the rangeland and riparian areas is maintained and enhanced.



- This includes grazing pastures with appropriate numbers of cattle at appropriate times, recognizing thresholds, and planning for the future.

**Also, managing invasive species,
one of the foremost challenges
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NCC's extension and ecological restoration efforts in the Waterton Park Front have taken place primarily since 2004, and largely through the building of respectful, positive relationships with our leaseholders and conservation easement grantors.

Following are some examples of ecological restoration successes achieved to date.



The Bruder Property: visible improvements in range health as a result of slightly reduced stocking rates.



Summer 2004. The Bruder Property (right side of fence) is grazed very heavily and range health at this site is assessed at 'unhealthy'.

Summer 2007. Utilization has been reduced and the site has improved to 'healthy with problems'.

The Urban Property: improvements in Dungarvan Creek's riparian health as a result of several years of rest. Fences have been erected in 2007 to create a 25 acre riparian pasture which will enable a grazing regime appropriate to the further recovery of the riparian area.



Summer 2003. Main channel. Heavy grazing has resulted in a decrease in woody vegetation and the reach is assessed at 'healthy with problems'.



Summer 2007. Increased establishment of willows along creek banks due to reduced livestock grazing pressure. The reach remains 'healthy with problems', but its health has increased considerably.

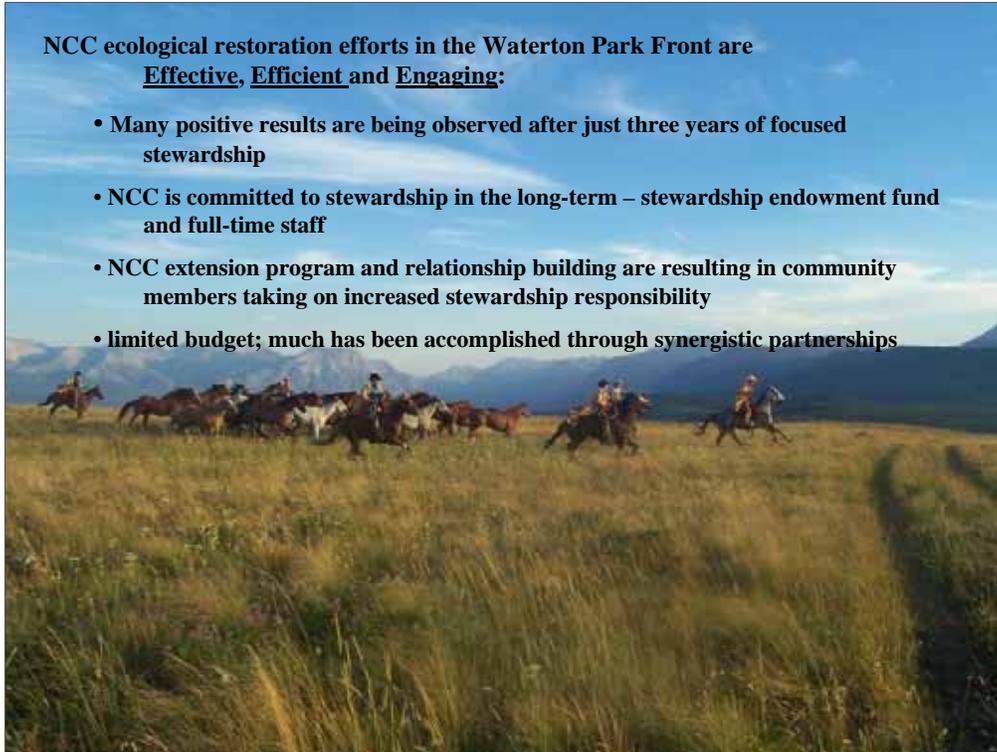
The Urban Property – Dungarvan Creek project, secondary channel



Summer 2003



Summer 2007. Banks are becoming better stabilized with rest.



NCC ecological restoration efforts in the Waterton Park Front are Effective, Efficient and Engaging:

- **Many positive results are being observed after just three years of focused stewardship**
- **NCC is committed to stewardship in the long-term – stewardship endowment fund and full-time staff**
- **NCC extension program and relationship building are resulting in community members taking on increased stewardship responsibility**
- **limited budget; much has been accomplished through synergistic partnerships**

- We've established relationships with all of our conservation agreement partners within the community and are setting a course to build on those foundations.
- We've also built strong relationships with several other agencies; we know that more conservation power comes out of partnerships than from NCC working alone.
- There's no doubt, we've got a great history in this area, but there is a big, bright future ahead of us.
- The WPF project wouldn't exist without the tremendous support of our two major funders, who I would like to briefly acknowledge before I wrap up.



- The W. Garfield Weston Foundation has provided the financial resources to secure the WPF project, and has also established a stewardship endowment fund
- John and Barbara Poole and Family have also provided valuable contributions
- Without these generous funders, the WPF landscape would have likely lost a lot of its value
- So, thank you to them, and also to you, for taking in my presentation. I would be interested in chatting with any of you who have questions or who have similar experiences to share.