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## Book Review: *The Great Sand Hills: A Prairie Oasis* Text by Rebecca L. Grambo

Bram Noble

*University of Saskatchewan*

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of the landscape, but also emphasizing a cultural connectivity forged by a history of local ranching activity.

The third section, pointing toward the future, describes the development of several land use planning initiatives, including the most recent Great Sand Hills Regional Environmental Study—a response to emerging concerns over the cumulative effects of ranching activity, a growing natural gas industry with more than 1,500 wells in the less than 2,000 square kilometer area of active dunes and mixed-grass prairie, and the resulting network of roads and trails that now fragment parts of the landscape.

Grambo concludes with a discussion centered on “choosing our path,” arguing that “the choice about further development seems obvious” and that “there should be no further gas exploration and development” in the Great Sand Hills. Unfortunately, the choice is not this simple. In many areas of the Great Sand Hills leases for gas development have already been sold; future development in them is inevitable. That said, much of this prairie oasis remains intact. In 2007, an independent scientific committee presented the government of Saskatchewan with three land use options for the future of the Great Sand Hills, each representing more or less ambitious development futures, the resulting implications for biodiversity, and a recommendation for a preferred option focused on maintaining the ecological integrity of the landscape. Unfortunately, at the time of this review, a path for the future of this prairie oasis has yet to be chosen. **Bram Noble**, *School of Environment and Sustainability, University of Saskatchewan*.

**The Great Sand Hills: A Prairie Oasis.** Text by Rebecca L. Grambo. Photographs by Branimir Gjetvaj. Regina, SK: Nature Saskatchewan, 2007. 124 pp. Photographs, appendices, bibliography, index. C\$24.95 paper.

The Great Sand Hills region of southwestern Saskatchewan is among the largest and, unfortunately, last intact native prairie ecosystems in the Great Plains. *The Great Sand Hills: A Prairie Oasis* is thus a fitting title. Filled with spectacular photography alongside narrative text telling the story of the prairie’s past, present, and future, this 124-page book was a finalist for the 2007 Saskatchewan Book of the Year Award as well as in the nonfiction and scholarly writing categories.

The first of the volume’s three sections provides a condensed physical and human history of the Great Plains, describing the glacial events leading up to the formation and then subsequent natural and cultural evolution of the Great Sand Hills landscape. Rebecca Grambo covers a lot of ground, eloquently telling the region’s history from its first cultural inhabitants and the rise and fall of the Plains bison, to the emergence of a ranching lifestyle and the cultivation of the surrounding mixed-prairie landscape. The text is interspersed with stories and narratives of homesteaders extracted from personal memoirs.

In part two Grambo paints a picture of the current landscape of the Great Sand Hills, describing the region’s physical geography and concentrating largely on the ecology and sensitivity