

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and
Social Sciences

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Spring 2006

Review of *Grasslands: Toward a North American Conservation Strategy* By David A. Gauthier, Alberto Lafon, Theodore P. Toombs, Juge Hoth, and Ed Wiken

David Gibson
Southern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Gibson, David, "Review of *Grasslands: Toward a North American Conservation Strategy* By David A. Gauthier, Alberto Lafon, Theodore P. Toombs, Juge Hoth, and Ed Wiken" (2006). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 827.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch/827>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Grasslands: Toward a North American Conservation Strategy. By David A. Gauthier, Alberto Lafon, Theodore P. Toombs, Jürgen Hoth, and Ed Wiken. Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Center, and Montreal, QC: Commission for Environmental Cooperation, 2003. xxvi + 99 pp. Maps, photographs, tables, glossary, citations, appendixes. Distributed free of charge.

In this short book the Commission for Environmental Cooperation of North America (CEC) outlines its vision for conserving the central grasslands. The CEC is a tri-national organization created under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) by Canada, Mexico, and the United States to address regional environmental concerns.

The text, in English, Spanish, and French, is organized into three main sections. First, the authors provide a comprehensive overview of grassland ecosystems, including their biological, geographical, and physical setting. This section's final part, which compares conservation legislation in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, is particularly useful.

The greater part of the book presents the results of a survey of over 400 informants from government and nongovernment sectors from each of the three countries. These experts assessed the issues and needs important for the conservation of central grasslands from a tri-national perspective. Issues and needs are categorized under five headings (biodiversity; land-use practices and management; policies and socio-economic issues; demographic and social issues; and education, communication, research, and monitoring) and ranked in terms of their short- to long-term importance. The results are presented in some detail and then repeated in a more concise summary and two tables. I found reading the text a bit laborious at this point and had a difficult time keeping track of the subtle differences between levels of response, e.g., primary and secondary short-term versus medium-term needs.

There were a number of differences among experts from the three countries. For example, with respect to issues of land-use practices and management, Mexican experts were particularly concerned about the lack of appropriate extension programs, whereas U.S. and Canadian experts were more concerned with the insufficient area of protected grasslands. There was nevertheless much in common among experts from the three countries, and all identified declines in biodiversity, fragmentation, and plowing of grasslands as important issues.

The final section, "Next Steps" and "A Way Ahead," uses the many common elements from the survey to develop a strategy for conservation. These recommendations make complete sense, for the most part advocating greater levels of cooperation and planning among the many and varied stakeholders who live and work in the central grasslands. As a vision for the future the recommendations may be ambitious, but such a roadmap is sorely needed.

This short book is well written, the text is clear, and the message important. I share the authors' hope that it will provide an action plan for conservation of the central grasslands. Land managers, agency personnel, and researchers will find the volume useful, providing justification for much that appears sensible for sustaining this valuable natural resource. **David J. Gibson**, *Department of Plant Biology, Southern Illinois University*.