

Article by Barry Brandow Sept 2008.

An update on the situation in the Gilpin with pictures of areas damaged by cows and vehicles, including damage in the Nature Trust Area which remains unprotected from cows.

The Gilpin grasslands has a long tragic history of poor management and the only hope for a management plan that will recognize and manage the values of this small but special ecosystem is A Wildlife Management Area designation. A WMA designation allows all stakeholders a presence but with more emphasis on habitat management.

Where in the province of B.C. is there an important ecosystem that has been recognized by three provincial governments, site of the first land purchase by the 2nd.Century Fund of B.C. (now Nature Trust) and recently an additional land purchase by The Land Conservancy and yet have the management problems that pictures on this web site dramatically illustrate.

The Socred Government in 1972 purchased the 1472 acre Ed Boothman Ranch for wildlife, the 1996 NDP Government recommended Gilpin become A Special Management Area, which was lost when Premier Mike Harcourt resigned and the 2007 Liberal Government created two Class A Provincial Parks on Gilpin.

One of the more dramatic examples of mismanagement of the Gilpin grasslands is the west side of Morrissey Creek. If you take time to read the story and look at the pictures remember that the Gilpin rancher received a prestigious provincial grazing award in November, 2006 and Spring, 2008 the Grassland Conservation Council of B.C. (ranchers and their supporters) stated on Global TV that the grassland ecosystem of B.C. is the most threatened

(less than 1% of our land mass) and home to most of our endangered and threatened species!

Nature Trust

On March 14, 1973 a feature article appeared in the Grand Forks Gazette celebrating the purchase of 470 acres of land by newly formed 2nd Century Fund of B.C. (now Nature Trust). This purchase was considered an important compliment to the purchase of the 1470 acre Ed Boothman Ranch by the Socred Government Greenbelt Fund August 1972.

Ray Demarchi, Fish & Wildlife biologist, Cranbrook in his summary report in 1979 on these private land purchases made it clear that the rationale to purchase the land was to secure critical habitat for wintering ungulates and increase wildlife management options.

The March/73 article in the Grand Forks Gazette stressed that hence forth wintering deer would never again face starvation in winter because of competition from cows. What is also significant about the Grand Forks Gazette article is the picture of 3 significant players in the creation of what was expected to be a new beginning for what is now known as the Gilpin grassland that would result in a dramatic reduction in the damage to the land and water resource. The picture taken on 2nd Century Land, now Nature Trust included: Dr. Alistair McLean from the Federal Agriculture Station Kamloops, the final signatory of the first Range Management Book in B.C.; Fred Russell, District MOF office who was one of the strong advocates in conjunction with the Grand Forks Wildlife Association supporting the private land purchases and Bert Hoffmeister, chairman of the B.C. 2nd Century Fund who stated that the purpose of the fund is to acquire lands in B.C. that are ecologically valuable but are endangered by increasing urban growth and industrialization.

Once the 2nd Century Fund purchase was complete a 99 year lease was signed with the government Fish & Wildlife staff. Those of us who knew of the location of the now Nature Trust Land assumed the pathetic Gilpin management standard was the standard to be applied.

I guess you could say it was a combination of anger and joy to read the draft proposal for a wildlife management area designation by the stewardship division MOE on page 10 that the essence of the 99 year lease agreement was “carefully protect and preserve the trees, bushes, shrubs, plants and flowers from waste, injury or destruction”.

The current management of the Nature Trust 470 acres and adjacent recent logging blocks may well represent the most pathetic management fiasco in the province’s history. After a recent inspection of their land by employee Carl McNaughton, Nature Trust wants their land fenced. If you take time to look at the pictures taken in /07 and/08 you can see the obvious contempt for responsible range management and yet the Gilpin rancher got a prestigious provincial grazing award in November /06.

The projected cost of fencing the Nature Trust Land is \$ 98,000.00 (\$10.00 a meter) and A Wildlife Management Area designation would increase the chances of a successful Habitat Conservation grant application but men who own cattle (I don’t consider them ranchers) promoted and signed a petition November/07 demanding the continuance of the current destructive range management plan.

Obviously there is a pathetic attempt to hide the truth and validate unacceptable range practices on the Gilpin grasslands.