



# Canada Grassland Protocol V1.0

## Protocol Summary

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### Project Definition

The prevention of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to the atmosphere due to land conversion and crop cultivation through perpetual conservation of an eligible grassland project area. Grassland is defined as an area of land dominated by native or introduced grass species with little to no tree canopy. Eligible areas must be privately owned. A single project may include multiple legal parcels if the area is held under ownership by a single landowner and covered by a single Qualified Land Conservation Agreement (QLCA). Initial project area may be expanded through new easements. Individual grassland projects may be managed and verified together as part of a cooperative. Project activities may include grazing, organic and synthetic fertilizer use, irrigation, wetland soil dynamics and recreation.

### Project Eligibility Requirements

**Location:** Canada. Must be located on land whose particular combination(s) of Reporting Zone and soil texture would result in emissions of belowground organic carbon in the baseline scenario, as determined by the default baseline emission factors. Wetlands classified only as 1-3 under the Stewart & Kantrud Classification System are allowed in the project area.

**Start Date:** The date on which the project area is committed to the continued management and protection of grassland either by submitting a project to the Reserve, recording a QLCA, or by transferring ownership to a public or private entity. All projects must be submitted no more than twelve months after the project start date.

**Crediting Period:** Maximum of thirty years. In the case of cooperatives, crediting periods will be tied to each individual grassland project within the cooperative and their respective start dates. The crediting period may be concluded at any time at the Project Owner's discretion.

**Performance Standard Test:** Projects must meet a two-part performance standard test:

- Financial threshold: Rental rate for cropland must be at least 40% greater than the rental rate for pastureland in the project county. Discount for uncertainty is applied for counties where rental rate difference is not at least 100%. All projects must obtain a certified real estate appraisal to identify the financial pressure to convert
- Suitability threshold: Projects must demonstrate a minimum percentage of the project area is made up of soils having a Land Suitability Rating System (LSRS) classification of 1-4. For areas where LSRS classification data are not available, data may be referenced from Canada's Land Inventory

**Legal Requirement Test:** No legal barriers to converting land to cropland and no legal requirements to keep grassland as such.

**Ecosystem Services Payment Stacking:** Payment stacking and credit stacking for ecosystem services are permissible under certain circumstances, subject to the legal requirement test and requirements for concurrent legally binding agreements. The Project Owner must disclose any payments or participation in such programs.

**Permanence Requirement:** There are two options for ensuring permanence:

- Tonne-Tonne Accounting (TTA): Projects must commit to protection of project area and soil carbon within for at least 100 years following year of credit issuance. Both the QLCA and a Project Implementation Agreement (PIA) must cover this entire period
- Tonne-Year Accounting (TYA): Discounts issuance of credits to reflect effective radiative forcing benefits to the atmosphere from the length of time that stored carbon is protected. Projects employing TYA option do not need to meet the 100-year commitment, but will be issued fewer credits based on the length of the commitment. All TYA projects must make a commitment to protection of soil carbon (via a QLCA and PIA) for at least twenty years following the project start date



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**Regulatory Compliance:** Projects must be in compliance with all relevant federal, provincial and local regulations.

**Monitoring, Reporting and Verification Schedule:** Annual monitoring includes prior land use, grazing activities, fertilizer application, irrigation and fires. Less frequent monitoring of ecosystem health is also required. Project verification must occur at least every six years during the crediting period. Site visits are not required for successful verification, but projects shall make an extra contribution to the risk buffer pool until the project site is visited for the purposes of verification.

### **Project Is Ineligible If:**

- Located on land contained in strata with either no data for modeling or with no baseline emission reductions from belowground organic carbon in the first ten-year emission factor period
- Located on organic soils or lands designated as certain types of wetlands and/or owned by the federal government
- Documentation from at least the past ten years is unavailable to determine eligibility

*Important Note: This is a summary of the protocol. Please read the full protocol for a complete description of project requirements.*