

Three Rivers Trail Association Newsletter

(Arm River – Qu'Appelle River – South Saskatchewan River)

Three Rivers Trail Association (TRTA), Box 367, Craik, SK, S0G 0V0.

Events & Archives: www.craik.ca/trta

No.12, September 2006

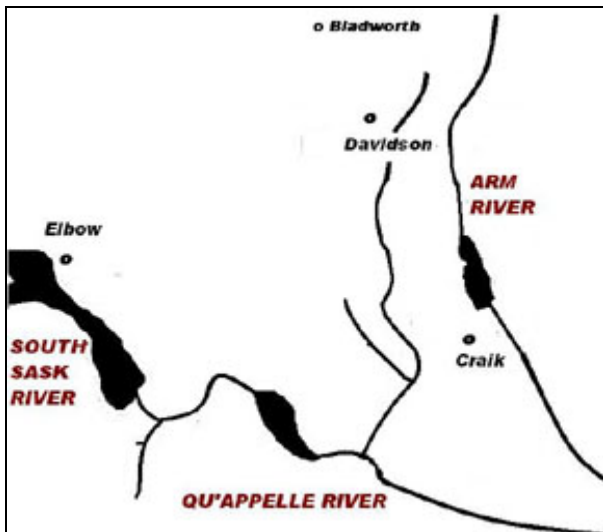
The TRTA Objectives:

- To promote the beauty of valley vistas, the prairie geography and the 'spirit' of the land;
- To give an understanding and appreciation of grassland ecology by identifying points of interests and associated trails in glacial pothole country, sand hills, wetlands, and old glacial valleys;
- To make maps showing multi-purpose trails, birding trails and heritage sites; and
- To mark hiking and equestrian trails with metal posts showing the

TRTA Logo:



The TRTA Area:



The TRTA Board of Directors:

Gloria Kadlec, Bladworth
Bob Doig, Chamberlain
Sterling Schollar, Craik
Doug McIvor, Girvin
Don Wilkins, Davidson
Peter Farden, Davidson
Ed Spratt, Davidson (Chairman)
Shirley Eade, Craik (Sec./Treasurer)

The Saskatchewan Trail Association (STA) Annual Meeting

23 September 2006

10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

(Lunch Provided)

**Meet TransCanada Trail Officials
and discuss the**

**Tugaske>Elbow>Outlook>WhiteCap>Saskatoon
Trail**

Missing MLCC

For the past 10 years the Mid-Lakes Community Coalition (MLCC) functioned to provide support for regional development activities like the Louis Riel Trail Association (LRTA), Farm Art Midlakes Exhibition (FAME), Craik Sustainable Living Project (CSLP), Chamberlain Elevator Museum, Davidson Rest-Stop, Three Rivers Trail Association (TRTA) and many other projects. In early 2006 MLCC joined with a municipal group called 'Between the Lakes' to be able to work more cooperatively on such items as regional garbage collection & gasification, water distribution, tourist road development and other projects that need inter-municipal government cooperation. From the TRTA perspective, this left non-municipal projects like FAME and TRTA without a parent body. The CSLP EcoCentre and EcoVillage have good municipal support but there is much more that needs to be done outside of municipal jurisdiction (for example, the TRTA Birding Site and the Arm Lake Trail).

A group needs to be formed to support tourism development along the Arm River Valley in concert with what TRTA, Communities in Bloom, and others can do. If considering only from Chamberlain to Kenaston along LRT; that would mean helping to promote the Elevator Museum Concept, Trails-End, Eco-Centre, Craik Regional Park, Stinson's B&B, Wilkin's Reserve, Arm Lake Trail, Davidson's Rest-Stop & Legacy Trail, Arm River Camp-o-Plenty, Arm River Heron Rookery, Pavelich's B&B, Allan Hills Ducks Unlimited Reserves. The group could be called 'Friends of the Arm River Valley' (FARV)!

TRTA will be calling a fall meeting to consider its 'next-year' plans. Top priority is to start working on the bridge over the Arm River at 'Wilkin's Reserve' to complete the around the lake "Arm Lake Trail". STA has a letter from Oceans & Fisheries saying that so long as a trail bridge does not interfere with water flow (no centre posts or bank changes), then they have no concerns. This summer I have seen many suspension bridges using building rafters to suspend a bridge platform. Believe me, skating rink rafters can hold up a good sized platform! Cover-All Inc. makes nice rafters.

TRTA needs to add more 'friends' to their ranks. We already collaborate with CSLP, Craik Regional Park, Davidson Communities in Bloom, and others; we just need to all get together for some 'planning' and work sharing. Ideas would be welcome before we call our after harvest meeting (October); please phone Ed Spratt or Shirley Eade.



Two building rafters suspending a bridge about 60 ft long



The Prairie Grassland Keepers

Historically, all over the Great Plains of North America the natural ecology of prairie grass was greatly diminished by the progressive invasion of settlers looking for productive farmland. In total, grassland cultivation of the prairie was the greatest ‘hit’ that an ecological zone has ever taken. Today the Amazon and Boreal forests may be absorbing a similar shock. At the same time, there have always been people trying to preserve some of the natural habitat with representative flora and fauna of each ecological region. This was done by creating parks and reserves; even today there are examples, like the Bison reserves and being set up in Canada and USA.

Here in the TRTA region we have been fortunate to have large glacial drainage channels that left the landscape undesirable for cultivation. Prairie flora and fauna flourished in these vast areas. Our pioneers recognized the value of these landscapes for livestock production, to compliment the crop production of the upland arable land. Native pastures, as they were called, became popular with ranchers and a philosophy of management was developed so that the native grasses would be productive on an annual basis. This really meant that the number of grazing animals had to be regulated according to rainfall expectations, and grass had to be left at the end of the season to regenerate for next year.



Native grasses have extensive root systems, they have rapid spring growth but they often start drying up during the hot weather of late summer. However, they keep their nutritional value during the late fall and winter. If grass was not grazed it could be left to accumulate for 2 years or more, and then cut for hay. New and old grass would mix to form what

ranchers would call ‘prairie wool’ and it made excellent, nutritious hay.

Prairie fires in early spring or late fall were always a hazard for ranchers but they could be helpful for reinvigorating the rangeland. Prairie wool was particularly vulnerable to lightning strikes but fires kept the scrubs from invading and spreading.

In our region pioneer ranchers can be credited for preserving what we have left of our prairie grass heritage in the Arm River valley, Iskwao creek, Qu’Appelle valley, Ridge creek, the South Sask river valley and all their tributaries. The Elbow sandhills were also not fit for cultivation, and they were preserved for livestock grazing. The land adjacent to the sandhills, which was sandy, was made into community pastures once it became obvious, during the 1930’s, that cultivated crops could not survive sand storms and drought. The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act (PFRA) was formed during the 1930’s to reclaim all marginal crop land, either with tree belts or community

pastures. Also, the Co-operative Movement encouraged groups of farmer/ranchers to form Co-op Pastures. The TRTA region has several of these community pastures where the prairie landscapes with native flora and fauna have been preserved.

The names of some of early pioneer ranch families come to mind when we think of the grasslands of our valleys. In no particular rank, the family names that come to my mind include Sanden, Wilson, Gallagher, Griffin, Schmidt, Kinney, Riecken, McIvor, Farden, Gust, Wilkins, White, Schollar, Edwards, Vibert, Watkins, Spencer, Mittelholtz, and more. If one looked up their ancestors today and one could hear plenty of stories about their ‘old days’. Around Craik, many pioneers and their



ancestors have given information to Vi Spenser, to put into the Oral History Society at the Craik Library. Credit goes to their families and their neighbors for preserving what we have left of the precious prairie grass landscape.



2 photos of “Prairie Wool” – Native Grass in September

Recent News:

Premier Doer of Manitoba has just announced \$1 million for development of more trails in Manitoba. Often it is trail bridges that hold up development and much of the money will go in that direction.

Saskatchewan may yet catch up to other provinces. The STA Board have been pressuring several SK Cabinet members to propose a Bill in the next Legislature to give added support to recreational trail building in Sask. They seem to be listening. Please support STA by buying a membership. (www.sasktrails.ca)

Recreational Trail Associations promote mental and physical fitness by developing and identifying trails, preserving historical information, and promoting the beauty of our natural prairie landscape.