

4 October 2016

Dear Mayor Katchur and Councillors:

Re: Fort Saskatchewan Prairie Stewardship Program

I regret that I will be unable to be present at the October 27 Council meeting on the budget for 2017 as I will be out of the country on vacation on that date.

I can, however, report that our Fort Saskatchewan Prairie Stewardship group continued our caretaking activities in the Prairie this year and plan to do more of the same next year.

The expenditure of \$1,587.50 on paid labour and the input of 90 volunteer hours (albeit from a limited number of volunteers) this year have enabled us to make good progress with the enhancement of the native plant communities in the Prairie. Activities have included weed removal, preparation and transplanting with native plants of restoration plots, seed collection on-site, and trail maintenance.

Native plants were obtained from two main sources: salvage from a similar sandy-soil native prairie north of Gibbons being developed for road widening; and plants grown from Prairie-collected seed by the Edmonton Native Plant Group.

We were assisted by the Departments of Public Works and Parks in the provision of water for the transplants and the removal of garbage (mainly weeds).

Our goal for the future continues to be maintenance of the Prairie's native plant communities and their gradual extension through removal of non-native smooth brome patches followed by replanting. We will be recording location and species content of restoration plots on large-scale aerial maps provided by the City in order to monitor survival and growth of the transplant species.

Another objective is to develop a program to recruit local volunteers, both to promote local appreciation of the Prairie and eventually to reduce expenses (approximately \$1,100.00 was claimed for travelling expenses this year and not all trips were claimed for). We would welcome any assistance the City can provide with an outreach project. We do plan to hold at least one locally advertised guided field trip in 2017.

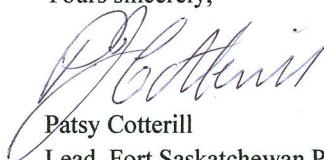
Since it is unlikely that we will be able to recruit enough volunteers in the immediate future through outreach, we expect to continue to rely on temporary paid labour in 2017, so labour costs will again be a priority for spending. We will continue to work with the \$3,000 in grant funding the City generously offers. However, an increase of \$1,500 would allow us to employ labour for longer during the season, enabling us to get control of weeds earlier and thus save maintenance costs in the long term. In addition, since free salvage of native plants will not be available in 2017, we anticipate that costs for seed-raised plants will be higher.

We hope to be able to engage McClay Ecoscience in a trial of a biocontrol agent on toadflax next year.

A further goal is to engage the Edmonton Native Plant Group to produce a brochure on the Prairie's weeds, the better to assist our field workers in weed identification and discrimination from native species.

The Fort Saskatchewan Prairie is a valuable amenity for the City and we are pleased to see more people using its trails responsibly. Although our ultimate goal is to reach a stage where the natural communities are more self-sustaining and require less maintenance, ongoing stewardship is currently necessary if we are to maintain the progress we have made. Hence I respectfully request Council approve funding of \$4,500 for 2017.

Yours sincerely,



Patsy Cotterill  
Lead, Fort Saskatchewan Prairie Stewardship Program  
member, Edmonton Native Plant Group





Fort Saskatchewan Prairie looking south (Sept. 27, 2016)



Restoration plot in "First Hollow" (Sept. 27, 2016)



Partly completed restoration plot, on slope, "Second Hollow." Weedy slope requiring eventual restoration.

Patsy Cotterill

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