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# OH Ranch

## Heritage Rangeland Management Plan



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Cover photograph of OH Ranch courtesy of Kaitlin Holden.

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## Contents

|                                                                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction.....                                                                 | 4  |
| 1. Natural Conservation and Protection .....                                      | 9  |
| 2. Forests .....                                                                  | 15 |
| 3. Fire and Wildfire Management .....                                             | 16 |
| 4. Water Resources .....                                                          | 17 |
| 5. Wildlife and Fisheries .....                                                   | 18 |
| 6. Species at Risk .....                                                          | 20 |
| 7. Trapping .....                                                                 | 21 |
| 8. Cultural Heritage .....                                                        | 22 |
| 9. Recreational and Commercial Activities .....                                   | 24 |
| 10. Energy and Minerals .....                                                     | 30 |
| 11. Education and Outreach .....                                                  | 33 |
| 12. Public Safety .....                                                           | 35 |
| 13. Monitoring and Review .....                                                   | 37 |
| Appendix A: Glossary.....                                                         | 39 |
| Appendix B: Permitted Land Use Tables for Heritage Rangelands .....               | 42 |
| Appendix C: Indicators .....                                                      | 45 |
| Appendix D: Species at Risk Listing .....                                         | 46 |
| Appendix E: List of Applicable Acts, Regulations, Strategies and Directives ..... | 47 |
| Appendix F: History.....                                                          | 49 |

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## Introduction

### Heritage Rangelands and Management Planning

Heritage Rangelands are established for the conservation of representative areas of Alberta's prairies, using grazing (via long term leases) to maintain the native grassland ecology. This classification ensures the protection of biological diversity and maintenance of ecological health of native grasslands in perpetuity while also sustaining the historic culture and economic function of ranching on Alberta's native rangeland. This designation is administered under the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangeland (WAERNAHR) Act*.

A management plan provides a framework to guide internal staff and external communities, stakeholders and public users on management actions, access permissions and any development direction. This plan provides a foundation for long-term environmental, cultural, social and economic benefits for Alberta citizens. Implementation will be completed by the Government of Alberta with support and collaboration with other government agencies, disposition holders, Indigenous communities, other partners and site users.

### Management Plan Intent and Alignment

After designation as a Heritage Rangeland in 2008, a management plan was completed and approved in 2010. The intent of this updated OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland Management Plan ("the plan") is to conserve and sustainably manage Alberta's intact native Crown rangelands on the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland through existing grazing disposition leases, stewardship collaboration and balancing other compatible land uses. Management direction maintains the current pattern of land use, conserves remaining native fescue grassland, and limits new development that would significantly alter the landscape. Heritage Rangelands are administered through Acts, Regulations, regional and sub-regional plans (where applicable), related policy directives (e.g. Heritage Rangeland Operational Management Directive and Government of Alberta programs) and management objectives that focus on maintaining the current pattern of land use while conserving and enhancing the remaining native fescue grasslands, shrublands, and forest ecosystems. The plan also limits new developments that could significantly alter the landscape or compromise ecological integrity.

Private lands under conservation easements, if desirable to the owners, can continue to support ranching operations and may accommodate compatible economic activities, provided these activities do not adversely affect ecological values to the Heritage Rangeland. Non-compatible activities and associated developments will be contained to private lands and guided by their registered conservation easement agreements.

The plan provides clear direction for land use, resource management and access, and sustaining ecological values into the future. The OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland Management Plan will adhere to current and future planning direction included in sub-regional plans, landscape footprint management plans, management frameworks and other directives, where available. A list of pertinent legislation, policies, and direction is included in Appendix E.

## OH Ranch Planning Area

The OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland is located in southern Alberta along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountain foothills, southwest of Calgary near the community of Longview. It supports one of the most intact remaining areas of foothills fescue grassland in the province, in a landscape that is a mosaic of grasslands, shrublands and forests that maintains connectivity with adjacent landscapes.

The area represents a convergence of climate, soils, and topography that has been shaped over millennia by climate, fire, and grazing. Plains bison were central to this system as their migratory grazing patterns allowed for greater biodiversity in plant communities, their wallows created habitat diversity, and their hooves churned the soil in ways that improved water infiltration and nutrient cycling. Beginning with herds trailed north from Fort Benton into the region in 1877, the arrival of cattle partially restored the grazing role that bison had long fulfilled. While cattle differ in behavior, managed grazing allowed them to mimic many of the ecological functions of wild grazers.

The OH Ranch rangelands have therefore been historically sustained by large herbivores, and natural disturbance cycles, and, in turn, have sustained successive human communities. This has supported livelihoods rooted in ranching, stewardship, and food production linking ecological health, cultural heritage, and economic resilience across generations.

Two areas of public land within the OH Ranch—Longview (2 areas) and Pekisko<sup>1</sup>—were designated as Heritage Rangeland. The public land was designated in 2008 under the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act (WAERNAHRA)*. The private land managed alongside the Heritage Rangeland was subsequently placed under conservation easements to support long-term stewardship across the full land base of the historic OH Ranch (see Appendix F for history and background).

The current boundaries of the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland are Crown land sections in the Tongue Creek (1,245 hectares, Stampede lands 1,616 hectares), and the Pekisko Creek lands (2 parcels totaling 1,328 hectares). The Heritage Rangeland lands totaling 10,569 hectares (Figure 1). Private lands placed under conservation easements around the Heritage Rangeland parcels are

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<sup>1</sup> "Pekisko" land section associated with the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland are almost completely surrounded by the Pekisko Heritage Rangeland. Currently, the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland- "Pekisko land section" will continue to be managed and maintained under the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland Management Plan. The intent will be to ensure that both Heritage Rangelands are managed in a similar conserved direction.

approximately 379 hectares supporting native grassland conservation management.

The grasslands on the OH Ranch Heritage rangeland contain *Festuca scabrella*—the official grass of Alberta, also known as rough fescue. It is a symbol of Alberta's prairie heritage, and it provides year-round forage for wildlife and livestock. Today, rough fescue grasslands are considered rare and are slow to recover once disturbed. Once prevalent across western and central Alberta, over 75% of our Fescue grasslands (Foothills and Plain Rough fescue) have been lost to forest encroachment and conversion to crops or other land uses.



Image source: <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-emblems> Festuca scabrella

The Heritage Rangeland designation under *WAERNAHR Act* reinforces the importance of conserving these remaining landscapes. Maintaining the ecological integrity of the area, contributes to the long-term protection of one of Alberta's largest remaining contiguous blocks of foothills fescue landscapes. The OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland supports a mosaic of landscapes including grassland, shrubland, forests, and wildlife species that rely on intact landscapes and provides ecological connectivity to adjacent protected areas, while allowing and respecting the ongoing traditional ranching and grazing operations. Careful use of grazing to maintain the grassland ecology and preserve these lands are the goals of the Heritage Rangeland designation.

### **Grassland Landscape and Primary Land Use**

The planning areas feature native grasslands, forests, shrubland and riparian areas. The area is a transitional tension zone between forest and grassland where due to lack of disturbance much of the landscape has gradually succeeded to forest. The current native grasslands are among the most intact remaining examples of foothills fescue grasses in Alberta and in the world. Alberta is the only place in North America with three rough fescue species (plains, foothills and northern variations) with foothills rough fescue (*Festuca scabrella*) being the species occurring in the OH Ranch area. Livestock grazing is the primary land use and will continue under existing grazing dispositions and provincial legislation. Carefully managed grazing plays an important role in maintaining grassland health and ecological function.

Development across the area is limited. This management plan maintains the current pattern of land use and addresses potential new management

approaches, while prioritizing the conservation of the remaining native grasslands and watershed values.

### **Management Plan Development**

Heritage Rangeland designations only apply to the Crown lands of the historic OH Ranch, however, these rangelands are managed together with private land under conservation easements. The management direction for these private lands was developed to be complimentary and consistent with the management direction for the Heritage Rangelands, allowing for continued management of the land base as contiguous units.

Range Management Specialists and agrologists with Forestry and Parks will follow an adaptive lifecycle management approach where they will work with disposition holders to address issues as they arise (rather than a 10-year review or audit).

### **Management Plan Approach**

The plan will be implemented by the Government of Alberta. An Advisory Committee previously existed and may be re-established, involving members from the local grazing lease holders, municipalities, and other partners as determined by the Government of Alberta, to support collaborative, land stewardship implementation of this management plan.

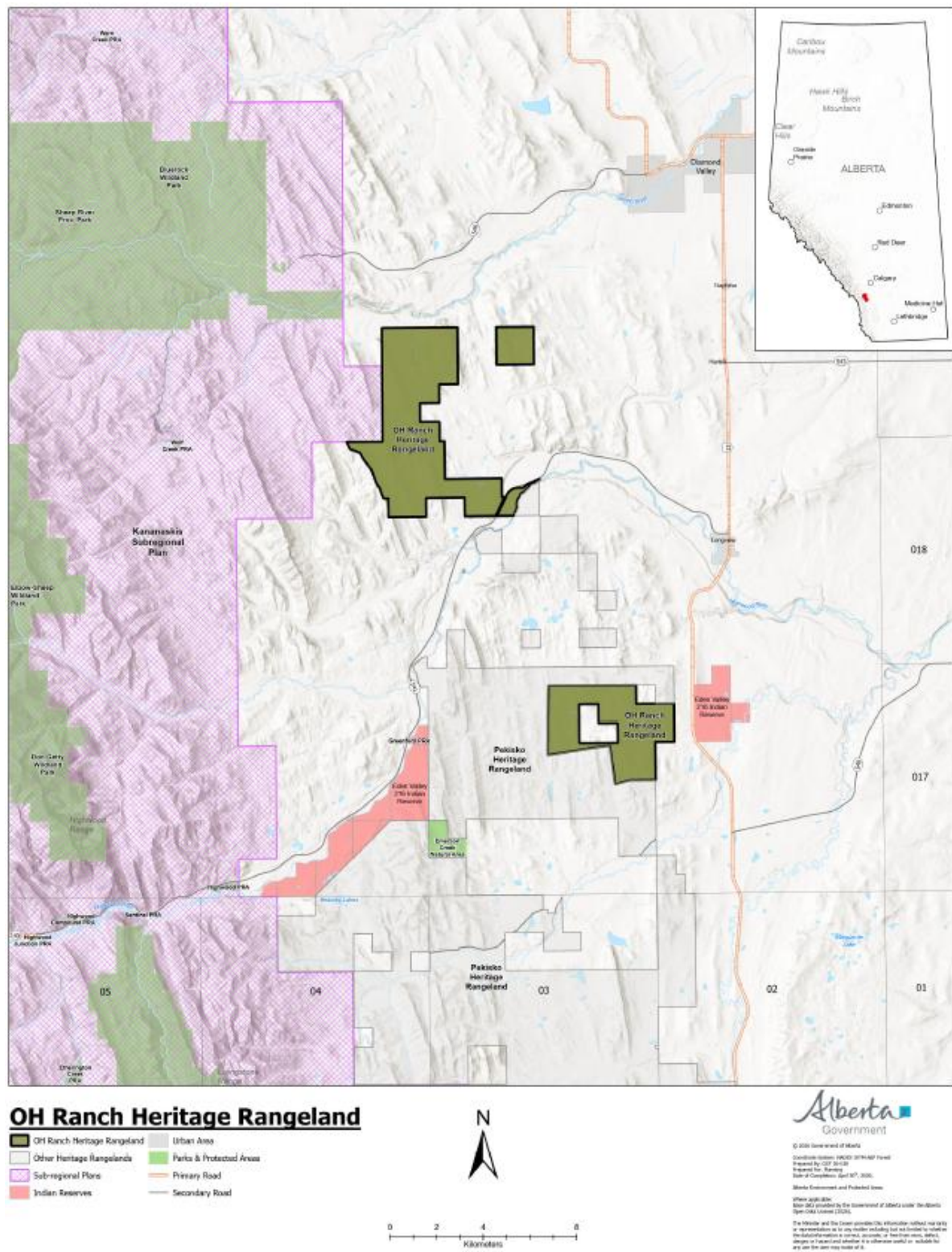
### **Integrated Land Management**

Integrated Land Management (ILM) is a holistic approach to land use that balances environmental protection, economic development, and social well-being by coordinating multiple land uses and stakeholders.

Land uses and developments within the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland are managed to protect natural values and support ongoing grazing operations. The intent is to limit new disturbances (other than those required to abate forest encroachment), minimize the footprint of approved activities, and maintain the open grassland landscape.

Existing commitments for recreational and commercial activities and essential infrastructure may continue, subject to conditions that reduce visual, ecological, and operational impacts and/or disturb the surface. New public roads, recreational infrastructure, and industrial development are not permitted.

Map of the Planning Area



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# 1. Natural Conservation and Protection

The OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland is managed by the Government of Alberta in partnership with grazing lease holders who are responsible for the sustainable stewardship of the rangelands on their disposition. The *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act (WAERNAHR Act)*, *Public Lands Act*, and the Public Lands Administration Regulation set the legislative and regulatory requirements for the conservation and protection of the rangeland on this designated heritage rangeland. The stewardship is further guided by specific management directives, policies and management frameworks, and guidelines (and any future iterations) such as:

- [Heritage Rangelands Operational Management Directive](#)
- [Alberta's Rangeland Grazing Framework](#)
- [Operating Standards for Alberta's Crown Land \(Grazing Dispositions\)](#)
- [Stewardship for Rangeland Sustainability](#)
- Other policy and management directives identified by the Government of Alberta.

Together, these documents outline the approach ensuring the long-term health, sustainability and resiliency of the rangeland ecosystem, supporting the many ecological goods and services that rangelands provide.

Outcomes:

- Ensure the long-term health, sustainability and resiliency of the rangeland ecosystem, supporting the many ecological goods and services that the rangeland provides.
- Support stewardship practices that value these lands, maintain the native grassland, and protect environmentally sensitive areas.

## Rangelands and Grazing

Livestock grazing is the primary land-use management tool within the planning area and aligns with the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan intent; *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act* (WAERNAHR Act); and the Heritage Rangelands Operational Management Directive.

### Objectives:

- 1.1 Maintain the integrity of the native rangelands within this landscape through grazing management.
  - a. Use grazing dispositions under established legislative and administrative frameworks to provide the management guidance for maintaining these lands in a well-managed, adaptive process in which grazing plays an important role in maintaining the structure and function of native grassland ecosystems.
  - b. Manage grazing dispositions under a stewardship model (Stewardship for Rangeland Sustainability) in which the disposition holder has the primary responsibility to steward the rangelands within the disposition with support from the government rangeland agrologist.
  - c. Ensure all grazing infrastructure is compatible with landscape connectivity with respect to wildlife movement.

The core measure of sustainable rangeland management on public land is range health and the associated riparian health measure. These health assessments are diagnostic tools that assess the specific systems' ability to perform certain key functions.

For rangelands, these include net primary production, maintenance of soil site stability, the capture and beneficial release of water, nutrient and energy cycling, and functional diversity of plant species. For riparian areas the key ecological functions assessed are the system's ability to trap sediment, build and maintain streambanks, store flood water and energy, recharge the aquifer, filter and buffer water, reduce and dissipate stream energy, maintain biodiversity and create primary productivity. Both assessments use key indicators to give the assessor a clear picture of the system's state.

The use of livestock grazing through grazing dispositions supports healthy, functioning rangelands and riparian ecosystems. Grazing is managed through the four principles of range management that guide stewardship:

- Balance livestock demand with the available forage supply (sustainable stocking rates).
- Distribute livestock grazing impact.
- Avoid grazing during vulnerable periods.
- Provide effective rest after grazing.

Plant communities and/or tame pastures with introduced non-native forages and species not designated by the Weed Control Act will be managed for their current conservation values and to minimize further invasion into native plant communities.

Range management projects which improve the overall management of the rangeland and benefit livestock and/or wildlife and ensure consistency with the objectives of this plan will be allowed.

Existing operational range management plans and grazing lease agreements pertaining to grazing dispositions will continue and will be updated or replaced as per rangeland lifecycle processes determined by the Government of Alberta. Individual dispositions may have specific plans developed by the Government of Alberta that will improve the management of livestock and/or wildlife. These plans will be reviewed and approved by the Government of Alberta to ensure that plans comply with the overall management objectives for the area and the terms and intent of the applicable grazing disposition.

## **Vegetation Management**

Maintaining a landscape that reflects a mosaic of native grassland, forest, and shrub communities, representative of the Foothills Parkland and Montane Natural Subregions is a management priority. In the absence of disturbance, the natural tendency of ecological succession in this area is toward forest cover, altering the desired balance in heterogeneity on the Heritage Rangeland. Changes from this desired landscape diversity due to succession will be addressed through appropriate management treatments as determined by the Government of Alberta.

Vegetation management objectives and direction will comply with the overall management objectives for the area. Direction will be determined by the appropriate department of the Government of Alberta. All approvals, authorizations, and permits will be governed by the appropriate department and authority. Where appropriate, nothing in this plan prevents the issuance of vegetation management approvals and commercial or local timber permits to facilitate the required removal of identified woody vegetation.

### **Objectives:**

- 1.2 Promote grassland communities in areas that have successional components and that have been encroached.
- 1.3 Use vegetation management tools including forest harvesting and thinning, mechanical clearing (brush plowing, mowing, mulching), prescribed grazing and fire, and chemical control to manage encroachment into grasslands.
- 1.4 Use vegetation management tools to support grassland, riparian, and wildlife values, and reduce fire risk.

The OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland has been selected as a priority location for research on ecosystem resilience and the application of vegetation management approaches. Active vegetation management planning began in 2025, with a focus on maintaining native grasslands and promoting a heterogeneous mosaic of

habitat types across the landscape to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. Management outcomes at the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland are intended to inform the development of a scalable provincial model for vegetation management on Crown Lands.

## **Weed Management**

This management plan supports early detection, monitoring, minimizing, and controlling of invasive species in accordance with provincial legislation, and municipal weed control requirements. Management actions emphasize prevention, responsible operational practices, and the use of approved control measures to reduce infestations and restore native communities.

Objectives:

- 1.5 Support early detection, monitoring, minimizing, and controlling of invasive species in accordance with provincial legislation, and municipal weed control requirements.
- 1.6 Manage invasive/non-native/noxious plant species to restore and promote the regeneration of native communities.

## **Invasive Plants and Noxious/Prohibited Weeds**

Measures which prevent the establishment and spread of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds, and to control infestations as outlined in and in accordance with the *Weed Control Act*, *Public Lands Act*, provincial programs and the MD of Foothills weed control bylaws will be used. Weed management requires a collaborative process and all stakeholders are needed to achieve outcomes.

Best management practices for prevention of invasive plant species, including cleaning of equipment used in close proximity to noxious or prohibited invasive plant species, and using materials from certified weed-free sources will be followed.

Outcomes:

- Terrestrial weeds are effectively managed through cooperation and collaboration.
- Aquatic invasive species infestations are prevented, controlled and reduced when identified.

Objectives:

- 1.7 Disposition holders are responsible for inspections and management of weeds within their dispositions and must work with agrologists from the Government of Alberta to complete assessments during inspections.
- 1.8 Municipal weed inspectors are responsible for weed notices and compliance action under the *Weed Control Act*.
- 1.9 The Government of Alberta is responsible for ensuring the legislation and policy are followed.
- 1.10 Application of the Alberta Aquatic Invasive Species Early Detection Rapid Response Plan in water systems, where identified.

- 1.11 Maintain public awareness campaigns to communicate the importance of cleaning equipment (e.g. watercraft, hip waders, life jackets, etc.) and management of domestic pets, using the 'Clean, drain, dry your gear' and 'Don't Let it Loose' campaigns.

### **Non-native Species**

Non-native species, if unmanaged, can have a detrimental impact on native plant communities that could limit or prevent conservation outcomes for the Heritage Rangeland. Preventing the introduction and spread of non-native species in the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland is a priority to maintain the integrity of native plant communities and healthy watersheds.

Objective:

- 1.12 Intentional introduction of non-native species of plants or animals will not be considered or permitted, with the exception of the seeding of tame forages on existing tame pastures and the use of biological control for invasive species (as approved by the Government of Alberta).

### **Reclamation, Restoration and Revegetation**

Re-vegetation, reclamation and restoration projects follow current Reclamation Criteria Guidelines published by the Government of Alberta and any relevant supporting guideline documents that are published. This includes projects that return a disturbed area to its near native vegetation pre-disturbance site assessment condition or equivalent land capability.

Objective:

- 1.13 Applications for native seed collection will be reviewed and may be permitted as per current authorization application processes. Native grass seed is preferred for rough fescue grass revegetation.

## Trail Management and Use

There are no designated trails identified within the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland. Existing trails provide access throughout the lands for grazing purposes and user access. No motorized access is permitted except for grazing and land management purposes (see Recreational and Commercial Activities section for more information).

On the Heritage Rangeland, new trails for ranching operations require review and approval of the Government of Alberta. The private lands under conservation easement are at the discretion of those land holders for any new trail developments.

### Permitted uses:

- ✓ Grazing
- ✓ Restoration and/or Rejuvenation of Tame Pasture
- ✓ Control of Tree and Shrub Encroachment
- ✓ Range Management Projects
- ✓ Weed Control
- ✓ Control of Invasive species and pathogens
- ✓ Motorized access- For management activities (Disposition Holder Only)
- ✓ Motorized access- Private land

### Not permitted:

- x Cultivation of Native Grasslands
- x Motorized Access (including Highway vehicles, Off-highway Vehicles (OHV), Snowmobiles and Power Boats)

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## 2. Forests

Lack of fire on the landscape has allowed for forest encroachment to occur onto the grasslands over time. Managing the forest and shrub communities is necessary to slow and/or prevent the tree encroachment while still providing a mosaic of forest, shrub and grasslands in the riparian areas. Vegetation management tools, in conjunction with species recovery plans, will be used, as appropriate, to support this landscape balance to minimize disturbance, protect grassland, riparian, and wildlife values, and reduce fire risk.

Introduced pathogens, such as white pine blister rust (*Cronartium ribicola*) threaten native plant communities and species at risk (e.g. limber pine). The Government of Alberta continues to monitor limber pine populations, insects and pathogens and follow established recovery plans for the species.

Management for wildfire, forest encroachment, insect and disease control will be allowed in areas where traditional forestry activities are not permitted. This may include prescribed fire, forest harvest and other treatments as necessary. Prescribed activities will require an approved plan and follow current best management practices, species recovery plans and policies as determined by the Government of Alberta.

Outcome:

- Tree encroachment is slowed and/or prevented through management of forest and shrub communities while still providing a mosaic of grasslands, shrub and forest within the riparian areas.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Prescribed fires and prescribed vegetation management operations will be the preferred methods for balancing forest cover types with other plant communities.
  - a. Prescribed vegetation management includes forest harvesting and thinning, mechanical clearing (brush plowing and mowing) and chemical control on sites for the purposes of balancing grasslands forest and shrublands.

Permitted uses:

- ✓ Forest harvesting- for the purpose of vegetation management projects only
- ✓ Temporary roads for forest harvesting activities- for the purpose of vegetation management projects only
- ✓ Prescribed Vegetation Management
- ✓ Management for wildfire, insect and disease control

Not permitted:

### 3. Fire and Wildfire Management

Fire is a key ecological process that promotes vegetation renewal, increases biodiversity, disrupts continuous fuels, and creates more resilient landscapes. Research shows that fire helps maintain grassland stability and ecosystem heterogeneity in transitional areas.

Indigenous Peoples used seasonal, low-intensity fire as a deliberate land-stewardship tool that maintained open grasslands, promoted culturally important plants, and reduced fuel accumulation in the OH Ranch Area. With increased human settlement and establishment of the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve, land management shifted toward conservation and fire suppression.

Outcome:

- Wildfire management practices align and comply with the Alberta Wildfire Mitigation Strategy and the *Forest and Prairie Protection Act*.

Objectives:

- 3.1 All proposed mechanisms for fire management will be assessed and managed for threats (wildfires) and opportunities (prescribed fires) within and outside of the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland.
- 3.2 The Fire Ban System or ministerial order as per *WAERNAHR Act* can prohibit or restrict human activities that may ignite wildfires.
- 3.3 Where fires impact the landscape, natural succession will be promoted for recovery of the area. Grassland communities will be promoted in areas that have a grassland successional component and that have been encroached.

Recreational fires are not permitted, except at existing facilities on private land. The Minister may prohibit or restrict fires in a Heritage Rangeland at any time through an Order.

Permitted uses (under appropriate management direction):

- ✓ Prescribed Fire
- ✓ Managed Fire

Not permitted:

- x Recreational fires; except at existing facilities on private land under conservation easements

## 4. Water Resources

Water and soil resources are fundamental to the health of ecosystems within the Heritage Rangeland. Streams, wetlands and groundwater systems support livestock use, wildlife habitat and overall landscape function. The Government of Alberta has a number of tools at its disposal to manage water and groundwater.

Outcome:

- Natural watercourses and riparian areas are protected.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Limit activities that could alter hydrological systems.
- 4.2 Address source water protection to protect downstream communities from unintended increased mineral deposits with any land-use impacts.
- 4.3 Adhere to the *Water Act*, associated water, groundwater and soil regulations, the Alberta Wetland Policy, water directives, all applicable codes of practice including the Code of Practice for Watercourse Crossings, and management frameworks.
- 4.4 Use monitoring and assessments through partnerships, to guide management decisions and help maintain and improve water quality and quantity including riparian health management.

This plan does not support commercial water development such as hydro-electric generation, bottling operations, etc. The *WAERNAHR Act* does not permit the destruction or damage of any land or water within the boundary nor allow surface disturbance through the development of new infrastructure.

The Government of Alberta, along with partners, stakeholders and non-government organizations; initiate, complete and monitor watershed status and watershed projects for the effective management of riparian areas.

Offsite watering is a tool that supports balanced livestock distribution to improve and/or sustain range and riparian health. Existing dams and dugouts for the purpose of livestock management will be maintained. New developments (e.g. dams) will be reviewed through the established referral process for review and approval.

Permitted uses (under appropriate management direction):

- ✓ Livestock watering developments.

Not permitted:

- x Commercial water developments (e.g. water bottling operations, hydroelectric generation dams)

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## 5. Wildlife and Fisheries

Wildlife and fish populations within OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland are managed within established provincial and regional frameworks. Native species and their habitats are an important component of the area's grassland, riparian, and forest ecosystems. Responsible stewardship includes managing the coexistence between wildlife and people on the land. The *Wildlife Act*, hunting regulations and Alberta fishing regulations guide this section.

Outcomes:

- Maintain viable self-sustaining populations of native wildlife and fish species, and the unique grassland (fescue) habitats that support them while continuing regulated hunting and fishing.
- Ecological function, regional strategies, and the interaction between wildlife and livestock use is considered in making management decisions.
- Landscape intactness to support wildlife, sensitive habitats and biodiversity is sustained.

### Wildlife

Wildlife populations are managed in a sustainable manner as per the direction contained in applicable Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) strategies and provincial/regional wildlife management plans.

Objectives:

- 5.1 Exclude livestock and controlled/exotic animals that are infected with diseases that are detrimental to wildlife (inclusive of domestic sheep and goats).
- 5.2 Use of domestic and/or controlled/exotic species such as donkeys, llamas, etc. for commercial purposes may be allowed subject to existing health requirements for commercial users.
- 5.3 Manage for non-native species, e.g. wild boar, that have been introduced, transported, and/or migrated using current best management practices.

Habitat supporting viable populations of native wildlife species are managed to emphasize the retention of all ecosystem components and the retention (or emulation) of natural processes. Habitat heterogeneity ensures both domestic cattle production and native wildlife species needs are met. Habitat and rangeland management decisions consider the needs of both wildlife and livestock. As needed, species inventories and/or studies conducted by Alberta Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Branch, may provide direction for habitat improvement and enhancement projects. These projects will be evaluated and

prioritized on a multi-species basis; the benefits of habitat projects for livestock will also be considered.

Objectives:

- 5.4 Manage wildlife conflicts through appropriate remedial actions that have minimal impacts on non-target species, people, and property.
- 5.5 Predator management activities may use registered trappers when needed.

## **Fisheries**

Sport fishery will be managed through established regulations that apply to the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland lands for Fisheries Management Area ES1.

Objectives:

- 5.6 Support fish population and fish habitat inventories undertaken in the Heritage Rangeland.
- 5.7 Inform and support riparian habitat improvement projects as necessary.

Permitted uses (under appropriate management direction):

- ✓ Recreational Hunting
- ✓ Recreational Fishing
- ✓ Habitat Management Projects
- ✓ Problem Wildlife Control
- ✓ Motorized Access for management activities (Disposition Holders Only)

Not permitted:

- x Motorized Access for hunting, fishing access or game retrieval
- x Introduction of Exotic Wildlife Species

## 6. Species at Risk

Within the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland there are wildlife, fish and vegetative species present that are of varying conservation significance. Additionally, many species are also considered under the Federal *Species at Risk Act* (to protect Federally-listed endangered and threatened species) and determined by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). A listing of the provincial and federally designated species occurring on the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland is included in Appendix D.

Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*) and Limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*) are considered Endangered Species in Alberta, listed under the Alberta *Wildlife Act*. Grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*), Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and Westslope Cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*) are currently listed as Threatened under the Alberta *Wildlife Act*. Each of these species have recovery plans, which provide strategies to achieve the overall recovery goal to restore them to viable, naturally self-sustaining populations within Alberta. Additionally, there are species that are considered Species of Special Concern (classification for wildlife that may become threatened or endangered due to a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats), where preventative actions are outlined in the form of Conservation Management Plans, which are designed to prevent the species from becoming threatened or endangered. Where species have been impacted (harming, killing or destroying habitats) due to inappropriate actions, could result in non-compliance of that protection and management direction.

Outcome:

- Known vegetation and wildlife species at risk are managed to facilitate their survival and regeneration.

Objective:

- 6.1 Disposition holders will consult with local Fish and Wildlife biologists for activities that have likelihood of impacting species at risk.

Permitted uses (under appropriate management direction):

- ✓ Habitat Management Projects that support species at risk
- ✓ Control of Invasive Species and/or Pathogens
- ✓ Problem Wildlife Control

Not permitted:

- x Introduction of Exotic Wildlife Species

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## 7. Trapping

Trapping supports wildlife and habitat management (e.g. predation management for protection of species at risk, disease mitigation, and problematic wildlife) and helps maintain sustainable wildlife populations. This activity is administered and regulated under the Alberta *Wildlife Act*, Wildlife Regulation and Trapping Regulations.

In designated Heritage Rangelands, trapping is not allowed as per the Heritage Rangeland Operational Management Directive. Existing (before Heritage Rangeland designation), registered fur management areas will be permitted to continue, provided that the activity does not impact the grazing operations. New traplines will not be issued.

Outcome:

- Support sustainable wildlife populations.

Objectives:

- 7.1 Manage predators through appropriate management activities as per Government of Alberta direction.

NOTE: No Registered Fur Management Area or registered traplines exist in the Heritage Rangeland. No new traplines will be issued except where problem wildlife management control is required.

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## 8. Cultural Heritage

Native grassland landscapes and ecological systems provide essential services for maintaining natural habitats, sustaining populations of plants and wildlife, supporting clean hydrological cycles, carbon sequestration ability, and biodiversity. They have an extensive history of human use and conserving and protecting these lands to support this living history and culture is an important value.

### First Nations and Indigenous Peoples

The direct relationships that Indigenous Peoples have with the land and water provide valuable interconnections for their culture, spirit and language. Conservation and preservation of these lands for future generations is necessary for intergenerational knowledge transfer, traditional land use, and is essential for cultural and natural landscape monitoring.

First Nations' rights provided by the treaties in Alberta to hunt, fish and trap for food are recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Alberta's government understands the important role these rights have in maintaining First Nations' cultures and traditions. The treaties define the ongoing relationship between the Crown and First Nations and set out the obligations and rights of all signatories. Nothing within the content of the plan is intended to be interpreted to add to or take away from any existing rights recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

Outcome:

- Indigenous values, perspectives and traditional land uses in land management, monitoring and protection activities are considered in the management, monitoring and protection of the Heritage Rangeland.

Objective:

- 8.1 Support the ability for First Nations and Indigenous peoples to access and use the land and resources. The Recreation Access Regulation guides the process to access this area.

## Historic Resources

OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland contains historic resources that contribute to the heritage value of the landscape. These resources are managed under provincial legislation and require careful management to avoid disturbance.

Outcome:

- Historic resources are managed to prevent disturbance and unauthorized removal.

Objective:

- 8.2 Ensure appropriate oversight of developments that could affect known and undiscovered historic resources by ensuring that all ground disturbing activities comply with the *Historical Resources Act*, *WAERNAHR Act*, and associated policy and directives.
- 8.3 Ensure appropriate mitigation measures when ground disturbance is proposed to manage sensitive sites and the historic resource information they contain.
- 8.4 Manage landscape conditions to conserve culturally sensitive areas, where known or discovered.

Heritage Rangelands designation limits the possibility of disturbance on the landscape to support appropriate management of all existing historic resource sites. Development or improvements to existing structures on private land under conservation easement will maintain the character of the ranch and will not impact the ecological integrity of the ranch.

Permitted uses (under appropriate management direction):

- ✓ Low Impact Access – Use Recreation Access Regulations for information and contact details.

Not permitted:

- x Removal of cultural and/or historical items found. Follow processes to report findings.
- x Disrupting sensitive areas and Indigenous ceremonies or activities when occurring.

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## 9. Recreational and Commercial Activities

### Recreation Use and Access

The OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland will not be promoted as a recreation or tourism destination. Recreational access and use are intended to remain limited, low-impact, and compatible with the protection of natural, cultural and heritage values, while respecting the ongoing grazing operations. Maintaining ecological integrity of the area takes precedence over any recreational access that negatively impacts the grasslands, as well as recreational development.

The OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland has been impacted by recreational access pressures, resulting in trail closures and user limits. Recreational access management plans could be completed to manage recreation, non-compliance with the recreational access regulations, infrastructure destruction (e.g. fencing) and inappropriate trail access and use, are ongoing issues impacting the leaseholders, government staff and other responsible users.

Outcome:

- The Heritage Rangeland is protected from negative impacts made from extensive, intensive recreational use activities and motorized recreational access.
- The ecological integrity of the area takes precedence over any recreational access that negatively impacts the grasslands, as well as recreational development.

Objectives:

- 9.1 Motorized recreation is not permitted.
- 9.2 New trails, recreational infrastructure and formal trail systems are not permitted to be developed.
- 9.3 The *WAERNAHR Act* and the Recreational Access Regulation (RAR) will provide direction on accessing the Heritage Rangelands for accessing lands and permitted recreational activities.
- 9.4 Non-motorized recreation will be dispersed and facility-free.
- 9.5 Recreational access management plan(s) will be considered if non-compliance access increases and/or these activities severely impact these lands.

Under the Recreation Access Regulation (RAR), grazing lease holders have a duty to allow access unless one or more of the circumstances outlined in the legislation applies. All recreational users must contact the grazing lease holder prior to any entry on the lease. Refer to the Government of Alberta website for the most up to date information <https://www.alberta.ca/recreation-on-agricultural-public-land>. Non-compliance with the Recreational Access Regulation can result

in a ticketable offence or administration penalty. Reports of non-compliant incidents are reported to 310-LAND.

Access to the Heritage Rangeland may be closed or restricted by:

- Minister Order (*WAERNAHR Act*).
- Local Settlement Officer (LSO) or Director under the Recreational Access Regulation for the purposes of proper land management, public safety, or animal health.

See Appendix B for a complete list of permitted uses under the Access Management and Integrated Land Management Sections.

Permitted uses (under appropriate management direction):

- ✓ Foot Access- Subject to Recreation Access Regulations
- ✓ Cycling and Biking- Subject to Recreation Access Regulations
- ✓ Backcountry Camping- Subject to Recreation Access Regulations

Not permitted:

- x Motorized Access, including Highway Vehicles, Off Highway Vehicles (OHV), Snowmobiles and Power Boats
- x New Public Roads
- x Aircraft Take-off or Landing

## Commercial Activities

### Commercial Recreation

The type of commercial recreational activities that occur will be reviewed by the Government of Alberta and in consultation with the grazing leaseholder, to assess the impacts to the Heritage Rangeland. A methodology may be adopted or developed to assess levels of use, environmental impacts, and recreational carrying capacities.

Outcome:

- The impact of non-motorized commercial recreation activities is mitigated through management and ongoing monitoring.

Objectives:

- 9.6 Manage commercial recreation requests and activities that may be compatible with; the Heritage Rangeland designation, the compatibility with the existing ranching operation and the cultural goals and objectives, of the Heritage Rangeland.
- 9.7 Manage commercial recreation activities that include horses, feed and equipment to minimize impact and prevent the introduction of weeds.
- 9.8 All commercial recreation will require review and approval by the Government of Alberta. This review and approval will follow the established referral process.
- 9.9 A license and/or permit is required to conduct any commercial recreation including guiding and outfitting services.
- 9.10 Restrictions to access, duration, group size, and activity may be placed on any permits granted for commercial recreation activities.

## **Commercial Tourism**

This activity is inconsistent with the purpose and intent of the Heritage Rangeland and will not be considered under any circumstances. Visitation and tourism development are not a priority of the Heritage Rangeland.

### **Outcomes:**

- The Heritage Rangeland remains free from all commercial tourism infrastructure.
- The Heritage Rangeland is not promoted for tourism or recreation purposes.

### **Objectives:**

- 9.11 Commercial tourism facilities such as hotels, motels or small-scale ecolodges, recreational vehicle (RV) parks, golf courses, or similar types of development or outdoor recreation facilities such as auto access campgrounds, picnic areas, hard surface hiking trails, boat launches and beach areas are not permitted.
- 9.12 Manage requested public visitation using the Recreation Access Regulation (RAR).
- 9.13 Limit the amount of public visitation by using appropriate education and communications tools.

### **Permitted uses (under appropriate management direction):**

- ✓ Limited, Low Impact Non-motorized Activities

### **Not permitted:**

- x Motorized Access: including Highway Vehicles, Off Highway Vehicles (OHV), Snowmobiles and Power Boats
- x Facilities and Infrastructures (see section below)

## Special Events

Special events within the Heritage Rangeland designation, especially large-scale events, are considered not compatible. A special event may include but is not limited to weddings, rallies, sports competitions, filming and still photography, etc. Applications are submitted through the Ministry/Minister responsible for Heritage Rangeland management, in consultation with other Government of Alberta departments and the grazing lease holders.

Outcome:

- Special events or compatible activities on Crown Lands are limited and approved by application if the activity does not impact natural or cultural features or disrupt grazing operations.

Objectives:

- 9.14 Ensure grassland and ecological values are considered and supported in requests for special events and evaluate the appropriateness of event use on these lands.
- 9.15 OH Ranch continues to use the private land under conservation easement as settings for private, special events.
- 9.16 Special event. applications are submitted through the Ministry/Minister responsible for Heritage Rangeland management, in consultation with other Government of Alberta departments and the grazing lease holders.

Permitted uses (under appropriate management direction):

- ✓ Small-scale, short-term events (requires approval)

Not permitted:

- x Large scale, long-term events that impact the native landscape

## Facilities and Infrastructure

The management intent is to maintain the undisturbed natural quality of the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland through a review of all considered/proposed facility and infrastructure development.

Facilities and infrastructure on the Crown land portions of the Heritage Rangeland will only be considered for approval if they are for rangeland management purposes.

OH Ranch Heritage Rangelands has no designated staging area for parking purposes.

Outcome:

- Facilities and infrastructure on Crown land portions of the Heritage Rangeland exist only for rangeland management purposes.

Objective:

- 9.17 Maintain the undisturbed natural quality of these lands through a review of all considered or proposed facility and infrastructure development.

Permitted uses (under appropriate management direction):

- ✓ For Rangeland Management Purposes- Requires approval

Not permitted:

- x Commercial Tourism and Recreational Facilities
- x Outdoor Recreation Facilities

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## 10. Energy and Minerals

The OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland contains underlying petroleum and natural gas resources, including brine and rock-hosted mineral resources. The area currently has minimal energy and mineral development, with no active wells or Crown mineral surface dispositions within the Heritage Rangeland, although existing linear infrastructure (e.g., pipeline and transmission lines) occurs adjacent to the planning area.

### Outcomes:

- Native grasslands and habitats are maintained and supported by limiting surface access.
- Heritage Rangeland legislation, policy, directives and grassland processes are in compliance when considering new proposals for existing access changes and maintenance of existing infrastructure.

Management of energy and mineral resources within the Heritage Rangeland is guided by provincial legislation, regulatory processes, and the intent of maintaining ecological integrity and native rangeland function. The *WAERNAHR Act* and Heritage Rangeland Operational Management Directive provide direction for resource development and processes within Heritage Rangelands.

Crown and freehold mineral rights will be honored if the right to access subsurface minerals existed at the time the land became designated (*WAERNAHR Act*) as a Heritage Rangeland in 2008. Crown mineral dispositions (*WAERNAHR Act*, under the *Mines and Minerals Act* and applicable regulations) may be issued and include a *no surface access* condition, to prevent new surface disturbance. Subsurface resources may only be accessed from outside the Heritage Rangeland boundary (e.g., horizontal or directional drilling), consistent with provincial policy and the intent of the protected area.

No new agreements for petroleum and natural gas, brine-hosted minerals, geothermal, and which authorize the use of pore space will be issued. Metallic and industrial minerals, ammonite shell, and coal remain reserved from disposition.

Objectives:

- 10.1 The Heritage Rangeland will remain unavailable for disposition agreements for rock-hosted metallic and industrial minerals, and ammonite shell recovery.
- 10.2 Surface access restrictions associated with sensitive wildlife habitat (e.g., raptor habitat, species at risk buffers) and native grassland and ecological values of the lands will be applied through existing provincial tools and referral processes.
- 10.3 Surface access on Crown land, where required and approved, will be subject to authorization under applicable legislation and coordinated Government of Alberta review processes.

Any Crown exploration or development proposals that represent existing but undeveloped mineral rights will be reviewed and regulated through established Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) processes and applicable provincial legislation. Where surface access is required to honour existing mineral rights, development activities should minimize surface disturbance, prioritize the use of existing disturbance and access areas, avoid native grasslands where possible, restore disturbed lands in accordance with reclamation requirements, and align with provincial guidance for minimizing disturbance in native grasslands.

Objectives:

- 10.4 Manage footprint, where existing (prior to Heritage Rangeland designation) commitments occur, in a responsible manner.
- 10.5 Surface access restrictions associated with sensitive wildlife habitat, native grasslands, and ecological values will be applied through existing provincial tools and referral processes.
- 10.6 Surface access on Crown land, where required and approved, will be subject to authorization under applicable legislation and coordinated Government of Alberta review processes.

New access roads or other infrastructure will only be considered when no reasonable alternative exists, and access is required to honor existing rights. To reduce new disturbances, operators shall use existing and shared access routes wherever possible.

Objectives:

- 10.7 Maintain and support intact native grasslands and habitats by limiting surface access.
- 10.8 Manage footprint, where existing commitments occur, in a responsible manner.

New roads proposed through the Heritage Rangeland to access resources outside or adjacent to the Heritage Rangeland are not supported.

Objectives:

- 10.9 Maintain and support intact native grasslands and habitats by limiting surface access.

- 10.10 Surface access restrictions associated with ecological values and native grasslands will be applied through existing provincial tools and referral processes.

New surface pipeline dispositions within the Heritage Rangeland are not permitted unless required to support existing authorized subsurface commitments. Existing pipeline infrastructure will continue to be operated and maintained under existing approvals.

Objectives:

- 10.11 Manage footprint, where existing commitments occur, in a responsible manner.
- 10.12 Ensure compliance with all Heritage Rangeland legislation, policy, directives, and grassland procedures when considering existing access changes and maintenance of existing infrastructure.

## Other Activities

Neither extensive nor intensive resource development activities are permitted on Heritage Rangelands. Examples of prohibited developments include new data centres and electricity generation facilities, including renewable energy developments such as wind, geothermal, hydroelectric, and bio-energy projects.

Permitted uses (under appropriate management direction):

- ✓ Maintenance of existing communication towers and transmission corridors
- ✓ Existing oil and gas commitments—impacts must be minimized
- ✓ Minerals- existing commitments. Surface access and activity will be permitted in honoring existing mineral commitments. Surface access and activity will minimize surface disturbance as per conditions of approval and principles of IL 2010-02
- ✓ Existing pipeline agreements
- ✓ New pipeline agreements—only to access existing subsurface commitments
- ✓ Existing access/resource roads—access controls may apply

Not permitted:

- x New oil and gas commitments
- x Surface materials extraction (e.g. sand, gravel, peat, marl)
- x New or expansion of existing communications towers and transmission corridors
- x Commercial windmills or wind farms
- x Minerals—new exploration
- x New access roads—access for developing existing oil and gas commitments must use existing roads, if possible

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## 11. Education and Outreach

### Public Awareness

Public awareness efforts will support the protection of OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland by clearly communicating the sensitivity of its grassland, riparian, and cultural resources. Messaging will emphasize responsible use, respect for grazing operations, and the importance of maintaining ecological integrity.

Given that multiple grazing operations are active on the Heritage Rangeland, the conditions and restrictions to access, and the sensitivity of the grassland ecology; public education and awareness initiatives will not promote the Heritage Rangeland with the aim of attracting increased levels of visitor use.

Outcome:

- Educational messaging communicates the history of ranching and cultural use to build a stronger connection to the land.
- Visitor access to the Heritage Rangeland is minimized.

Objectives:

- 11.1 Focus education and communication materials on the natural, indigenous and ranching heritage of the area.
- 11.2 Develop education messaging in collaboration with Government of Alberta, grazing disposition holders, Bar U Ranch National Historic Site, indigenous communities and the conservation easement holders.
- 11.3 No promotional materials will be developed that encourage visitation.

## Research

Research helps improve how the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland is managed by building knowledge about grassland, riparian, wildlife and ecosystems. Research that studies natural values and addresses management needs is allowed.

Outcome:

- Scientific and applied knowledge of the Heritage Rangeland and native grasslands is supported and encouraged.

Objective:

- 11.4 Manage research activity through research and collection permits authorized by the Government of Alberta. Access to the land for research is authorized and managed through Temporary Field Authorizations or Recreation Access Regulation, depending on research intensity and duration.

Permitted uses (under appropriate management direction):

- ✓ Research and monitoring using the appropriate approvals processes

Not permitted:

- x Promoting the Heritage Rangeland as a tourist or multi-use destination

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## 12. Public Safety

Public safety is a priority within the Heritage Rangeland. Fire, wildlife encounters, and the act of recreation can create situations that put the public or land managers at risk. There is limited cellphone coverage in the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland that makes communication challenging.

Recreation users need to be aware of the risks and take the appropriate precautions, so they are prepared. Education of the risks prior to visitation, during visitation, and information obtained upon access approval help reduce the occurrences and severity of public safety incidents.

The Fire Ban System (Fire Advisory, Fire Restriction, Fire Ban or Forest Area Closure), issued by the local Municipalities or the Government of Alberta, continues to be used throughout the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland and area. Wildfires may be reported to 310-FIRE.

Management is in accordance with current provincial government policy and procedures appropriate departments, and in collaboration with local Municipalities.

The OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland has a few Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachments locally to support enforcement, which include the following: Diamond Valley, High River and Nanton. The RCMP is the lead agency for Search and Rescue within the Province.

Outcome:

- Minimize safety risk to users, including the grazing disposition holders, Indigenous Peoples, public, wildlife and cattle on these lands, where possible.
- Ensure all human users of these Heritage Rangelands are aware of the risks when accessing these lands through education and effective communications.

Objective:

- 12.1 Collaborate with external agencies to ensure appropriate public safety measures are implemented.
- 12.2 Government of Alberta staff and municipal government staff provide assistance to federal and provincial enforcement agencies will work together with any public safety or emergency management situation within the OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland.

## **Fire Safety**

Outdoor fires require consent of the grazing lease holder and adhere to the *Forest and Prairie Protection Act*, the Fire Ban System, Recreation Access Regulation, and local bylaws.

Note: *WAERNAHR Act* can prohibit or restrict fires as directed from the Minister responsible for the Act. All other fires, including wildfires and prescribed fires, will be managed in accordance with the section on Fire and Wildlife Management.

Objectives:

- 12.3 Align with provincial wildfire management priorities.
- 12.4 Support implementation of the Alberta Wildfire Mitigation Strategy and any other applicable acts, regulations, policies, and directives.

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## 13. Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and review processes are critical to the success of implementation of the plan. Government of Alberta staff will continue to identify opportunities to complete monitoring activities in collaboration with the scientific community, partners, stakeholders and Indigenous People.

Outcomes:

- Environmental indicators provide information for management decision-making.
- This plan maintains purpose and relevance through regular evaluation and review.
- Other monitoring systems, such as rangeland monitoring and evaluation programs, are applied as their cycles require.

### Monitoring

Monitoring will assess ecological conditions through monitoring programs. The information generated will be used to determine if adjustments to management practices are required. Any adjustments to grazing management will be consistent with existing grazing dispositions, range management plans, and applicable legislation, and will be implemented in collaboration with disposition holders.

The approach is to maintain monitoring programs that measure grassland and riparian health and adjust management practices as needed. There are two monitoring programs: rangeland monitoring and biodiversity indicator monitoring. Biodiversity indicators can be used to monitor key metrics that help understand the status of values on this landscape and to provide information that assists in long-term evaluation, planning, and decision-making. A set of indicators have been identified (Appendix C).

Objectives:

- 13.1 Rangeland Management staff will manage grazing disposition inspections, monitoring and evaluation as identified under rangeland priorities, programs, etc.
- 13.2 Monitoring and evaluation of the overall impact of the Heritage Rangeland Management Plan will be conducted by government environmental monitoring staff using environmental indicators.
- 13.3 Indicators used will remain flexible to ensure that new findings or techniques to monitor changes to the landscape are able to be built in as need arises.

## **Review**

Regular review processes for the overall Heritage Rangeland Management Plan are important to ensure the plan will benefit the current and future management directions. The environmental and social context may change before the completion of the plan, or monitoring may reveal unfulfilled plan objectives or unexpected trends. A regular review cycle ensures that management approaches and landscape changes or impacts are addressed early before further impact occurs. Management plan changes will continue to align with the policy as directed at that time.

### **Objectives:**

- 13.4 Complete a comprehensive review of this management plan every ten (10) years from date of plan approval.
- 13.5 Initiate an evaluation of this management plan if the environmental indicators show undesirable trends or that this management plan is not meeting expected outcomes.

Minor changes during any review period may result in a simple amended statement, while larger changes may lead to this management plan being amended, replaced, renewed, or repealed. If this management plan meets the expected outcomes, no further action is required until the next scheduled review.

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## Appendix A: Glossary

**Best Management Practices:** Recommended operating practices that provide information to applicants of departmental desired practices while planning and performing activities on public land.

**Conservation Easement:** A voluntary agreement between a current private landowner, and all subsequent landowners, and a municipal agency or qualified not-for-profit corporation that applies stipulations to the land to ensure its protection (by restricting development, management or certain uses).

**Controlled Animal:** Species or groups of species named as such if they pose public safety or ecological concerns such as animals with toxins or behaviors which endanger people, are likely to cause damage to native species and their habitats, present a risk of disease, or otherwise are liable to cause economic damage to agricultural or environmental resources and result in a reduction or loss of recreational or economic opportunities that rely on the use of native species and their habitats.

**Crown Land:** Land titled to His Majesty the King in Right of Alberta and also includes public lands under the Public Lands Act.

**Designated Trail:** An area or linear disturbance (trail) identified for a specific activity, or activities as identified through a regional and sub-regional planning process, a regional management plan or the issuance of a disposition. Trails must be mapped, signed, and maintained.

**Disposition Holders:** The holder of a disposition according to the records of a regulatory body.

**Ecological Goods and Services:** The economic and social benefits humans gain, directly and indirectly, from the natural environment.

**Fescue Grasslands:** Native grassland communities associated with the black grassland soils of Alberta that are located within the Foothills Fescue, Northern Fescue, Central Parkland, Foothills Parkland, Montane, and Subalpine Natural Sub-regions.

**First Nation:** A band as defined in the Indian Act.

**Existing Footprint:** Any human-caused spatially identifiable surface disturbance that remains visible or functionally altered on the landscape at the time of assessment and has not been fully reclaimed.

**Footprint:** The impact or extent of a disturbance on public land. This includes the intensity, frequency, and nature of any uses or activities related to the disturbance.

**Grasslands:** Also referred to as rangelands or native prairie. Natural region of Alberta where the dominant vegetative species are herbaceous grasses, forbs and shrubs.

**Grazing Lease:** A land-based disposition (in the form of an agreement with individuals, corporations, or associations) granted by the Province of Alberta to allow grazing on public lands. The Government of Alberta requires grazing lessees to employ sustainable rangeland management practices as the core component of their stewardship responsibilities. The objective of sustainable rangeland management is to maintain plant vigor, protect and build the soil, perpetuate the forage resource and ensure a stable flow of products and other societal benefits.

**Heritage Rangeland:** A classification of protected area, designated under the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas, and Heritage Rangelands Act*, which recognizes and legislatively protects Alberta's ranching culture and the connection of ranching to the land.

**Indigenous:** Includes the "aboriginal peoples of Canada" within the meaning of section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

**Intensive Recreation:** High density recreational activities orientated toward developed facilities for example: campgrounds, day-use areas, day-use trail networks and off-highway vehicle areas.

**Land Stewardship:** The practice of carefully and responsibly managing land uses to ensure natural systems are maintained or enhanced for future generations.

**Native Grasslands:** A landscape unit where the vegetation is dominated by grasses, grass like plants, and/or forbs (>50%). For example, if an air photo review shows a unit with 45% scattered woody species canopy cover and 55% grass species canopy cover, it would still be defined as a grassland. For grasslands to be defined as "native", they must be comprised of greater than 30% foliar cover of native grassland species.

**Pre-disturbance Site Assessment:** The assessment collects detailed soil and vegetation data within the area designated for planned footprint.

**Rangeland:** Land supporting indigenous or introduced vegetation that is either grazed or has the potential to be grazed and is managed as a natural ecosystem. Rangeland includes grassland, grazeable forestland, shrubland, pastureland, and riparian.

**Resource Roads:** Roads held under a department license-of-occupation (DLO)/ licence of occupation (LOC) allowing temporary authorization to enter and use public lands (e.g. roads). (Additional information on resource road management is located in the Heritage Rangeland Operational Management Directive, 2015).

**Riparian:** The adjoining vegetated uplands that are directly influenced by the water body.

**Stakeholder:** A representative of an organization, or is an interested party, that has been identified as interested in, or potentially interested in, a specific matter.

**Traditional Uses:** For the purposes of this plan, “traditional uses” has the same meaning as in the Government of Alberta’s policy regarding consultation with First Nations on land and natural resource management.

**Treaty Rights:** The rights provided by the treaties in Alberta to hunt, trap and fish for food which are recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. These rights may be exercised on unoccupied Crown lands and lands where First Nations have a right of access for such purposes.

**Wildlife Management Unit (WMU):** The Province of Alberta is divided into a series of Wildlife Management Units, and wildlife within the boundaries of each WMU is managed according to the regulations under Alberta’s Wildlife Act.

## Appendix B: Permitted Land Use Tables for Heritage Rangelands

| Rangeland Management and Grazing                |               |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Grazing                                         | Permitted     |
| Cultivation of Native Grassland                 | Not permitted |
| Restoration and/or Rejuvenation of Tame Pasture | Permitted     |
| Control of Tree and Shrub Encroachment          | Permitted     |
| Range Management Projects                       | Permitted     |
| Weed Control                                    | Permitted     |

| Forest Management                                   |                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Forest Harvesting                                   | Permitted for the purpose of vegetation management projects only |
| Temporary roads for forestry harvesting activities. | Permitted for the purpose of vegetation management projects only |
| Prescribed Vegetation Management                    | Permitted                                                        |
| Management for Wildfire, insect and disease control | Permitted                                                        |

| Fire Management |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Prescribed Fire | Permitted |
| Managed Fire    | Permitted |

| Water Management                                                                               |               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Commercial Water Developments (e.g., water bottling operations, hydroelectric generation dams) | Not permitted |
| Livestock Watering Developments                                                                | Permitted     |

| Wildlife and Fisheries                                                                                |                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recreational Hunting                                                                                  | Permitted                                                                          |
| Recreational Fishing                                                                                  | Permitted                                                                          |
| Trapping<br>No Registered Fur Management Area or registered traplines exist in the Heritage Rangeland | No new traplines or fur management areas will be issued in the Heritage Rangelands |
| Motorized Access- Disposition Holders                                                                 | Permitted – <i>disposition management use</i>                                      |
| Motorized Access —Hunting, fishing access or game retrieval                                           | Not permitted                                                                      |
| Introduction of Exotic Wildlife Species                                                               | Not permitted                                                                      |
| Habitat Management Projects                                                                           | Permitted                                                                          |
| Problem Wildlife Control                                                                              | Permitted                                                                          |

| Invasive Species and Pathogens               |           |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Control of Invasive Species and/or pathogens | Permitted |

| Access Management                                                                                     |                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Motorized Access- Disposition Holders                                                                 | Permitted – <i>disposition management use</i>      |
| Motorized Access- Private Land                                                                        | Permitted to private lands                         |
| Motorized access, including Highway Vehicles, Off Highway Vehicles (OHV), Snowmobiles and Power Boats | Not permitted                                      |
| New public roads                                                                                      | Not permitted                                      |
| Foot Access                                                                                           | Permitted Subject to Recreation Access Regulation  |
| Development of New Facilities to Support Outdoor Recreation                                           | Not permitted                                      |
| Cycling and Mountain Biking                                                                           | Permitted. Subject to Recreation Access Regulation |
| Backcountry Camping                                                                                   | Permitted. Subject to Recreation Access Regulation |
| Aircraft Take-off or Landing                                                                          | Not permitted                                      |

| Integrated Land Management                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Commercial Tourism and Recreational Facilities                                | Not permitted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Outdoor Recreation Facilities                                                 | Not permitted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Surface Materials<br>(e.g. sand, gravel, peat, marl)                          | Not permitted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Maintenance of existing communication towers and transmission corridors       | Permitted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| New or expansion of existing communications towers and transmission corridors | Not permitted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Commercial windmills or windfarms                                             | Not permitted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Existing oil and gas commitments                                              | Permitted- <i>Impacts from this development must be minimized.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| New oil and gas commitments                                                   | Not permitted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Minerals – Existing Commitments                                               | Permitted<br><i>Surface access and activity will be permitted in honoring existing mineral commitments. Surface access and activity will minimize surface disturbance as per conditions of approval and principles of IL 2010-02 (ERCB IL 2010-02. Principles for Minimizing Surface Disturbance in Native Prairie and Parkland Areas)</i> |
| Minerals – New Exploration                                                    | Not permitted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Existing Pipeline Agreements                                                  | Permitted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| New Pipeline Agreements                                                       | Permitted <i>Note: only to access existing subsurface commitments</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Existing Resource Roads                                                       | Permitted <i>Note: access controls may apply</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| New Resource Roads                                                            | Not permitted <i>Note: Access for developing existing oil &amp; gas commitments must use existing roads.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

| Research and Monitoring |           |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Research and Monitoring | Permitted |

## Appendix C: Indicators

| Indicator                     | Function                                 | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Forest Cover, Riparian        | Habitat Provision                        | The amount of wetland and riparian area free from anthropogenic disturbances. Calculated for each of Riparian, Bogs, Fens, Marshes, and Swamps.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Forest Cover, Non-Riparian    | Tree Encroachment                        | The amount of forest cover in an area can be used to identify woody encroachment in habitats where trees and shrubs are not native. Woody encroachment is characterized by an increase in the abundance and dominance of trees and shrubs within grassland ecosystems. This process poses a significant threat to native grasslands by, for example, altering fire regimes, grazing patterns, and other natural disturbance processes. |
| Grasslands                    | Patch size of Rough Fescue               | In development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Suitable Habitat              | Moose, Fisher and Martin                 | This indicator estimates the relative suitability of an area for Moose, Fisher and Martin.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Suitable SAR Critical Habitat | Grizzly, Westslope Cutthroat, Barred Owl | This indicator estimates the relative suitability of an area for Grizzly, Westslope Cutthroat Trout, and Barred Owl                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Invasive Vascular Plants      | Grassland Degradation                    | The predicted distribution of invasive vascular plant species in Alberta, grouped by regulatory status.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

## Appendix D: Species at Risk Listing

Species At Risk in the OH Ranch Heritage Rangelands

| Common Name               | Scientific Name                    | Alberta Wildlife Act/Detailed Status   | Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) Status | Federal Species at Risk Act Status |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| American Badger           | <i>Taxidea taxus</i>               |                                        | Special concern                                                           | Special concern                    |
| Bank Swallow              | <i>Riparia riparia</i>             |                                        | Threatened                                                                | Threatened                         |
| Barn Swallow              | <i>Hirundo rustica</i>             |                                        | Special concern                                                           | Threatened                         |
| Barred Owl                | <i>Strix varia</i>                 | Special concern                        |                                                                           |                                    |
| Bull Trout                | <i>Salvelinus confluentus</i>      | Threatened                             | Threatened                                                                | Threatened                         |
| Ferruginous Hawk          | <i>Buteo regalis</i>               | Endangered                             | Threatened                                                                | Threatened                         |
| Grizzly Bear              | <i>Ursus arctos horribilis</i>     | Threatened                             | Special concern                                                           | Special concern                    |
| Harlequin Duck            | <i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>   | Special concern                        |                                                                           |                                    |
| Hoary Bat                 | <i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>           |                                        | Endangered                                                                | Recommended (Endangered)           |
| Horned Grebe              | <i>Podiceps auritus</i>            |                                        | Special concern                                                           | Special concern                    |
| Limber Pine               | <i>Pinus flexilis</i>              | Endangered                             | Endangered                                                                | Recommended (Endangered)           |
| Little Brown Myotis       | <i>Myotis lucifugus</i>            | Endangered                             | Endangered                                                                | Endangered                         |
| Olive-sided Flycatcher    | <i>Contopus cooperi</i>            |                                        | Special concern                                                           | Special concern                    |
| Prairie Falcon            | <i>Falco mexicanus</i>             | Special concern                        |                                                                           |                                    |
| Sprague's Pipit           | <i>Anthus spragueii</i>            | Special concern                        | Threatened                                                                | Threatened                         |
| Trumpeter Swan            | <i>Cygnus buccinator</i>           | Special concern                        |                                                                           |                                    |
| Westslope Cutthroat Trout | <i>Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi</i> | Threatened                             | Threatened                                                                | Threatened                         |
| Wolverine                 | <i>Gulo gulo</i>                   | Data deficient undergoing reassessment | Special concern                                                           | Special concern                    |

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## **Appendix E: List of Applicable Acts, Regulations, Strategies and Directives**

### **Acts**

- Constitution Act (Federal)
- Forest and Prairie Protection Act
- Historical Resources Act
- Public Lands Act
- Species at Risk Act (Federal)
- Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act (WAERNAHRA)
- Water Act
- Weed Control Act
- Wildlife Act

### **Regulations**

- Alberta Guide to Hunting Regulations
- Alberta Guide to Sportfishing Regulations
- The Public Lands Administration Regulation
- Recreational Access Regulation
- South Saskatchewan Regional Plan

### **Plans**

- Alberta Aquatic Invasive Species Early Detection Rapid Response Plan
- Alberta Ferruginous Hawk Recovery Plan (2024)
- Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan
- Alberta Peregrine Falcon Recovery Plan
- Alberta Trumpeter Swan Recovery Plan 2012-2017
- Alberta Whitebark Pine and Limber Pine Recovery Plan
- Barred Owl Conservation Management Plan 2016-2021
- Bull Trout Conservation Management Plan 2012-2017
- Harlequin Duck Conservation Management Plan 2010-2015
- Sprague's Pipit Conservation Management Plan – 2017 Update
- Alberta Westslope Cutthroat Trout Recovery Plan 2012-2017

## Strategies and Directives

- A guide to endangered and threatened species, and species of special concern in Alberta. Version 2
- Alberta Energy Information Letter 2003-25 Honouring Existing Mineral Commitments in Legislated Provincial Protected Areas
- Alberta Wetland Policy
- Alberta Wildlife Mitigation Strategy
- Alberta's Rangeland Grazing Framework
- Alberta's Strategy for the Management of Species at Risk
- Code of Practice for Watercourse Crossings
- *ERCB IL 2010-02*. Principles for Minimizing Surface Disturbance in Native Prairie and Parkland Areas
- Heritage Rangeland Operational Management Directive
- Master Schedule of Standards and Conditions
- Operating Standards for Alberta's Crown Land (Grazing Dispositions)
- Reclamation Criteria Guidelines
- Stewardship for Rangeland Sustainability

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## Appendix F: History

The Longview and Pekisko ranches are some of the oldest ranches in Alberta. The Longview ranch has the historic OH Ranch, which celebrated its 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023. The Pekisko ranch was once a part of the historic Bar U Ranch.

The Longview ranch is the headquarters for the entire OH Ranch. The OH Ranch has operations at four different locations: Longview, Pekisko, Dorothy, and Bassano. The Longview and Pekisko ranches are managed together. The Dorothy and Bassano ranches (which are not included in this Heritage Rangeland designation or conservation easement) are managed separately. The OH Ranch manages these four separate land holdings to complete their cattle breeding program.

Since 1987, a vigorous program to upgrade the ranch has been undertaken, as well as maintaining and preserving the history of the operation. The North West Mounted Police Station has been reconstructed, as the original was destroyed by fire in 1962. The cookhouse, which was originally constructed by the Ings in the 1800's, has also been restored to its original status.

An important aspect of the OH Ranch history is the continuation of traditional ranching methods. Cowboys continue to ride the range, moving cattle and doctoring sick animals in the open field by roping them from horseback. While modern equipment is available, horses remain the primary mode of transportation on the ranch.

The public land portions of the Longview and Pekisko sections of the OH Ranch were designated as Heritage Rangeland under the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas, and Heritage Rangelands Act* in the summer of 2008. The private land holdings of the Longview and Pekisko sections of the OH Ranch were officially placed under conservation easements in early 2009. The public land and private land continue to be managed as an operating ranch to conserve the native grassland ecosystems.