

# 2024 Coordinator Report

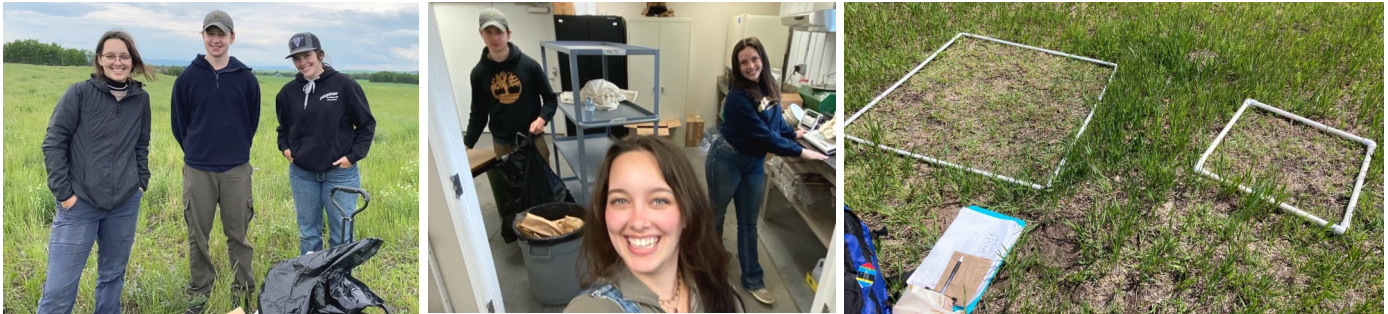
By Nadia Mori, PAg



**(1) The Peace Region Living Lab project** is a region-wide collaboration led by the Peace Region Forage Seed Association (PRFSA). The PRFA and six other producer groups from the AB and BC Peace Region have joined the PRSFA in this 5-year on-farm applied demonstration project.

Enhancing agroecosystem services in the Peace River Region is the focus of the Peace Region Living Lab (PRLL), with the goal of adoption of practices that improve productivity, profitability & environmental resiliency.

The PRFA monitors and manages 10 project sites. This summer we had amazing helpers with summer students Ella Bennett (PRFA), Liam Walsh (BC Grain) and Rylee Peck (BC Grain) who made all the many field visits possible. This project was started in fall 2022 and will continue until March 31, 2027.



PRLL sites: Ella, Liam and Rylee in the field (left) and lab (middle), and clippings to determine forage yield and plant composition (right).

## **(2) Evaluating the use of prescribed fire to rejuvenate forage pastures and its impact on soil health**

Prescribed fire can be an important tool to

- a) increase pasture and forage productivity in areas with unhealthy brush encroachment,
- b) remove hazardous fuel buildup as a preventative measure to severe wildfires, and
- c) reignite cultural burning practices in support of Indigenous food sovereignty.

Concerns around prescribed fire often include the potential loss of soil carbon. This project seeks to assess soil nutrient cycling following prescribed fire, with special attention on the soil microbiome.

Collaborators include Dr Jillian Bainard (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada) and Dr Sonja Leverkus (Northern FireWoRx). This project started in the fall of 2023 and will continue until March 31, 2027.

Funding for this project has been provided by the Government of Canada under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, the Canadian Cattle Association (BCRC), and the BC Hydro Agricultural Compensation Fund.



Dr Sonja Leverkus, Nadia Mori and Dr Jillian Bainard.



AAFC staff at sampling locations following a Rx fire.



Ardill Ranch Prescribed (Rx) Fire, April 2024 (left, middle & right)



# 2024 Coordinator Report

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## (3) Training and acquisition of wildfire response equipment in northeastern BC (Fire Schools & Fire Wagons)

Outcomes planned (at the beginning of the project):

- 1) Two wildland firefighting trailers (structural protection units) fully stocked with all appropriate gear for wildfire deployment,
- 2) 30-60 agricultural landowners trained & certified in BC Wildfire Service fire suppression courses using the purchased equipment,
- 3) training and implementation of proper maintenance & care of the acquired equipment (following each deployment, between seasons, and as part of an annual review system), and
- 4) maintaining a database of trained agricultural producers and facilitating the annual re-certification requirements.

This project was started in spring 2024 and will continue until March 2026. Funding for this project was provided by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

### EVENTS SUMMARY

**Winter Webinars:** Regenerative Grazing: builds healthy soils & profitable farms with Greg Judy from Greener Pastures Farm, and Pasture rejuvenation: how to get started with Dr Breeanna Kellin from the U of Saskatchewan. Past webinars are available through our online library through the Enhanced membership.

**Fire Schools:** 4 schools hosted at Aitken Creek and 2 schools hosted at Arras, training a total of 150 local people in S100 Basic wildfire suppression, S185 Fire entrapment avoidance, and ICS100. Instruction was provided by Dr Sonja Leverkus and her team from Northern FireWoRx with funding provided by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food through the Fire wagon & Fire school project.

**June Summer Tour:** weathering the drought, was held in the Pouce Coupe area featuring Lloyd Lintott (nose pump & forage corn), Fred Schneider (pasture fertilization & pressurized water system) and Dennis Gellings (stock-dog demo). Just over 60 people joined us for this successful full-day event.

**The AUGUST Grazing Series:** featuring Glenn Hogburg in the Progress area, Jack Thiessen along Aitken Creek, Ben Harrington & Tara Holmes north of Cecil Lake, and South Peace Grain in Dawson Creek. Themes included forest to pasture conversion, watering systems, cover crops, and peer-to-peer learning.

**Digging It: Soil Workshop Series:** with sponsorship from Petronas, the On-Farm Climate Action Fund & Peace Region Living Lab. A 3-day series held throughout September with lead instructors Rick Kabzems and Sandra Burton teaching hands-on training in soils classifying and working with soils of the Peace Region.

**Digesting Cowbytes:** a hands-on training session led by beef nutritionist Barry Yaremco hosted in October to learn the ins-and-outs of the Cowbytes ration balancing software. Funding support was provided by BCRC.

The year has been full and rich, with many experiences and successes. Of course, there were lessons learned and room for growth & improvement, but how boring would it be if we had already achieved perfection! I am grateful for the opportunity to be so directly involved with the support of the Peace Region forage and livestock industry and to serve the Peace River Forage Association in the role of coordinator where I get to work with an amazing team of contractors, innovative producer members, and a supportive board.



August 13th Reveal of Fire Wagon #1 (FW1)



April 26-27th Wildland Fire Training (5th of 6 schools)



June 20th Summer Tour: in the field at Schneider's



Aug 6th at Glenn Hogberg's

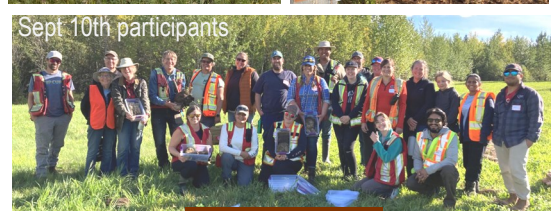
### AUG Grazing Series



Aug 13th at J Thiessen's



Aug 20th at Ben & Tara's



Sept 10th participants

### SEPT Soils Series



Sept 17th at Clark's



Sept 17th Forest Soil Pit