

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

## DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and  
Social Sciences

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

2003

### Letters to the Editor

Ralph Grossi

*American Farmland Trust*

William Parton

*Colorado State University*

Myron Gutmann

*University of Michigan*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Grossi, Ralph; Parton, William; and Gutmann, Myron, "Letters to the Editor" (2003). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 685.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch/685>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

The study published in the spring 2003 issue of the *Journal of Great Plains Research*, “Urban Sprawl in Great Plains Does Not Hurt Agriculture” stakes a superficial claim. Beneath a reported increase in eastern Colorado’s harvested land lies a deeper, more dangerous trend: Sprawling development along the Front Range is pushing agriculture onto less-productive, environmentally-sensitive land—land that requires more water in an increasingly arid West.

The study’s authors correctly identify that demand for water will only intensify over time. Since development brings a permanent demand for water, the stage is set for ever-fiercer battles between agriculturalists and developers over scarce water resources.

It’s natural to hope that farms and ranches can stay healthy and strong as our communities grow and prosper. That’s what we’re working toward. But none of us can afford to paint too rosy a picture of the real economic and environmental challenges that sprawl poses to our nation’s farmland—not just in the Great Plains, but everywhere.

**Ralph Grossi**, President  
American Farmland Trust  
1200 18th Street, NW Ste. 800  
Washington, DC 20036

\* \* \*

Dear Editor:

Ralph Grossi’s critique of our recent paper is unjustified in its assertion that we suggest that Urban Sprawl has little impact on agriculture. We never wrote, “Urban Sprawl in Great Plains does not Hurt Agriculture,” the expression used by Mr. Grossi. Instead, our article demonstrates that Urban Sprawl greatly reduces land in agriculture and alters the crops grown in those agricultural areas impacted by urbanization. In our balanced view of changes in agricultural activity since 1950, the positive impacts of urbanization include stable employment in the agricultural service sector and higher prices for some products. Negative impacts include decreases in harvested

land and total farmland, reductions in farm and ranch jobs, and income from animal production. Agriculture changed dramatically in Colorado during the second half of the 20th century, for many reasons including urban growth. Responsible science requires us to examine and understand that change and all the reasons behind it.

**William J. Parton**

Colorado State University

**Myron P. Gutmann**

University of Michigan

William Travis

University of Colorado

\* \* \*

Editor's Note:

The article referred to above was titled "Sustainability and Historical Land-Use Change in the Great Plains: The Case of Eastern Colorado," by William J. Parton, Myron P. Gutmann, and William R. Travis. *Great Plains Research* (Spring 2003) Volume 13 Number 1, pages 97-125.