

The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 19, NO.4 Winter 2006-2007

Grassroots Conservation at Work

President's Message

By Evanne Hunt

Turn your 6-acre prairie into 100 acres!

The Prairie Enthusiasts have applied for many Wisconsin state stewardship grants over the years. These grants require TPE to "match" up to 50% of the value of the grant with dollars or in-kind donations.

For example, suppose a 100 acre high-quality native remnant was available. TPE could apply for a Wisconsin state stewardship grant to purchase the remnant. Our in-kind match for the grant could consist of equally desirable habitat that matches the grant criteria. More importantly, land can be donated in one area of the state to support a project in another area of the state or thru in-kind donations of land or conservation easements. This is an extremely important ability.

This program rule allows members in most TPE chapters to contribute to the protection of high quality remnants throughout the state. Credit for the donated land can be "banked" for three years.

The opportunity to leverage several small, geographically distant, medium quality prairie remnants to protect a large high quality prairie may happen in the near future. If you believe you can participate, contact Jack Kussmaul (kussmaul@chorus.net), chair of the Land Protection Committee.

Protecting a Pocket-Prairie

By Britta Lee

Land prices in St. Croix County are among the highest in western Wisconsin, especially on Bass Lake - one of the largest lakes in the County. However, the Simon family, a brother and three sisters, chose to honor their mother's wishes and preserve their remnant prairie forever.



The 5-acre site, which is within earshot of Bass Lake, is a dry-mesic prairie that is home to many native grasses and flowers. The prairie species include: Little Bluestem, Big Bluestem, Black-Eyed-Susan, Indian Grass, Round-headed Bush Clover, Lead Plant, Arrow Leaf Aster, and many other native species. (Continued on page 6)

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Southwest Wisconsin	Jesse Bennett, 608-794-2724
Winnebago Land	Renae Mitchell, 262-473-2956

The Prairie Enthusiasts (TPE) is a grassroots organization of volunteers which is solely committed to the protection, management and restoration of native prairies and savannas in the Upper Midwest. To date, TPE has protected 1,479 acres that harbor at least five state or federally protected species through acquisitions, easements and management agreements. TPE has a stewardship program which provides active management to ensure the ongoing health of protected sites.

TPE is actively involved in planting prairie on its properties and on other conservation lands and has assisted both public agencies and private groups in these efforts. Thus far, more than 150 acres have been planted with seeds of prairie plants from local sources. In addition, TPE develops educational materials and provides presentations on prairie and savanna ecology, conservation and management for both children and adults.

TPE was incorporated in Wisconsin in 1987 as a private nonprofit, tax exempt corporation under section [501(c) 3] of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible.

TPE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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President	Evanne Hunt <i>St Croix Valley Chapter</i>
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The Prairie Promoter is a quarterly publication of The Prairie Enthusiasts. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without permission. We welcome submissions

*of letters, articles, announcements, artwork and photographs that are relevant to prairie and savanna ecosystems. Material should be typed; electronic submissions are strongly preferred. Writers who use computers can e-mail their submissions to jenkinma@uwplatt.edu. Use MS Word and do not format. Letters and articles may be edited for length or style. Computer disks, art, and photographs will be returned. Deadlines for submission of material are **March 4 (Spring issue – please note this deadline has been set back from Feb. 25)**; May 25 (Summer issue); August 25 (Fall issue); and November 25 (Winter issue).*

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

(Overlooking Elderberry Prairie)

By Renae Mitchell

After helping clean many plastic wading pools full of prairie seeds with Richard Oberle, Tanis Cuff and Ann Thering this weekend, I came away with a metaphor for the effectiveness of TPE. While global warming and so many other human-accelerated atrocities are being done to our planet, TPE is a group of folks who are working closely with Mother Nature to help increase her own efficiency and reverse the trends of other human forces. While she can spread seeds through a variety of means, we have found ways to ensure more seed is spread at a good time and place to ensure good soil contact and better germination. While she may cause a natural burn occasionally via a lightning strike, TPE burn crews provide a faster flame, just as our predecessors did in grasslands around the world. Likewise, there are folks in our organization who are helping me increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our organization and at this time of Thanksgiving I want to acknowledge as many as I can.

Our new President Evanne Hunt has been helping us move forward with our new committee structure and board meetings have thus become more efficient. We are still accepting members for the following important committees: Outreach and Education, Fund-raising and Land Stewardship. Evanne is working at better communications with our members through her email letters, so make sure we have your email address. Jim Rogala has taken over updating the website with useful information I send him about upcoming conferences and events - so put www.theprairieenthusiasts.org into your "favorites!"

As you may remember, we welcomed two new board members at-large last spring. Dr. Paul Jacobsen will be heading up our Outreach and Education committee and Attorney Jack Kussmaul has become the leader of our Land Protection Committee. These two committees will help us accomplish two of the critical aspects of our mission and help us grow the organization as well. Jack has been a great example of that metaphor of TPE as an efficient nurturer - he provided a generous matching grant that helped spur all of our hard-working Board Members and other kind friends of Jack's to provide well over \$10,000 for TPE - WAY to GO!!!

Now we are in the midst of our annual fund drive and we are off to a great start - over halfway to our goal of \$12,000 to help meet the operating expenses of The Prairie Enthusiasts.

THANK YOU SO MUCH to all the members who have been sending in your contributions to help keep us going!

All members received some Prairie Fact Sheets for your states that were put together by local experts, Rich Henderson, Jim Rachuy and Jaime Edwards - thanks! You also received

a list of some of our many accomplishments over the past 20 years. TPE will actually celebrate our 20th Anniversary in 2007 and I would love to hear of any ideas you may have to help us make the most of it!

The last two photography exhibitions were held at the Phipps Center for the Arts in Hudson and the library of UW-Platteville. Both held wonderful receptions that allowed us to reach out to new people in the communities to educate them about prairies and the work of The Prairie Enthusiasts. The St Croix Valley chapter worked with teachers and students to create meticulously measured prairie roots sculptures. They hung in the windows and lobby of the art center like modern art works but with a definite educational advantage! We greatly appreciate the talents and efforts of so many photographers, committee members and sponsors throughout our three state area! I will be sending the final report to chapter committees and to the WI Humanities Council by the end of the year.

We had a nice colorful article in the fall issue of a magazine called Northwest Quarterly. I have extra copies if anyone would like one. Rich Henderson and I were interviewed for a web radio program. You can hear it at www.friendsoffarrington.org. I've been developing a PowerPoint presentation in three parts which can be used by any chapter once it has been reviewed and approved by the new Outreach and Education Committee.

We had good press coverage for the 62 acre Shea Prairie dedication which was held on Oct. 21 in the Shea's garage due to rainy, windy weather. Our restoration ecologist, Amy Staffen has been out in the field weekly managing over 25 project sites. Other chapters have worked hard on land management and protection projects as well and I want to help you advertise these. I encourage you to let me know when I can help you celebrate these achievements and make the most of these opportunities to benefit the entire organization.

Last, but not least, I greatly appreciate working with our finance committee headed by Scott Fulton, our accountant Claudia Vlisides and auditor, Audrey McGhee, corporate treasurer, Kathy Henderson and membership coordinator Victoria Oberle, who all helped me finally land that Fiduciary-responsibility Fritillary I first talked about when I came to TPE over a year ago. We are now in good stead to move forward as an organization and I appreciate all of our member's generous spirits and confidence in my leadership as we move into the exciting new adventures ahead! Happy holidays and may all your stiff goldenrod wear fluffy caps of snow soon!!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prairie Restoration Workshop

Submitted by Cate Harrington

Madison Audubon Society and Pheasants Forever-Columbia County are conducting a two-day prairie restoration workshop on Saturday, February 17, 2007 (classroom), at Wisconsin Wildlife Federation Headquarters in Poynette and Saturday, August 4, 2007, (field day) at Madison Audubon Society's Goose Pond Sanctuary in Arlington.

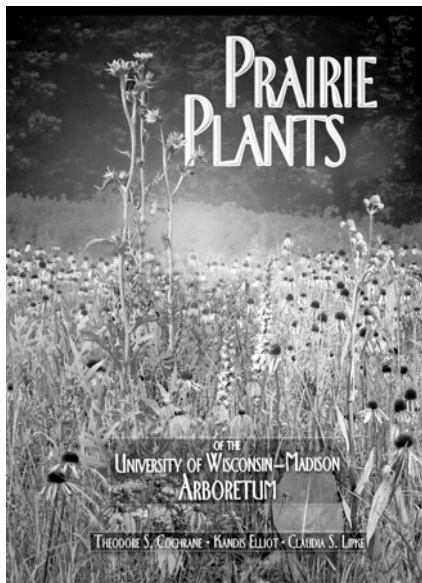
The workshop will include the fundamentals of prairie restoration and maintenance, food plot and winter cover establishment, and what programs are available to provide assistance.

Cost is \$20 per person or \$30 per couple. Lunches will be served. Reservations are required. Contact Mark Martin, W7468 Prairie Lane, Arlington, WI 53911; phone 608-635-4160 or by e-mail goosep@chorus.net for specific information and to reserve your spot.

New Book! Prairie Plants of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum

Submitted by Cate Harrington

Senior Academic Curator Ted Cochrane, with Senior Artists Kandis Elliot and Claudia Lipke, has completed a 3-year project, *Prairie Plants of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum*, a guide to 360 selected horsetails, ferns, rushes, sedges, grasses, shrubs, vines, weeds, and wildflowers. The book illustrates and describes native and introduced species that grow and bloom on the Arboretum prairies, and briefly discusses or casually mentions many additional species, infraspecific taxa, and hybrids. With comprehensive descriptions by Ted, full-color photos by Claudia, and layout and design by Kandis, the guide provides a beautiful and informative sample of the flora of the Arboretum and of the southern Wisconsin



landscape. The authors hope it will increase awareness and respect for our last remaining small prairie remnants, motivate readers to work for prairie preservation, and encourage the planting of native Wisconsin species in yards and gardens. This is a companion book to *Spring Woodland Wildflowers of*

the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum, authored by Andrew L. Hipp, also with photos by Claudia and layout and design by Kandis. *Prairie Plants* was published in late September and is available now at the University Bookstores and at the Arboretum store.

A New Conservation Partnership Introduces A High-Tech Approach to Wildlife Monitoring

Submitted by Andy T. Paulios, DNR

Washington, D.C. (November 7, 2006) - Today, the Natural Resource Monitoring Partnership-a new collaborative effort by 30 conservation organizations to collectively improve wildlife monitoring efforts-launched a new online system, using a searchable database to aid wildlife conservation efforts. These tools will save time and money, enhance state planning efforts and provide new opportunities for collaboration.

Monitoring is essential to making effective management decisions. The "Monitoring Locator" and "Protocol Library" were built to allow easy access to monitoring protocols throughout the U.S. and Canada and make it easy to find out what types of conservation monitoring is happening in a specific region or for a particular species.

Monitoring Protocol Library - An internet-accessible, searchable database that provides information on monitoring protocols and assessment methodologies organized for better reference and use. This is not a database of monitoring data or results, but rather a database of protocols. Designed to function as a library or catalog, it will be further developed and maintained by users, under the management of an archivist/librarian.

Monitoring "Locator" - An internet-based system that allows users to identify where and what kind of natural resource monitoring is being conducted within a particular area (e.g., state, county, province, or other selected geographic area). This system will continue to develop throughout coming months providing complete access to information about ongoing monitoring efforts according to the scales, target areas, and objectives specified by the user.

The Natural Resource Monitoring Partnership is a new collaborative effort by the natural resource management community to improve wildlife monitoring efforts for more effective evaluation and decision-making. Current participants include state, territory, provincial and federal natural resource management agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and academic institutions-including the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

For more information, view these tools and a complete list of participating organizations, please visit <http://nrmp.nbii.gov>.

Announcing the Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association!

Submitted by Ann Thering

The Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association is a chapter of the North American Butterfly Association (NABA), a group of butterfly enthusiasts that enjoys and works to conserve butterflies. At the next meeting on Sat., Feb. 17, at 10 a.m., in Madison (Alicia Ashman Public Library), Doug Taron (Chicago Academy of Sciences) will discuss the Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network's successful program. For more information about SWBA, including a list of 2007 field trips, visit <http://www.naba.org/chapters/nabawba/index.html> or email Ann Thering, therannc@yahoo.com

CONFERENCES

2007 TPE all Chapter Banquet and Prairie Conference

Save the Date! March 10, 2007

The St. Croix Valley and the Chippewa Savanna Chapters invite you to Menomonie for the **2007 TPE All-Chapter Banquet And Prairie Conference** on Saturday, March 10, 2007 at the UW-Stout Memorial Student Center.

Consider car-pooling or renting a bus to the banquet. A party bus could be a great bonding experience! You can also tap your chapter expertise to provide a land management workshop or geologic commentary during the trip.

The doors to the conference open at 8:00 a.m. when you can check-in at the registration desk. Enjoy a continental breakfast while you review your conference materials.

CONFERENCE

The conference starts at 9:00 a.m. with a history of Dunn County by local author and newspaperman John Russell.

We have an impressive list of conference topics and presenters for your enjoyment and education:

- Prairie Restoration for Beginners
- Blister Beetles
- How to Evaluate a Prairie
- Ralph's Talking Eggs
- Using Herbicides in Restoration and Management
- Determining the History of Your Land
- Myths of Prairie Restoration
- Photographing a Prairie
- Conservation Options Round Table
- Prairie Management Round Table

In addition, we have a Kid's Konference for children in grades K-6. This program consists of hands-on activities, games,

crafts, and stories centered on prairies. Program presenters and leaders include other prairie enthusiasts and experienced educators. Pre-registering is required so we know the ages and number of children to expect.

LODGING

We have blocked 25 rooms at the Holiday Manor Inn (\$60). The Friday night social hour and the Sunday TPE Board meeting will be held here. Also nearby are the Super8 (~\$60), Motel6 (~\$48), Comfort Inn (~\$70), and Country Inn & Suites (~\$109). The Oaklawn Bed and Breakfast (\$79) offers a special rate for reserving the "whole house". A complete list of lodging options will be sent with your registration confirmation.

ONLINE REGISTRATION

You will be able to register online from a link on the TPE website. Managed by UW-Stout Outreach Services, the online registration form accepts credit cards. You can also download a PDF version of the registration form and mail it with your check. Finally, registration forms will be mailed to all TPE members in January.

Confirmations will be sent within a week of Outreach Services receiving payment. If you don't hear from them, call the number on the form as soon as possible.

Look for more banquet and conference details on the website as they develop: www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org

December 13 and 14 Invasive Plant Symposium

Registration is open and the agenda is out for the Midwest Invasive Plant Symposium being held in Milwaukee, WI Dec. 13 and 14.

The North Central Weed Science Society (NCWSS), Midwest Invasive Plant Network (MIPN) and the Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin (IPAW) will cosponsor a two-day program (Dec. 13 and 14) on invasive plants in the Midwest. The program will be held during the NCWSS Annual Meeting at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Milwaukee, Dec. 12-14, 2006. IPAW and MIPN will also hold their annual meetings at the conference.

The Invasive Plants Symposium will give land managers and landowners the opportunity to meet with other land managers, researchers, extension agents, and herbicide and restoration company representatives to discuss the need for further research and products for invasive plant control.

Registration is \$40 for one day and \$60 for both days. Register on-line at www.ncwss.org. Select "Annual Meeting". You may also print out a registration form from the website and mail it in with a check. If doing this - mark the amount

you will be paying for the symposium (\$40/one day or \$60/two days) to the right of where you mark it on the form.

TPE Protects a Critical Piece of Our Prairie Heritage

Submitted by Cate Harrington

In August, the Empire-Sauk Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts conserved 62 acres of land called the Shea Prairie in eastern Iowa County. The purchase includes original pre-settlement prairie buffered by 54 acres of grassland, and a half-mile of Williams Creek, a cold-water trout stream.

The Shea Prairie is within the Mounds View Grassland, one of the three most significant concentrations of prairie sod and grassland bird habitat within the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area. It contains eight acres of original remnant prairie, 13 acres of stream and wetland habitat, and 36 acres of CRP grassland. There is great potential for restoring it all back to its original prairie and sedge meadow habitat. The property lies within an area that was once a large prairie that extended north to the Military Ridge and covered many thousands of acres.

Renae Mitchell, Executive Director of The Prairie Enthusiasts noted, "The Shea property is a biogeographical lynchpin connecting two critical pieces of this important prairie complex. We are grateful to the Prairie Enthusiast volunteers who discovered and helped clear brush from the remnant, to the Sheas for recognizing the conservation needs of this natural treasure, and to the state Stewardship Fund program, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever and our members who supported this protection effort."

The Military Ridge area, and especially the Mounds View Grassland, provide critical habitat for rare or declining grassland/prairie species such as regal fritillary butterflies, bobolinks, meadow larks, upland sandpipers, northern harriers, dickcissels, Henslow's sparrows, and grasshopper sparrows.

The sellers, John and Diane Shea, are pleased to see the land being conserved so that people will be able to experience the sights and sounds of the prairie and so that habitat for rare and declining species is protected. The Sheas gave The Prairie Enthusiasts a bargain sale.

The Nature Conservancy was instrumental in helping with the negotiations and obtaining the option. The Shea Prairie is just west of 276 acres the Conservancy bought from A to Z Farm Industries in 2005, which will eventually be transferred to The Prairie Enthusiasts for long-term protection and management.

"The Nature Conservancy is pleased to assist The Prairie Enthusiasts in conserving the Shea Prairie," said Steve Richter, the Conservancy's director of land management.

"Thanks to the good work of The Prairie Enthusiasts and local citizens, children today and future generations will have the opportunity to experience the beauty and diversity of Wisconsin's prairie heritage. We are privileged to work in this landscape where the citizens of Iowa County have been careful stewards of the land for generations."

The land was purchased through a combination of Knowles-Nelson Stewardship funds and private monies. Generous contributions to the project were made by the Dane and Iowa County Chapters of Pheasants Forever, Jim & Rumi O'Brien, Schurch-Thomson Prairie Trust, Gary & Pam Gates, Max & Shelley Lagally, Mark Leach, and Laureen & Ron Thorstad.

The property will be open to the public for hiking, bird-watching, fishing, and limited hunting of pheasant, turkey, and deer. The Prairie Enthusiasts will pay property taxes at agricultural use rates.

The Prairie Enthusiasts is part of a diverse partnership of local landowners; local citizen groups; conservation organizations; local, state, and federal agricultural and resource agencies; and land trusts working together to conserve important grassland habitat, open space, public access and cultural heritage in the 50,000-acre Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area in Dane and Iowa counties.

Protecting a Pocket-Prairie

(Continued from page 1)

West Wisconsin Land Trust partnered with The Prairie Enthusiasts (TPE) to permanently protect the Simons' unique and beautiful remnant prairie. This partnership allowed the Simon family to donate the land to West Wisconsin Land Trust, while The Prairie Enthusiasts will manage the plant community on the property.

"The prairie is not large, but it is a remnant prairie and has a great base of native species to start from," said Harvey Halverson, a member of TPE and DNR Wildlife Biologist for St. Croix County. Evanne Hunt, President of the St. Croix Valley chapter of TPE went on to say, "This is definitely a WIN-WIN situation for our local prairie heritage!"

Management of the property will include the elimination of invasive and non-native species, burning of the prairie, and eventually a species enhancement project. Currently the prairie boasts an above average species count for the increasingly developed St. Croix County area.

Thanks to a creative partnership between WWLT and TPE, as well as the commitment of the Simon family, people from Minnesota and Wisconsin will be able to enjoy the rich diversity of another remnant of our western prairie.

West Wisconsin Land Trust has conserved 20,000 acres of prairies, bluffs, forests, shoreline, and family farms

throughout 18 counties of west-central and northwestern Wisconsin. Over 800 members support this important work, so future generations may enjoy the scenic landscapes that define western Wisconsin. For more information about West Wisconsin Land Trust, please call (715) 235-8850 or visit www.wwlt.org.

The Prairie Enthusiast's Conservation Toolkit - Acquisition and Conservation Easements

The first in a series of articles on our protection and management policies and procedures
By Renae Mitchell

I was surprised to learn that many of our Prairie Enthusiasts members and supporters did not know that we are a Land Trust. I have heard from generous members who would like to someday donate their prairies to TPE through their wills or are considering putting an easement on their lands to prevent future development from ruining the remnants they have worked to restore. There are many aspects to consider with such forms of conservation and our board has established a Land Protection Committee, led by Jack Kussmaul, which has begun reviewing and recommending policies for board approval. This series of articles will help address the use of land protection tools, such as conservation easements.

We are a Land Trust because we hold lands through acquisition by donation or purchase and we also hold conservation easements by the same means. We therefore have greater control over how these precious prairie and oak savanna remnants are preserved and cared for in perpetuity than when we merely help manage a site for a public or private entity. Being a Land Trust is a great responsibility that requires sound policies and recognition of our duties as a trusteeship.

Not all chapters are interested in owning land and that is fine. We have several other aspects to our mission, including management and education. However, as an entire organization, we still have the options afforded to a Land Trust because we are legally organized as one. Eventually there will be national accreditation process for all land trusts and we need to follow certain established standards and procedures as set out by the National Land Trust Alliance (www.lta.org). We are members of The National Land Trust Alliance and Gathering Waters Conservancy, an umbrella organization for land trusts in Wisconsin.

Currently, The Prairie Enthusiasts, Inc. owns 11 sites totaling more than 300 acres. We are near closing on several hundred acres more. All contain important original remnant or restored

prairies and/or oak savannas. The Prairie Enthusiast also holds conservation easements on four properties. Of the lands we own or hold easements on three are in Illinois and the rest are in southern Wisconsin. Negotiations for all land purchases and easements are kept strictly confidential until completion of the transaction unless the landowner desires that the efforts be made public.

Most TPE owned lands and easements were donated or purchased through a combination of cash donations from TPE donors and partners like The Nature Conservancy and Pheasant Forever and matched with grants from the WI Knowles -Nelson Stewardship Fund. Depending on the local situation, The Prairie Enthusiasts may or may not pay property taxes on the land and it may or may not be open to the public. We hold liability insurance on all our lands.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. It allows a landowner to continue to own and use their land and sell it or pass it on to heirs. The landowner does give up some rights such as the right to build additional structures or plant trees in the portion of the property containing the natural area. Future owners also will be bound by the easement's terms. The land trust is responsible for making sure the easement's terms are followed. An easement may apply to just a portion of the property, and need not require public access. It must be monitored annually for compliance with all the restrictions in the contract. TPE has donated or negotiated several conservation easements with other organizations, like the Natural Land Trust of Illinois since the same organization cannot both own the property and hold an easement.

To qualify for the favorable federal income and estate tax consideration that goes with donating an easement, it is essential that the easement meet some public purpose which, in our case, is always the protection of the natural area containing



a high-quality prairie and/or oak savanna. In August 2006 legislation was enacted increasing the tax benefit for donations of conservation easements.

Chapters initiate the consideration of lands for permanent protection through acquisition or easements. The Board of Directors recently established a set of criteria for deciding whether or not to pursue land protection projects. As we use these criteria we will refine the process but it is a helpful tool in the crucial process of assessing the value of protection versus the costs to the organization and the likelihood of our ability to properly care for each property we protect. Unlike many other conservation organizations, and are committed to finding volunteer help or grant funds to properly steward the fire-dependent ecosystems on these remnants.

The Finance and Land Protection committees of our Board are working to set up Endowment Funds and policies regarding the long-term protection of these properties. The Fund-raising committee will help establish goals to find the money for maintenance of these properties before we can accept donations of land or conservation easements.

Tax Incentives to Donate Land Have More Than Doubled!

By Michelle Dingwall

With the signing the Pension Protection Act on August 17, 2006 the income tax incentives to donate a land protection agreement have more than doubled. Now when landowners preserve their land, they can take up to a 50% deduction on their adjusted gross adjusted income until the appraised value of the donation is used up or for the next 16 years! Further, qualifying Farmers and Ranchers* can receive a 100% tax deduction on their adjusted gross income for the next 16 years!

The time is *now* however, because these new incentives only apply to properties conserved in 2006 and 2007.

The following example shows how this new law significantly increases the benefits for landowners:

Landowner Adjusted Gross Income = \$100,000

Conservation Easement Donation (appraised value) = \$800,000

Previous Law: Owner could deduct \$30,000/year for 6 years = \$180,000 total allowed deductions (amount of donation unused = \$620,000)

New Law: Owner deducts \$50,000/year for 16 years = \$800,000 total allowed deductions (amount of donation unused = \$0)

New Law for Qualifying Farmer/Rancher: Owner deducts \$100,000/year for 8 years = \$800,000 total deductions (100% of donation used in 8 years)

Many conservationists see this as a landmark victory for preserving our remaining farms and natural areas. Landowners are now being rewarded with these new tax incentives, for their generous and long lasting gifts of land conservation agreements. For more information about these new incentives, or about conserving your land, contact Renae Mitchell at tpedirector@idcnet.com, (262) 473-2956 or West Wisconsin Land Trust at (715) 235-8850 or visit www.wwlt.org.

*Defined as someone who receives more than 50% of his/her income from "the trade or business of farming".

Field Trip Ideas?

By Rich Henderson

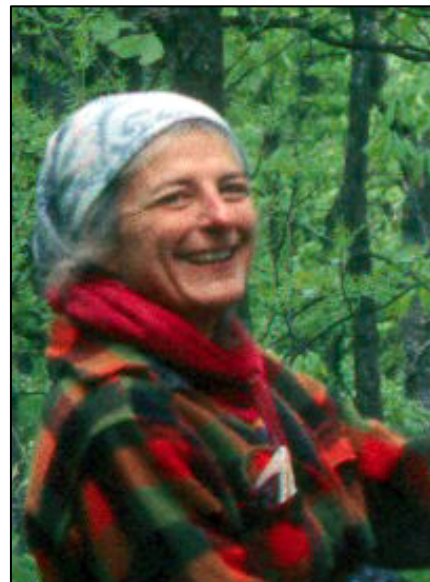
It's time to start thinking about field trip tours. Would you like a guided tour of your favorite prairie, sedge meadow, savanna, or oak woodland? Would you be willing to share with others your expertise of some aspect of natural history or your knowledge of a favorite natural area? If so, please contact your local chapter's field trip coordinator with your thoughts and ideas before March 1.

If you don't know who the local coordinator is, contact Victoria Oberle (tpe@tds.net) to find out.

EMPIRE – SAUK CHAPTER

Volunteer Focus—Jan Ketelle

By Kathy Cartwright



Jan Ketelle has volunteered with The Prairie Enthusiasts and other conservation organizations for many years. "My paid job is working as a hospital nurse...This is rewarding but stressful work. So getting outside and having my spirit renewed by Mother Nature has helped keep a balance in my life."

Jan became interested in TPE when she met Gary Eldred and Walter Mirk at a conference at the UW Arboretum. Her first work party was to Avoca Prairie. She did not know a single prairie plant. "Gary showed me three plants, told me their names and I collected those seeds....the next time I went, I

learned a couple more plants. ...I've never taken a formal class in ecology or botany. But I have taken advantage of TPE field trips to learn from the experts who lead the trips."

There are a lot of things that keep Jan volunteering with TPE. Among them are the opportunity to learn new things and skills, the exchange of ideas, the camaraderie of the work parties, the feeling of accomplishment, and the welcoming leaders of the work parties and field trips. "And just being outdoors, experiencing each season, the birds, butterflies and plants gives me hope."

Recent Donations to Empire-Sauk Chapter (August–October 2006)

The following donations were made to the Empire-Sauk Chapter during August, September, and October 2006. These are donations made in addition to membership dues.

\$500	CUNA Mutual Group Foundation unrestricted (in recognition of Richard Oberle's volunteerism)
\$1,000	Max & Shelley Lagally, Shea Prairie acquisition
\$12,000	Pheasants Forever – Dane County Shea & Losenegger Prairie acquisitions

Thank you to all donors. Your contributions help locate, protect, and care for the remnant prairies, sedge meadows, savannas, and open oak woodlands of our area.

Fall and Winter Work Parties

The Empire-Sauk Chapter continued its efforts to nurse endangered ecosystems back to health and to expand their acreage with restoration plantings. Fifteen work parties were held in September, October, and November to collect and clean seed, and remove trees and brush. Seven more are scheduled in December, and more will be scheduled in January and February 2007. When the snow arrives, we will be burning the many brush piles that have accumulated. So, stock up on marshmallows and hotdogs, and get ready for some warm outdoor winter exercise. Volunteers are always needed and appreciated, (i.e., homemade cookies will be provided at most work parties). Volunteer hours from these work parties are being used as match to earn several land management grants that TPE has been awarded. Depending upon the site and the grant source, each hour you contribute may generate another 3 to 6 hours of paid contract work.

The remnants we are working on this fall and winter include the Ripp Prairies north of Waunakee (includes a healthy population of the very rare state-endangered *Prenanthes aspera*), Underwood/Schurch-Thomson/Voss Prairies south of Blue Mounds, Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie, Schluckebier Sand Prairie near Sauk City, Walking Iron County Park, Mazomanie Bluff, Swenson Prairies in eastern Iowa County, Kalscheur Oak Savanna south of Hollandale, Shea Prairie south of Blue Mounds, Story Creek Wetlands southeast of Oregon, and Smith Drumlin Prairies near Cambridge. Be on

the lookout for fliers, e-mails and other notifications of work parties, or simply check the Empire-Sauk Chapter page of the TPE website (www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org). If you wish to be on notification lists, contact Empire-Sauk Chapter volunteer coordinator, Kathy Cartwright (608-839-5148 or kcartwright@charterinternet.net).

Over \$50,000 Worth of Seed Collected & Cleaned

By Rich Henderson

Even though the chapter is still looking for someone to coordinate seed collecting and planting (any interest out there?), the Empire-Sauk Chapter still managed to pull off another very productive season of seed collecting and cleaning. Special thanks go to Richard Oberle and Tanis Cuff for heading up the seed cleaning operation and to the many volunteers who assisted them. Thank you also to the 43 volunteers who put in over 280 hours of seed collecting.

NOTE: We very much need a person to step forward to get our seed collecting, cleaning, and planting program fully up and running. If you are interested, please contact Rich Henderson (845-7065). You don't need to know everything about seed collecting and cleaning. You just need to be an organizer. We have over 400 acres to plant at the Mounds View Grassland alone over the next 10 years or so; most of the other areas we manage need seed for buffer areas and spots cleared of brush and trees.

Our chapter collected and processed a minimum of \$46,400 worth of seed this past season (84 species, and approximately 153 pounds of clean seed). Missing from this total are seeds from 38 species collected at Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie (an effort headed up by site stewards Tom and Kathie Brock) worth another several thousand dollars. In addition, our chapter cleaned another \$2,400 worth of seed that the Southwest Wisconsin Chapter harvested from their Hollandale seed orchard. Much of the seed TPE volunteers collected went, or is going, to plantings in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA), including plantings at Schurch-Thomson Preserve, A to Z, Underwood's, Goplin's, Powell Prairie, and Nature Conservancy preserves. We also will be providing seed to Pleasant Valley Conservancy (Brocks), Pleasure Valley Conservancy (Wades), Steege/Euclide Prairies, and the Goodman Campus savanna restoration near Verona. Some of the MRPHA seed will also be going into the establishment of seed production beds or seed orchards. The purpose of these seed orchards is to produce seed from local genetic sources, and then use the resulting production for prairie plantings within the MRPHA and other projects in southwest Wisconsin, especially for plantings being done near native prairie remnants. In fact, our maturing seed orchard at Underwood produced an estimated \$28,500 worth of seed this year. This represents 85 pounds of seed from 44 species. We are expecting even more seed and more species to be on line next year. The value of the volunteer hours put into the seed orchard seed this past year, based on the retail worth of the seed collected, worked out to over \$130/hour. I hope the 22

volunteers who helped with maintenance and seed collecting at the orchard considered it to be a worthwhile endeavor.

Donations Sought for Annual Raffle/Auction

If you wish to contribute items to the Empire-Sauk Chapter for the annual raffle/auction fundraiser, please contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065). The banquet and raffle/auction are the weekend of March 10, 2007. See details in banquet announcement. Note the deadlines for registering items.

Empire-Sauk Chapter Board Meetings

January 23, 6:45 PM at Middleton Public Library, 7425 Hubbard Avenue. All members are welcome.

March 13, 6:45 PM. Location to be determined.

PRAIRIE SMOKE CHAPTER

2006 Highlights

The Prairie Smoke Chapter has had a very active and successful year. Highlights include...

Membership

Our membership continues to soar, as we recently hit 160 memberships (239 members), which is a 271% increase since we began our membership campaign in July, 2004.

Election of Officers for 2007

At our November annual meeting, the following people were elected as officers for 2007:

BOARD POSITIONS	
President	Dan Mueller
Vice-President	Bonnie Maffitt
Secretary	Andrea Mueller
Treasurer	Dave Edwards
BOARD MEMBERS	
Joel Dunnette	
Ruthanne Yaeger	
Barb Nigon	
Jeff Summerfield	
Keith Baker	
NON-BOARD POSITIONS	
Membership Coordinator	Dave Edwards
Newsletter Editor	Jaime Edwards
Webmaster	Sharon Kaufman

Cost Share Program

This year, the Prairie Smoke Chapter started a very successful cost-share program, in which landowners could get help (both physical and financial) with prairie and savanna restoration and management. PSC member Jaime Edwards was able to secure a deal with the Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC) in which their work crew of three to four well-trained MCC members would provide 12 ten-hour days of work to our members. In this arrangement, the landowner picked up

12.5% of the cost, while Prairie Smoke and MCC (some donated time) picked up the rest.

We accepted applications from our members and got 12 responses. The work took place in October and November and included cutting and spraying of buckthorn, honeysuckle, prickly ash, box elder and cedars as well as frost seeding. Landowner response was very positive and we anticipate trying to continue this program in 2007.

Prescribed Burning Class

On October 5, 2006, Jaime Edwards presented a prescribed burning workshop, with 32 people showing up for the 2.5 hour event. Over the past five years, Prairie Smoke has trained over 200 people in prescribed burning techniques and safety.

Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning has been the hallmark of our chapter since we formed in the 1980s as an offshoot of the Chatfield Fish & Game Club. Our chapter has its own burn equipment and recently purchased more. We have determined that we now have enough burn equipment to have three sets out at once.

Our burn totals for 2006 were 250 acres burned for 25 landowners. All total, 148 volunteers provided 329 volunteer hours to prescribed burning. This is after we set a record in 2005 with over 300 acres burned.

Seed Collecting

Prairie Smoke Chapter President Joel Dunnette once again led seed collecting trips from August through November at Chester Woods Park and Frontenac State Park. Nine seed collecting trips produced a lot of seed, but more importantly it helped educate the 25 members and 30 non-members (IBM employees and Sentence-to-Serve) who attended these events. Our members donated 75 volunteer hours to seed collecting, while non-members donated 85 hours.

Field Trips

Twelve members toured Hayden Prairie in Iowa on June 16th. Twenty-five members enjoyed an evening of prairie plant identification at President Joel Dunnette's house on July 26th.

Summer Picnic/Fall Potluck

In August, 55 members showed up for the annual picnic and hike at Chester Woods Park.

In November, 36 people attended the annual meeting, potluck, and get-together. At the annual event, we elected officers, watched a powerpoint presentation on prairie plants, and were given an equipment demonstration.

Political Involvement

On October 10th, the Prairie Smoke Chapter co-sponsored the Rochester City Council/Mayoral Candidate Forum, which was attended by approximately 40 people. Questions focused on conservation and the environment, with President Joel Dunnette serving as the moderator.

Prairie Work Days

Prairie Smoke Chapter Vice President Sue Wieseler led parsnip and salvage work days at Northwest Prairie Park in Rochester, which were attended by 22 individuals resulting in about 30 volunteer hours of work. In addition, Sue had an additional 70-80 hours out there this season.



A Prairie Smoke Chapter volunteer working on the Northwest Prairie Park in Rochester.

TPE Conference

In March, Prairie Smoke hosted the 2006 Spring TPE Conference in Lanesboro, with 297 people taking part in some/all of the event.

Equipment Purchases

In 2006, we have purchased two chainsaws, a brush saw, weed wrenches, and a variety of spray equipment. An equipment demonstration for members was presented at our annual meeting, potluck, and get-together. Chainsaw and brush saw training/safety classes are in the works for 2007.

Grants & Financial Highlights:

2004 US Fish & Wildlife Grant (\$70,300) - Prairie Smoke funded several bluff prairie restoration projects with this grant. We helped clear cedars off Magellssen Bluff in Rushford, and then assisted with prescribed burning on this site. Additionally, we helped restore over 70 acres of rare bluff prairie habitat in Fillmore and Houston Counties. Our grant helped the DNR with their efforts to restore bluffs in the same area.

2006 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Grant (\$99,500) – This grant will focus on 4 remnant areas that contain endangered or threatened species. Once the funds for this grant are set, we will continue the great work we started in the Rushford area,

as well as move into some new areas in SE Minnesota. We should be able to accomplish a lot of great work with these funds.

Prairie Smoke became a partner with the MN DNR and National Wild Turkey Federation for a State Wildlife Grant to restore bluff prairies and oak savannas on state land. That work will be done during the winter of 2006.

Prairie Stewardship Grants (\$5,000) - Prairie Smoke successfully completed the DNR Prairie Stewardship Planning Assistance Grant. Under this \$5,000 grant, we completed two management plans, and provided several landowner workshops on burning, plant id, and seed collection. We applied for a second round of this grant for 2007, and were successful. So, we will be completing similar work for the upcoming year. Individual members donated over \$1,700 to our chapter, including one \$300 matching grant from IBM. We financially ended the year in the black for the TPE conference (\$2,500) due to corporate sponsorships.



Prairie Smoke Chapter volunteers pulling parsnip at the Northwest Prairie Park in Rochester.

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