

www.theprairieenthusiasts.org

The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 20, NO.4 Winter 2007

Grassroots Conservation at Work

President's Message

By Evanne Hunt

You have a wonderful opportunity this winter to help your chapter. During the winter, the frozen ground protects the dormant prairie plants' roots. This makes winter a wonderful time to do serious work on our prairie remnants.

Most chapters take advantage of this and schedule work parties from December to March. The Southwest Wisconsin and St. Croix Valley Chapters have listed work party dates in the Chapter News section of this issue of *The Prairie Promoter*. If you belong to another chapter, please contact your chapter leaders to find out when and where these "parties" are to take place.

Several chapters, including Empire Sauk, St. Croix Valley and the Prairie Smoke Chapter, have received grants from the State, the Department of Natural Resources and/or US Fish and Wildlife to work on these remnants. This grant money enables the chapter to pay contractors to do work unsuitable for volunteers. However, most of these grants require the chapter to provide "in-kind" contributions.

Some state and federal grants require matching funds. Sometimes these funds can be in-kind and sometimes they must be a percentage of the total grant. In-kind means a payment for goods or services with something other than money.

State Stewardship Grants are awarded for up to 50% of a project's cost. The other 50% can be non-cash donations such as materials, equipment use, services, and labor. Volunteer labor is valued at \$5.35 per hour.

Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) grants require the landowner to provide cash for at least 25% of the total project cost. Again, the "in-kind" match can be labor,

supplies, and equipment. The hourly value of donated labor is \$12 per hour!

Your participation at these work parties is valuable. In many cases, every hour of volunteer time that you put in can be leveraged into 3-7 hours of paid contract labor. Contact your chapter leaders and ask how you can help.

Our Newest Preserve: Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie!

By Tom and Kathie Brock

It's official. The Prairie Enthusiasts is now the proud owner of Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie, a State Natural Area and one of the highest quality prairie remnants in southern Wisconsin. TPE has managed the prairie for the last five years under an agreement with The Nature Conservancy. In mid-August, the Conservancy transferred title to TPE.

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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.

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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 articles, announcements, artwork and photographs that are relevant to prairie and savanna ecosystems. Mail to local chapter editorial volunteers or e-mail submissions to jesse@nasw.org. 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); May 25 (Summer issue); August 25 (Fall issue); and November 25 (Winter issue).

If you would prefer to receive electronic notification of the newsletter please email Victoria at TPE@TDS.net.

This prairie once ranked among the top ten natural areas in Dane County in private ownership. Plant ecologist John Curtis used it as an outdoor classroom and as a study site for the *Vegetation of Wisconsin*. The University of Wisconsin-Madison Herbarium has numerous collections for this site, some dating back many years. The earliest collections that can be positively identified are those of J.R. Heddle, which were made August 3, 1916. Other collections were made in 1925, 1931, 1950, 1959, 1960 and 1965. Professor Hugh H. Iltis made the 1965 collection and also carried out a controlled burn that same year.

Land use history

Original land surveyor records indicate that the preserve was probably treeless prairie prior to settlement, except in the southwest corner where the vegetation graded into oak savanna or open woodland.

Although the preserve was part of the William Rettenmund farm, it was probably never plowed. The Bordner land use survey from the 1930s classifies most of the preserve as "permanent pasture." However, because of the way the surveyors' lines run, a major county highway separates this parcel from the rest of the Rettenmund land, limiting its accessibility by cattle. Also, the shallow bedrock discourages lush pasture growth. A narrow band along the lower portion of the hill (now being restored to mesic prairie) was cropped before the Conservancy acquired the site, but the rest of the site was essentially untouched.

William Rettenmund preserved this prairie for over 40 years. A plant survey was done (presumably by UW personnel) in 1969 and Mr. Rettenmund granted conservationists permission to study the prairie and conduct management activities, including controlled burns. However, he observed a marked "decline" in the prairie during his ownership, and both he and his wife wanted to see it preserved and well managed.

This desire led him to sell his land to the Nature Conservancy at below market value. When selling the land, Mr. Rettenmund commented that he did not expect to be remembered for farming the land, but he will certainly be remembered, for generations to come, for protecting the prairie.

The State Natural Areas office initially contacted the Rettenmunds in 1981, and serious discussions about purchase began in 1984. Rich Henderson played a major role in these discussions. Both he and Mark Martin worked hard to convince the Conservancy to acquire this site. At that time, about 40 percent of the site had been invaded by shrubs, aspen and other trees. The Conservancy acquired the property in 1986 using funds

provided by the Madison Audubon Society, and in 1989 it was dedicated as a State Natural Area.

Early restoration work

State Natural Areas crews and Conservancy volunteers began restoration work soon after the Conservancy acquired the prairie. (Rich Henderson was the site steward for the first several years.) Controlled burns occurred at regular intervals; weeds were hand pulled; and aspen, sumac and non-native honeysuckle and buckthorn were removed. Trees along the perimeter of the preserve were cut as were cherry trees, honeysuckle and buckthorn on neighboring land (with the owner's permission). The Conservancy also rebuilt the fence running east-west along the neighbor's pasture. During the first few years of restoration work, the State Natural Areas Board had a policy against the use of herbicide on State Natural Areas. Therefore, considerable re-growth of woody plants occurred.

In the late 1990s, modest volunteer work parties visited the site once or twice a year. Work alternated between primarily brush clearing with herbicide treatment and seed collection. However, these limited volunteer activities were insufficient to control woody growth and by the end of the 1990s, brush and tree growth on the south part of the preserve had begun to crowd out prairie vegetation.

In addition, sweet clover (*Melilotis alba*) had become a major invasive plant (possibly stimulated by the regular controlled burns).

Enter the Prairie Enthusiasts

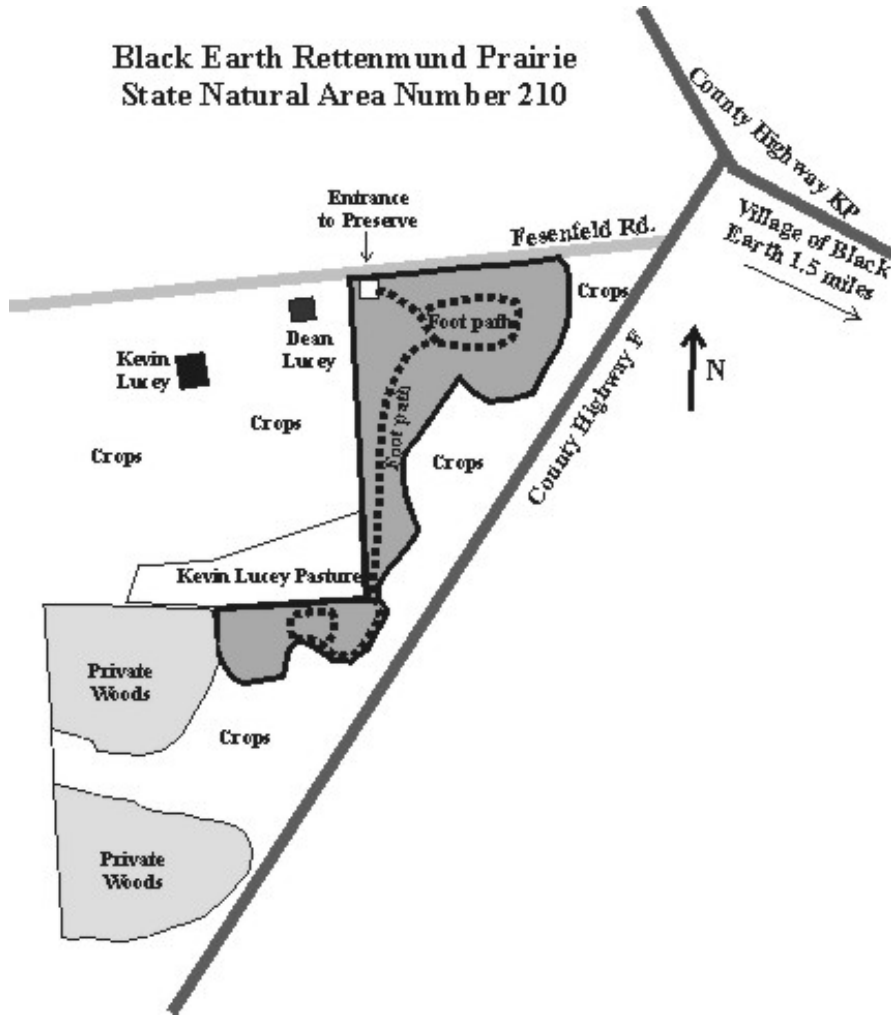
In 2000, Kathie and Tom Brock re-initiated extensive restoration work on the preserve. They instituted volunteer work parties on a monthly basis. In the winter, volunteers focused on brush control, especially in the south unit. In the summer, volunteers focused on sweet clover removal. The Prairie Enthusiasts also began managing all controlled burns.

Unfortunately, volunteer activities were not sufficient to bring the preserve to its fullest potential.

Outside contractors were hired using stewardship grants and support from the Savanna Oak Foundation, Inc. The Savanna Oak Foundation, Inc. has also sponsored UW-Madison interns at the site since 2003. Degraded areas of the prairie have responded positively to brush and weed control and controlled burns. However, keeping the sweet clover and woody vegetation under control demands continued vigilance. To this end, TPE is establishing a permanent endowment to support land stewardship activities at Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie in perpetuity.

The Nature Conservancy has committed to provide "seed" money to get the endowment started. Contributions to this fund can be made through the Empire-Sauk Chapter.

Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie has an odd shape as a neighbor's pasture juts into the south unit. Although the neighbors, Kevin and Dean Lucey, no longer use this pasture for cattle, it remains a source of sweet clover seed. Fortunately, the Luceys have helped mitigate this problem. For the past five years, Dean has generously mowed the major sweet clover infestation at the most favorable time for eliminating seed set. Kevin has



permitted us to burn his pasture during our regular burn of the south unit. As a result, the Lucey Pasture itself is reverting to prairie with lots of little bluestem and occasional populations of butterfly milkweed and shooting star. Even one wood lily plant has flowered in this pasture.

Outreach activities

School groups use the Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie extensively because it is located so close to Madison. Wisconsin Heights School District has used this site for class visits and summer enrichment courses. Numerous University of Wisconsin-Madison classes visit the site for field trips. Field trips also have occurred during national meetings held in Madison, such as the Natural Areas Association and the North American Prairie Conference.

Many researchers from UW-Madison and elsewhere have conducted studies at the prairie. In addition, visitors from universities in other states occasionally come to carry out specific projects. All research studies at Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie require a permit because the site is a State Natural Area. The Prairie Enthusiasts will now issue these permits in coordination with the SNA program.

Visitors come to the prairie from all over Wisconsin and nearby states to see the famous wood lily bloom in mid-June. The Madison Audubon Society jointly sponsors an annual field trip with TPE at the time of the wood lily bloom which has enjoyed high attendance (25-40 participants).

Flora

A species checklist compiled by Rich Henderson in 1993 comprised 178 species, quite a large number for such a small site (16 acres). In addition to wood lily, plants of interest include large populations of wood betony (*Pedicularis canadensis*), *Asclepias tuberosa*, *Amorpha canescens*, *Comandra umbellata*, *Hypoxis hirsuta*, *Phlox pilosa*, *Heuchera richardsonii*, *Liatrix aspera*, *Liatrix cylindracea*, *Polygala senega*, *Dodecatheon meadii*, *Potentilla arguta*, *Solidago ptarmacoides*, *Aster oolentangiensis*, *Aster sericeus*,

Veronicastrum virginicum, *Spiranthes cernua*, *Sporobolus heterolepis*, *Stipa spartea*, *Silphium laciniatum*, and prairie willow. Special Concern species include *Pediomelum esculentum*, *Zigadenus elegans*, and *Carex richardsonii*.

The following state-listed species originally recorded at this site have not been found in recent years: *Cirsium hilli* and *Orobanche uniflora*. Another state listed species, *Agalinis gattereri*, was “lost” for a few years but TPE stalwart Jim Sime has recently found a modest population and has provided coordinates so that monitoring can continue.

Although there are good prairie grasses, like most high quality remnants of original prairie, Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie is primarily a forbs-rich prairie, which is perhaps why it attracts so many visitors.



Compass plant at Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie. Photo by Tom Brock.

Plans for the future

By accepting title to Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie, The Prairie Enthusiasts have accepted responsibility for preserving, restoring and maintaining it at its highest level. Controlled burns are only a start. Sweet clover control, requiring many hours of paid and volunteer labor from June to August, must continue. Invasive brush also continues to be a problem, especially in some of the erstwhile wooded areas. During the past four years, participation at work parties has ranged from a one to 15 volunteers, with an average of four or five. Perhaps because the prairie is perceived to be in “good shape,” participation in work parties has fallen off during the last few years. We owe it to ourselves and our predecessors to continue to maintain this outstanding prairie at its highest level.

Former crop area under restoration

As mentioned, one small area of the prairie was cropped. Through the years, smooth brome gradually took over. Since one must walk through this field to reach the remnant prairie, it behooves us to bring it back to prairie again. Four years ago, we initiated restoration work on

this approximately one-acre tract. Burning and overseeding (using seed collected elsewhere on the site) led to only modest success. Therefore, we adopted a technique suggested by Jim Sime. We burned the site in early December to remove all the thatch. In early spring, when the cool-season grasses became visible, the local co-op sprayed the whole tract with glyphosate. A few days later, we seeded the prairie with a good mixture of prairie grasses and forbs collected from the site the previous fall. The herbicide treatment effectively eliminated the cool season grasses, and many prairie plants began to appear. Since then, we have continued annual burns and overseeding. Now in the third growing season since herbicide treatment, a substantial number of prairie species have become established. We plan to continue burning and seeding for several more years.

Annual field trips will continue. Although the main focus is to show off the prairie in its early summer glory, we also use this field trip to discuss invasive plant control. Visitors are surprised to observe such a high-quality prairie still suffering from invasive plant incursions. We will continue to foster university research and teaching. The permitting system will ensure that researchers leave the prairie as they have found it.

Simon Prairie to be Managed by St. Croix Valley Chapter

By Jeff Holmquist

Managing Editor, New Richmond News

A small reminder of the area's past will forever be protected, thanks to the generosity of a local family.

Simon Prairie is the newest addition to a growing list of protected lands owned by the West Wisconsin Land Trust. The Trust now holds title to 377 acres in St. Croix County, 3,103 acres in Pierce County and 2,185 acres in Polk County.

The property, east of Bass Lake on 140th Avenue near Boardman, is a "pocket prairie remnant" that is home to native grasses that have all but disappeared from the local landscape. Less than one tenth of one percent of the original vast expanses of prairie remains in the county today.

The Coughlin and Simon families recently donated the local property in an effort to prevent development and to protect the native plants found there.

"We have so few prairie remnants in St. Croix County," said Harvey Halvorsen, private lands wildlife biologist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural

Resources. "The permanent protection of each and every one is a stepping stone to preserving our prairie heritage."

Halvorsen said the original surveyor's land survey notes that in the mid-1850s the Simon land was covered with prairie, interspersed with stands of black oak brush.

"Fire kept the prairies thriving and the oak brush short," he said. "That this Simon remnant still remains, albeit in a degraded manner, is a reason to celebrate its resiliency and now its permanent protection."

Two plant surveys have been completed to determine the species richness of the prairie remnant, Halvorsen said. The studies revealed the presence of several prairie plants that are rare, including bluestems, leadplant, prairie willow and cinquefoil.

"The ecological value of this prairie is unmeasurable," Halvorsen said. "To have the Simon prairie permanently protected means we'll have a local ecological blueprint for future restorations. It also will be a source of prairie seeds to add to other prairie plantings in the area."

The land donation will have an impact on more than that piece of property. The DNR has used the monetary value of the Simon Prairie land to apply for a North American Wetlands Grant, which requires local matching funds prior to approval.

Halvorsen said the DNR expects to receive up to \$1 million dollars for additional land acquisition in the west-central Wisconsin area by next year, thanks to the local prairie project.

"This is conservation in action and shows the multiplier effect that can take place in our local community," he said.

Now that the land is protected, Rick Remington, director of land programs with the West Wisconsin Land Trust, said work to restore the prairie remnant will begin over the coming months. The overall management of the property will be accomplished cooperatively between the Land Trust and the St. Croix Valley Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts.

"The Prairie Enthusiasts are very grateful to the Coughlin and Simon families for ensuring that this native prairie and oak savanna remnant is preserved," said Evanne Hunt, president of the local chapter. "It speaks to their values, land ethic, and their love of the land on which they grew up. My hope is that, in just a few years, this prairie will look like it did when their grandparents first saw it as children."

The Prairie Enthusiasts group is writing a management plan for the property, including short- and long-term goals, Hunt said.

"We will probably start by removing the non-native trees and brush," she said. "We expect the sun-loving prairie plants to respond dramatically,

increasing in size and distribution. We also plan to use prescribed burning to remove the non-native vegetation and to free up the nutrients locked in the plants. This makes the nutrients available to the prairie plants. Again, we expect the native plants to respond dramatically to fire.”

Hunt said seeds stored in the soil for decades will finally get a chance to germinate.

“Our management plan will most likely not include bringing seeds or plants to the site,” she said. “Instead, we will collect seed from the existing plants and deposit it on open spots. In that way we can maintain the genetic character of this prairie remnant.”

John Coughlin, a grandson of the original Simons, said the family is pleased that the property will be preserved and managed for future generations to enjoy.

The land’s known history dates back to the mid-1850s when Christopher Simon settled near Bass Lake and began farming, according to Coughlin.

The prairie and farmland between the Willow River and Bass Lake next went to son William and wife Emma (Parent) Simon.

They had five children: Joseph, Maurice, James, Bessie and Lucy. James was born in 1895, attended the South Bass Lake School, entered the army at age 17 and served as an airplane mechanic in France during World War I. After the armistice, he returned home and married Edna Campbell at St. Anne Catholic Church in Somerset. The farm passed to Maurice; Joe and Jim got land on the east side of Bass Lake.

Jim and Edna Simon settled in Boardman and purchased Tobin Hardware (currently the Boardman Bar) in 1925 and later the Boardman Store (site of Meister’s Place). Jim and his brothers also farmed the Simon land. Jim, and later

Edna, served as Boardman’s postmasters. They met the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha trains to get the town’s mail. During the depression, train-traveling hobos knew that the Simon family would share what they could. In 1954, Jim and Edna built a cabin on Bass

Lake just a little bit west of the prairie parcel which probably wasn’t farmed because part of it is low-lying and sometimes swampy.

The Simons raised four children in Boardman; Mary (Jim Matthews), Yvonne (Leo Furr), Donna (John P. Coughlin) and James W. Simon (Christine VerHalen). They had 10 grandchildren and, to-date, 14 great-grandchildren.

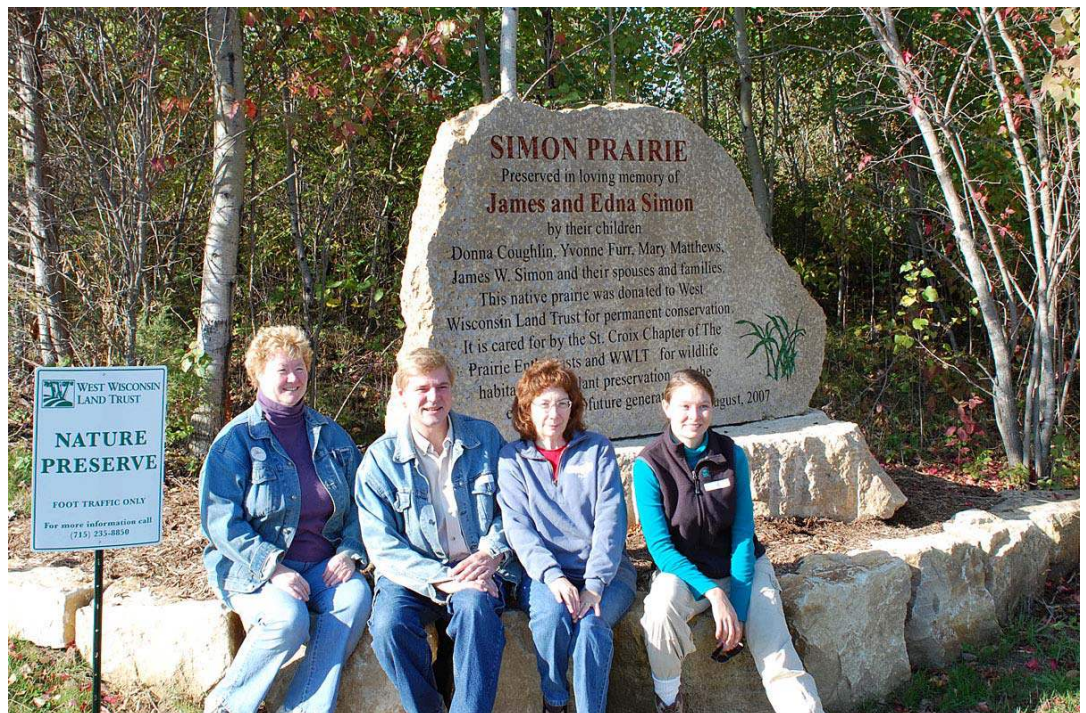
After selling the store, Jim and Edna began to spend more time at the cabin and their land near Bass Lake. The cabin became a favorite family gathering spot.

Jim and Edna shared their love of God’s creation with their children and grandchildren – fishing, gardening, walking the land and planting trees, Coughlin said.

They passed the land to their children who later sold the cabin to grandson John M. Coughlin, his wife Mary Beth Arthaud and daughter Erin.

Carol Benish, a member of The Prairie Enthusiasts, invited John and Mary Beth to learn more about the “hidden prairie jewel” just down the road. They shared the news about the prairie with John’s mother, Donna.

“That led to a family discussion about preserving the prairie section of the original Simon homestead,” Coughlin said. “The family decided that it would be a



Evanne Hunt (TPE), John M. Coughlin, his wife Mary Beth Arthaud, and Britta Lee (WWLT). Photo by Burt Levy.

fitting tribute to honor Jim and Edna Simon, in perpetuity, by donating the prairie land to the West Wisconsin Land Trust.” A stone monument marking the Simon Prairie site was recently installed at the property.

Another 157 Acres Protected

By Rich Henderson

On Oct. 26, TPE, working through the Empire-Sauk Chapter, closed on the protection of 157 acres, via conservation easement, in western Dane County, Wis. The easement was purchased from Richard and Judy Kelly. The property is a half-mile NE of Blue Mounds State Park and contiguous to the 131-acre Pleasure Valley Conservancy, on which TPE also holds a conservation easement, making a conservation area totaling 289 acres.

The easement is located within the unglaciated driftless area. It consists of rugged topography. A high, Y-shaped ridge traverses the property with 97 acres of grassland enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. It supports bobolinks, eastern meadow larks, and other grassland birds. The slopes drop off quickly and are covered with 52 acres of oak and mixed hardwood woodlands. Rock outcroppings and buffer habitat for a cold-water trout stream are also present. The landowners intend to restore appropriate parts of the woods back to original oak savanna and oak woodlands. A good variety of open oak woodland plants species are present. They also wish to gradually plant the grassland to native prairie.

Acquisition of the Kelly easement was a cooperative effort with the Dane County Department of Land and Water Resources. The easement is held jointly by Dane County and TPE, however, Dane County is taking the lead in monitoring and enforcing the easement. The Kellys funded the development of a management plan by TPE's Amy Staffen. TPE will also provide technical advice to the landowners regarding restoration of prairie and oak woodlands. Funding was provided by the Dane County Conservation Fund and the Knowles-Nelson State Stewardship Fund implemented by the Wis. Department of Natural Resources.

Seeking Enthusiasts for new Central Sands Chapter

By Shelley Hamel

Following a September prairie dedication in Marquette County, the dream of starting a new chapter in this part of the state is three members short of reality.

At the Hugh Iltis Prairie and Savanna dedication on David and Shelley Hamel's property, more than 20 people indicated their interest in a new chapter. Hopefully, this enthusiasm will translate into real members. Marquette, Adams, Waushara, Green, Lake and Portage counties all have small populations, so please encourage interested

people in these counties to contact Shelley Hamel at sdhamel@maQs.net or 608-296-2866.

A chapter in this general area of the state has been in the planning stages for several years. With a little enthusiastic help, maybe it can happen now.



Shelley Hamel (center) and Sharon Clark-Gaskill (left) walk and talk with Rob Baller (right) of the Prairie Bluff Chapter at the Hugh Iltis Prairie and Savanna dedication.

The Prairie Enthusiasts gives a piece of Wisconsin Desert to The Nature Conservancy

In early December, The Prairie Enthusiasts gave 144 acres of land in Sauk County, Wis. to the Nature Conservancy. The property sits along the northern edge the Conservancy's Spring Green Preserve and includes bluff prairie and oak woodlands of regional significance.

"With the collaboration of The Prairie Enthusiasts, we've now conserved a rare and picturesque landscape of bluff and prairie that is home to some of Wisconsin's rarest plant and animal communities," said Mary Jean Huston, director of The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin.

The Prairie Enthusiasts purchased the property from Spring Green High Country, LLC with funding from Wisconsin's Stewardship Fund. The acquisition was made possible by matching donations of land and easements in other parts of the state to the Prairie Enthusiasts from Tom and Kathie Brock, The Savanna Oak Foundation, and Rich and Kathy Henderson.

"This is a unique and beautiful place and we've helped ensure it will remain so for future generations to

experience and enjoy,” said Rich Henderson, vice president of The Prairie Enthusiasts.

Read more on the Empire Sauk Chapter website and in the spring issue of *The Prairie Promoter*.
www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/chapter/empire/news.html

ANNOUNCEMENTS

13th Wisconsin Wetlands Association Conference

**Save the Date! Jan. 31
& Feb. 1, 2008**

Wetlands experts and enthusiasts from the Midwest and beyond will meet in Oconomowoc, Wis. to discuss the latest in wetland science, management, restoration and protection as they relate to human alterations that affect wetlands. The program will focus on the theme *Wetlands in the 21st Century: Altered Landscapes and Changing Climates*, and will include a keynote address, topical oral sessions, a poster session, working groups, a banquet and wetland field trips.



For more information or to register please visit:
www.wisconsinwetlands.org/2008conference.htm

Early bird registration deadline: Dec. 15, 2007

2008 Prairie Enthusiasts' Banquet and Prairie Conference

Save the Date! Saturday March 8, 2008

The Coulee Region Chapter will host the 2008 TPE Banquet And Conference on Saturday, March 8, 2008 at the UW-La Crosse Cartwright Center.

Doors open at 7:30 a.m. for check-in. Meet with vendors and exhibitors prior to the first presentation.

CONFERENCE

The opening presentation starts at 9:00 a.m.

Tentative presentation topics include:

- Hill prairies (several presentations)
- Prairie birds
- Prairie reptiles and amphibians
- Sand prairies of the coulee region
- Prairie burning basics
- Invasive species
- The role of fungi in prairies
- Case studies of land protection

Roundtables (open discussions and questions for experts) will run from 3:00 to 4:00.

- Land Protection Round Table
- Remnant Management Round Table
- Prairie Planting Round Table

LODGING

A block of 20 rooms has been reserved at the Courtyard by Marriott at a rate of \$62 single and \$82 for two to four people. This hotel is 1.25 miles from UW-La Crosse, in downtown La Crosse. A complete list of lodgings will appear on The Prairie Enthusiasts' website and in the conference announcement sent out in January. Finding lodgings in La Crosse is notoriously difficult on some weekends, so reserve a room early.

REGISTRATION

A link to the online registration form, managed by UW-La Crosse Continuing Education and Extension, will be available on the Prairie Enthusiasts' website in January. You may register online using a credit card. Alternatively, you can download a PDF version of the registration form and mail it with a check. Registration forms and updated conference and banquet agendas will also be mailed to all Prairie Enthusiasts in January.

More banquet and conference details will be posted as they develop: www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org

3rd Fire in Eastern Oak Forests Conference: Learning from Experience

Save the date! May 20-22, 2008

A meeting for managers of oak and associated ecosystems held at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Ill.

For more information or to become a sponsor, please contact Charles Ruffner (ruffner@siu.edu or 618 - 453-7469), John Groninger: (groninger@siu.edu or 618-453-7462), or Todd Hutchinson (thutchinson@fs.fed.us or 740-368-0090)

21st North American Prairie Conference

Save the date! Aug. 4-8, 2008

A meeting for prairie enthusiasts, biologists, community members, botanists, and businesses specializing in prairie seeds and restoration held at Winona State University in Winona, Minn.

A link to the NAPC can be found on the TPE website: www.ThePrairieenthusiasts.org

Engineering Challenge

The Empire-Sauk Chapter of TPE is still looking for volunteers to design and direct the construction of two bridges on TPE preserves in eastern Iowa County, Wis. These bridges will be crossing small, but high-banked, streams. They need to be functional for human foot-travel and ATVs used in land management.

Many construction materials have already been donated, including a number of large utility poles and a good supply of two-inch thick cedar planks. Additional supplies may be purchased or sought through donations.

The tasks include: (1) drafting a design that meets DNR specifications, (2) submitting the drawings and stream crossing applications to the DNR, and (3) lining up the materials and directing volunteers in the construction. If you are willing to help with one or more of these tasks, please contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065 or tpe.rhenderson@tds.net).

Field Trip Ideas and Leaders Sought

It's time to start thinking about field trip tours. Is there a prairie, sedge meadow, savanna or oak woodland you would like to visit on a guided tour led by someone knowledgeable about the site? Would you be willing to serve as a guide to share your expertise in 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.

TPE's field trips are great opportunities to learn about the natural history of prairies, savannas and oak woodlands, and also to pick up tips on how to manage and care for these native ecosystems. The trips are opportunities to meet other people with similar interests. Please take advantage of our outings and spread the word. The tours are free and open to all. Many of the outings are offered jointly with Madison Audubon, the Wisconsin Butterfly Association, The Nature Conservancy and other groups.

TPE Merchandise Available on Website

Now you can order all of your TPE merchandise in one convenient location. Parsnip Predator and No Mow signs, as well as TPE hats, tote bags, and notepads are now available on the TPE website.

www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org/Merchandise.htm

Send the completed order form and payment to:

TPE, P.O. Box 1148, Madison WI 53701.

All proceeds will still go to the originating chapter, but now you can order any item using a single order form and payment. Some of these items previously were available only at selected TPE events.

Contact Evanne Hunt with ideas for additional products (eahunt@presenter.com).

EMPIRE – SAUK CHAPTER

Board Meetings

Tuesdays, **Jan. 22** and **March 11**, 2008 at 6:45 p.m. at the Middleton Public Library. All members are welcome.

Fall and Winter Work Parties

The Empire-Sauk Chapter continued its efforts to bring endangered ecosystems back to health and to expand acreage with reconstruction plantings. Twenty-four work parties were held in September, October and

November to collect and clean seed and remove trees and brush. Nine more events are scheduled in December, and more will be scheduled in January and February.

We will be planting seed and removing more trees and brush. When the snow arrives, we will also be burning the many brush piles that have accumulated. So, stock up on marshmallows and hotdogs and get ready for some outdoor winter exercise. Volunteers are always needed and appreciated (i.e., homemade treats are 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.

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 Web site (www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org).

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). All items must be preregistered. The banquet and raffle/auction are the weekend of March 8, 2008. See details in banquet announcement. Note the deadlines for registering items.

Barn Renovation Progressing

Thanks to the Schurch-Thomson Prairie Trust, great progress is being made in renovating the barn at Schurch-Thomson Prairie (on Reilly Road, in SE Iowa County). A new ground floor has been poured and the foundation repaired. Work will be starting soon on replacing the loft floor and putting on new siding and doors.

We will be looking for volunteers to do interior carpentry and electrical work, so if you wish to help, please contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065 or tpe.rhenderson@tds.net).

We are also looking for donations of cash or materials to match the trust fund's contributions towards the renovation.

Seed Collecting, Cleaning and Planting Coordinator(s) Sought

The Empire-Sauk Chapter has a pressing need to scatter prairie (and savanna) seed over hundreds of acres over the next several years in our efforts to recover

degraded sites and expand critical habitat for many rare and endangered plants and animals. Unfortunately, our efforts in seed collecting and planting are starting to slip and may be reduced to a trickle if people can not be found to take leadership roles and get things moving. We very much need a person or two to step forward to get our seed collecting and processing program up and running in earnest. We could use both an overall coordinator, as well as local leaders focused on specific sites. By next fall, we will have a great seed cleaning, processing and storage facility at the Schurch-Thomson barn in Iowa County. If you are interested, please contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065 or tpe.rhenderson@tds.net).

Are You Mechanically Inclined?

The Empire-Sauk Chapter is looking for a volunteer or two to be in charge of the maintenance and repair of field equipment. This includes, but is not limited to, drip torches, water backpack cans, backpack herbicide sprayers, hand tools, brush-cutters, chainsaws, mowers, propane torches, fire-pump units and seeders. Plans are to eventually develop a workshop at the Schurch-Thomson barn, after its renovation, as this is where most equipment will likely be stored when not in active use. However, maintenance work may certainly be done at other locations. If you wish to help, please contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065 or tpe.rhenderson@tds.net).

Record Amount of Seed Collected & Cleaned in 2007

Submitted by Rich Henderson

The Empire-Sauk Chapter had a very productive season of seed collecting and cleaning in 2007. Volunteers and interns collected over 300 pounds of clean seed. Special thanks go to Richard Oberle for heading up the seed cleaning operation out of his garage and to the dozen volunteers who helped with the cleaning. Thank you also to the 38 volunteers who put in nearly 300 hours of collecting and processing seed, and to Tom & Kathie Brock for heading up the seed collection and processing at Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie and Pleasant Valley Conservancy. The outstanding seed collector this year, by far, was Erik Goplin. His efforts alone accounted for 40% of the total seed collected. Erik also expanded his seed production nursery that he maintains for the benefit of TPE projects in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA).

Our chapter collected and processed an estimated \$100,000 worth of seed in 2007. Approximately \$76,500 worth (87 species, and 290 pounds) was collected for the

MRPHA projects, Kalscheur Savanna, and sites in western Dane County. In addition, seed from 42 species were collected from and for Rettenmund Black Earth Prairie, and 116 species were collected for Pleasant Valley Conservancy. These seeds are worth many additional thousands of dollars. Seed was also collected and directly planted at a number of miscellaneous project sites, such as Smith Drumlin, Schluckebier Sand Prairie, and others. Our chapter also cleaned \$5,200 worth of seed (33 pounds) that the Southwest Wis. chapter harvested from their Hollandale seed orchard.

Seed orchards are proving their worth. Over half of the seed, by weight, collected in 2007 came from the two Empire-Sauk Chapter seed orchards. The Underwood Orchard produced an estimated \$17,500 worth of seed (52 pounds). The Goplin Orchard produced an estimated \$31,500 worth of seed (118 pounds).

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER

Tumbledrum-Drum-Drum

NIPE has a 50 gallon Tumbledrum mixer that we are willing to part with. It is electric and can be used to mix and/or thrash seed. The original cost (in 2000) was \$1,125. But don't worry about that. If you need this machine, we will consider any offer.

Volunteer Spotlight—Ed Strenski



Ed Strenski working his oaks on Pilot Knob. Photo by Jim Rachuy.

Ed Strenski is a carpenter by trade, a green building expert, and a LEEDS Professional (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). This year, after 30 years with Pepper Construction in Chicago, Ed and his wife Karin retired to their property on Pilot Knob in western JoDaviess County.

Ed now serves as a director and Vice President of NIPE and as Steward for Hanley Savanna. This year, Ed has contributed hundreds of hours of his time working in the greenhouse, building at Hanley, planting in the nursery, weeding restorations, collecting seed, and generally keeping us all pointed in the right direction.

Thanks so much ED! You are a perfect example of TPE's 'boots on the ground' approach to conservation.

New Prairies in 2007

As of Nov. 3, NIPE has completed our 2007 prairie restoration projects. This year we worked 1,125 hours, on 46 days, processing enough seed to restore 105 acres to prairie. In total our hardy band of pickers collected 1,722 pounds of seed, from 102 species, with a retail value of \$180,000.

Especially abundant this year were *Allium cernuum*, *Amorpha canescens*, *Aster ericoides*, *Echinacea pallida*, *Eryngium yuccifolium*, *Gentiana flavida*, *Helianthus molles*, *Hypericum pyramidatum*, *Liatris pycnostachya*, and *Triosteum aurantiacum*. New species included *Aronia melanocarpa*, *Aster umbellatus*, *Cacalia muhlenbergii*, and *Solidago missouriensis*.

Thanks to John Day, Laura Dufford, Paul Hansen, Paul McMenimin, Dick Peterson, Rickie Rachuy, Gene Roberts, Paul Rode, Blaine Schoenhard, Barbara Siekowski, Ed Strenski, Karin Strenski, and Ashley Switzer for their hard work. Also, a special thanks to Bill Hunt who donated 98 hours worked by his Twin Ponds staff.

New at Hanley Savanna

We have new facilities at Hanley Savanna, including a parking lot, shelter, picnic area, and display garden. Also new are the electricity, water, and irrigation equipment needed to service the 10,000 plugs added to the Rare Plant Nursery this year.

Special thanks to Ed Strenski, Beth Pomaro, and Pam Johnson for their hard work, to Chuck Wemstrom and Judith Wehrle for their support, and to the JoDaviess County Natural Area Guardians for their generous monetary contributions to this project.

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

Fair Meadows

Submitted by Rob Baller

On Saturday, October 10, 2007, Prairie Bluffers Rob Baller, Peg Bredeson (Beloit), Brian & Ellen Cummings

(Milton), and Gary & Penny Shackelford (northern Rock County, Wis.) collected seed on the Shackelford's 240 acre estate near Lake Koshkonong. The Shackelfords have been restoring the former farm for years and have permanently dedicated it as a Wisconsin State Natural Area. They lovingly refer to the collective oak savanna, prairie, and marsh as 'Fair Meadows'.

Our seed-gathering mission fulfilled a grant requirement pledged by Renae Mitchell. The grant (which TPE helped secure) assisted the Shackelfords with some of their restoration. Our in-kind labor began at 9:30 AM. We collected for about an hour or two, then hiked and saw lots of wildlife. After suffering through 60° F sunshine and impressive fall colors, and witnessing about ten migrating Coopers hawks in a half hour, we ate lunch provided by the Shackelfords at their house.

Thank you for a fine fall day Gary and Penny.



Ellen Cummings (left) and Peg Bredeson (right) collect little bluestem at Fair Meadows. Photo by Rob Baller

ST. CROIX VALLEY CHAPTER

Chapter Meeting

Jan. 23 (Wednesday) 6:00 - 9:00 p.m., City of Hudson Municipal Bldg., 911 4th Street, Hudson, WI Second floor community Room 212 (above the Library) Topic: TBD

Work Parties

This fall, the St. Croix Valley Chapter will continue restoring prairie remnants. Volunteers are needed at five sites to clear trees and brush.

We have several grants that require match of in-kind volunteer time to earn the grant money. For every hour of volunteer time that you put in, we receive between three

and seven hours of paid contract labor. This fall and winter, we will be working at the following remnants:

Dec. 8 - Blueberry Hill, Bayport, Minn.

Dec. 22 - Annual Winter Solstice Party at Alexander Prairie, River Falls, Wis.

Jan. 5 - Annual New Year's Party at Foster Cemetery, River Falls, Wis.

Jan. 19 - LIP Grant Match Work on the Covelli/Hanson Prairie, River Falls, Wis.

Feb. 2 - Rocky Branch goat prairie, River Falls, Wis.

Feb. 16 - LIP Grant Match Work on the Covelli/Hanson Prairie, River Falls, Wis.

March 1 - Rocky Branch goat prairie, River Falls, Wis.

March 15 - Site to be determined (depending on snow cover)

March 29 - Site to be determined (depending on snow cover)

April dates will be set according to weather conditions. Work will be preparing firebreaks and conducting prescribed burns.

Bring: drinking water, gloves, and loppers if you have them. Hot dogs, buns, beer, and mulled wine will be provided.

Contact: Wayne Huhnke at 715-425-7605, 715-222-6910 (cell), or whuhnke@dishup.us

SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN CHAPTER

Work Parties on Southwest Prairies

Submitted by Rose Sime

The Southwest Chapter has had a rather low profile the last few newsletters but we haven't been sleeping! We're eager to tell you that we're alive and well and have been out there killing! Three successful work parties at Eldred, Sime Balds and Bush Clover Prairies this fall and three this summer have resulted in the death of crown vetch, buckthorn, honeysuckle, garlic mustard, reed canary grass, and invasive trees of various sorts. We wish we could tell you the work is done but you all know better than that! Though we tend to see basically the same volunteers each work party, we were most happy to have a volunteer all the way from the state of Oregon at the Sime Balds Prairie. We tried to entice her to move to Wisconsin, but we lost out.

Future work parties will be held at these three sites in January, February and March. Be sure to check your email notices for dates and times. These should be lots of fun as they'll involve a good bonfire to burn up brush and

trees that still need to be removed from the sites. We'd love to see some new faces that enjoy meeting new friends while working to preserve the prairies we love.

Hollandale Nursery '07 Seed

Harvest

Submitted by Bill Wisler

The Hollandale Nursery once again provided a successful harvest. Over 33 pounds of clean seed was collected this fall, with an estimated value of \$5,200. The seed will be used at the Military Ridge Prairie and the Kalscheur Savanna.

We have a dedicated volunteer crew made up of the following people: Brad and Barb Glass, Janet and Doug Huebner, Carol Rademaker, Jim and Rose Sime, Harriet Ridnour, Malene Robinson, and Jayne and Bill Wisler. We also want to thank the landowner, Evan McGlenn, for his cooperation.

Update on Eldred Prairie (formerly Ellenboro Prairie)

Submitted by Rose Sime

We're especially proud of the results of the chapter's work at Eldred Prairie. If you haven't been to this original prairie remnant in awhile (or ever) a trip is well worth the ride to see the huge population of wild quinine, the cream gentians, the purple milkweed, among other beauties. Located 5 miles east of Lancaster, this forty-five acre site has seen a tremendous transformation since it was purchased in 2001. About two-thirds of the site has a southern slope and one-third a northern slope. Much of that northern slope was once covered in brush, briars and overgrown Christmas trees. Through many hours of dedicated work by volunteers, most of these invasives were removed and the Christmas trees await timber harvest. Every aspen that once covered the northern slope has now been girdled by the jolly girdlers (ya sure!).

The brush on the entire site, except for the Christmas trees, has been mowed a time or two by Driftless Land Service and their wonderful woods mower. Some of this

work was donated by DLS (Jesse Bennett and Jay Maxfield, proprietors) and some was contracted using U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service grant money. The resurgence of the native prairie as a result of this work is something to behold! We hope you'll get the chance to explore this lovely site.

Directions to Eldred Prairie: From the intersection of Hwy 129 (Hwy 129 is the Hwy 61 truck route bypass 1 mi. east of Lancaster) and Cemetery/Lincoln Rd., go approximately 3¼ miles east on Lincoln Rd to the Prairie on the north side of the road

2008 Winter Work Parties

Come join the fun as we prepare the sites for future spring burning. Dress in layers and bring a warm smile and an invigorating spirit. Chain saws, loppers, and safety equipment are most welcome!

Jan. 12 (Saturday) Eldred Prairie, Lincoln Road, Lancaster, 10 am – 1 pm, cutting trees and large brush-pile burning

Leaders: Jesse Bennett and Jay Maxwell (608) 996-2135 or 778-2832

Feb. 9 (Saturday) Sime Balds Prairie, Hwy MS, Boscobel, 10 am – 1 pm, cutting trees and brush-pile burning

Leaders: Jim and Rose Sime (608) 831-9297 or 604-1590

March 8 (Saturday) Bush Clover Prairie, Badger Road, Lancaster, 10 am – 1 pm, depending on weather either brush cutting or a spring burn.

Leader: Gary Eldred (608) 375-5271

For directions to the worksites, check your email for updates or call the leaders.

COULEE REGION CHAPTER

No information submitted

PRAIRIE SMOKE CHAPTER

No information submitted

THANK YOU, DONORS!

2007 Donations*

We thank everyone who made a donation to the 2007 Annual Appeal and all those who made gifts throughout the year. These gifts above and beyond membership dues are truly generous and appreciated.

Under \$100

Ameriprise Financial	Forrest & Theresa Hayden	Diane Rains and Stuart Janis
Don Amos	Katrina Hayes	Ron Reynolds
Craig and Amy Annen	Ralph & Ann Heuschele	Steve Richter
Chris Barlow	Judy & Alan Hoffman	Wisconsin Energy Corporation
Jack & Carolyn Bates	Mark Jeffries	Foundation, Inc. (<i>in honor of Noel Cutright</i>)
Benedictine Life Foundation (<i>in honor of Rich Henderson</i>)	Don & Barbara Johnson	Mary Rosenthal
Sandy Bennett	Maynard & Kris Johnson	Gerald & Margaret Roth
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Kim Bigler	Kenwood Company	Kristi Sazama (<i>in honor of Erik Anderson</i>)
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Donald Hagar		
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*As of November 28. Donations received in December will be recognized in the next issue.

\$100 - \$499

Craig & Jean Anderson	Patrick Handrick (Cuna Mutual Foundation match)	Judy Reed (in memory of Richard & Shirley Reed)
Mark & Donna Baller (in honor of Robert Baller)	Paul & Bernadette Hayes	Keith Relyea and Jeanne Kant (3M Foundation match)
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	Dan & Judy Peterson	Carla Wright
	Curtis Preuss	William Zarwell and Robin Chapman
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Cuna Mutual Group Foundation <i>on behalf of Richard Oberle and Patrick Handrick</i>	Jackie & Wayne Pauly (in honor of Rich Henderson, Jim and Rose Sime)	Pat Trochlell and Ken Wade
Hugh Iltis	Prairie Smoke Chapter	Meagan Yost
George & Carmeen Johnston	Ron & Paulette Smith	

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Karl Andersen and Carolyn Heidemann (in honor of Jan Ketelle)	Max & Shelley Lagally (in memory of Paul & Heota Lagally)
Kathie & Tom Brock	Kevin Magee (in memory of Susan Connell-Mager)
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Evanne Hunt	The Nature Conservancy
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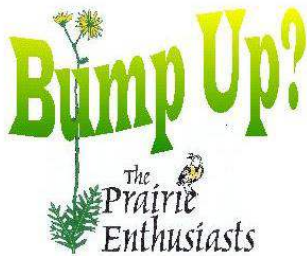
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We are asking that you pledge to continue at this new level for three years so we know we can count on your support!

Thank you, Your TPE Endowment & Fundraising committee

I/We name(s) _____ will bump up from a current membership level of _____ to the _____ level. Enclosed is a check for the difference of \$ _____ for 2007.

The Prairie Enthusiasts Membership Levels:

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Please send form and check to:

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