

2018 Annual Report



The
Prairie
Enthusiasts



Mission Statement of The Prairie Enthusiasts

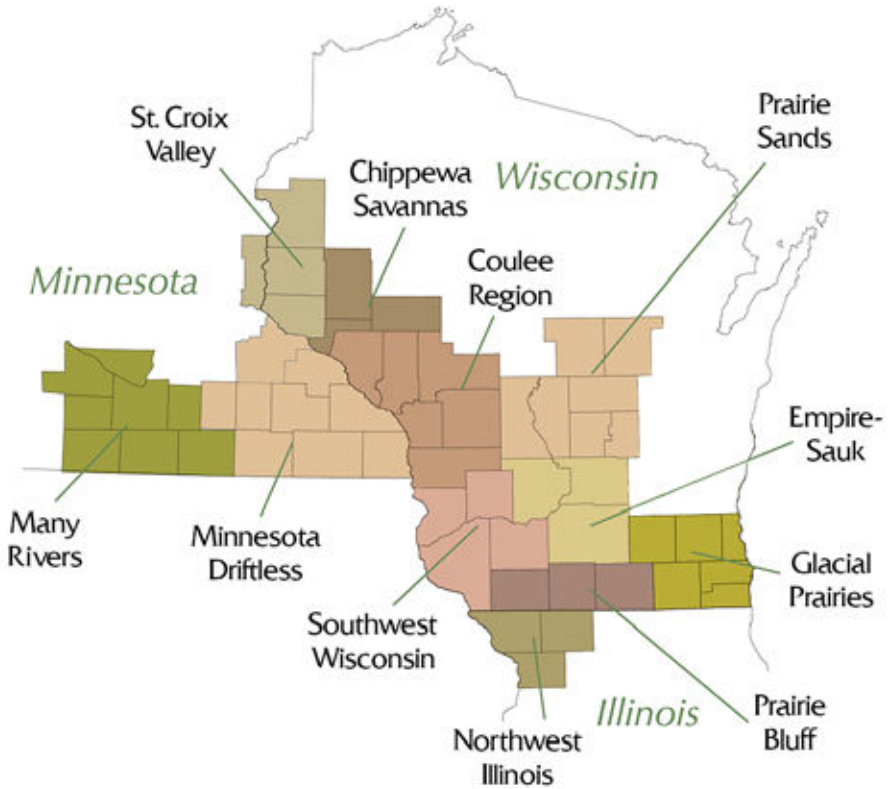
Adopted September 13, 2001



We seek to ensure the perpetuation and recovery of prairie, oak savanna, and other associated ecosystems of the Upper Midwest through protection, management, restoration, and education. In doing so, we strive to work openly and cooperatively with private landowners and other private and public conservation groups.



Chapters



- **Chippewa Savannas Chapter** (Dunn, Eau Claire, Pepin Counties in Wisconsin)
- **Coulee Region Chapter** (Buffalo, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, Vernon Counties in Wisconsin)
- **Empire-Sauk Chapter** (Columbia, Dane, Sauk Counties in Wisconsin)
- **Glacial Prairie Chapter** (Jefferson, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine, Walworth, Waukesha Counties in Wisconsin)
- **Many Rivers Chapter** (Blue Earth, Nicollet, Brown, Faribault, Freeborn, Martin, Waseca, Watonwan Counties in Minnesota)
- **Northwest Illinois Chapter** (Carroll, Jo Daviess, Stephenson Counties in Illinois)
- **Prairie Bluff Chapter** (Green, Lafayette, Rock Counties in Wisconsin)
- **Prairie Sands Chapter** (Adams, Green Lake, Juneau, Marquette, Portage, Waupaca, Waushara Counties in Wisconsin)
- **Minnesota Driftless Chapter** (Dodge, Fillmore, Houston, Mower, Olmstead, Steele, Wabasha, Winona, Goodhue Counties in Minnesota)
- **St. Croix Valley Chapter** (Pierce, Polk, St. Croix Counties in Wisconsin and Washington County in Minnesota)
- **Southwest Chapter** (Crawford, Grant, Iowa, Richland Counties in Wisconsin)

Executive Director's Message



In August of 2018, The Prairie Enthusiasts (TPE) and The Prairie Enthusiasts Trust (PE Trust) earned national recognition by becoming an accredited land trust. This means we have been found to have sound finances, responsible governance, ethical conduct, lasting stewardship, commitment to public trust and conservation excellence. It also means all of our hard

work toward Grassroots Conservation in Action has been noticed.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission awarded our accreditation status, signifying its confidence that TPE's lands are well protected. After several years of hard work on policies and procedures adhering to the commission's national standards and practices, TPE has demonstrated continuous organizational improvement for the biodiversity and people of the upper Midwest. Now that TPE has a solid and sound land protection program, it can commit to long-term legal defense and care for its sites into perpetuity.



Considering that in 2018 alone, we protected eight additional sites with about 350 acres of newly acquired properties. This distinction and commitment has been well received. More and more donors are establishing endowments with TPE. In 2018, we saw nearly a \$250,000 increase in our Land Management Endowment alone.

We work hard every day to carry the mission of TPE forward. This notoriety and recognition shows how our work is paying off and our approach is on target. You are the foundation of TPE, and your support is making a difference. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Chris Kirkpatrick,
TPE Executive Director

Prairie Roots

During the 5,000 years preceding European settlement, much of the upper Midwest's landscape was dominated by prairies and oak savannas. The 150 years following settlement have witnessed the destruction of all but 0.15% of these communities. Prairies as small as half an acre are worth saving and can be restored to be a healthy and vibrant ecosystems. TPE works with area chapters to support them in their direct land protection efforts, with TPE staff assisting as needed.

Prairies at Risk

The annual losses of prairie and savanna remnants are small as measured in acres and often go unnoticed. A few more decades of such losses will leave little to preserve outside of the precious few public and private preserves that exist today. The Prairie Enthusiasts, in cooperation with other conservation groups, is working to reverse this trend.

Benefits of Prairies

Restored prairies are very good for many reasons—no matter how small an area—but they are never as biologically diverse or physically complete as original prairie sod. Whenever possible, we encourage landowners to first conduct plant surveys, identify the prairie remnant, then add buffer zones using locally collected seed or a reputable seed source.

What Prairies Need

Prairies need ongoing management that includes weed removal, seed generation and suppression of non-prairie plants to remain vibrant and healthy and support the related wildlife that depend on this habitat. Short-term and long-term community support (conceptually, financially, politically, and from a participatory perspective) is important to sustain necessary management levels over time.



Land Protection Articles

St. Croix Valley Alexander Oak Savanna Acquisition

Evanne Hunt

Dick and Joan Alexander sold their native oak savanna (43 acres) to TPE on July 19. We got together Aug. 12 to celebrate. TPE president Scott Fulton and TPE executive director Chris Kirkpatrick headlined the event and explained what this means to TPE. The Alexander oak savanna is home to state- or federal-threatened species of kittentails and prairie tur-



L-R Chris Kirkpatrick, executive director; Scott Fulton, board president, and property donors Dick & Joan Alexander at the August celebration. (Photo by Evanne Hunt)



Celebration of the Alexander Oak Savanna acquisition by TPE. (Photo by Evanne Hunt)

nip. Most exciting, Alex Bouthilet, a trained rare plant monitor, documented the state endangered ground plum (*Astragalus crassicaarpus*), which had not been seen in 28 years on the site. Alexander hosts one of the largest populations in the state. The purchase was accomplished using Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program funds and a generous donation by the Alexanders. The chapter has been working on the site for more than 15 years clearing invasive trees and brush. It's exciting to know this savanna will be protected forever.



UW-Fall River students gather seeds at one of TPE's newest properties, Alexander Oak Savanna. (Photos by Alex Bouthilet)

Land Protection

Swenson Prairie Protected

By Scott Sauer

On Aug. 30, both TPE and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) achieved a long-term goal - the acquisition and permanent protection of two prairie remnants of distinction from Paul and Judy Swenson of Arena, Wisc.

The two remnants are part of a larger collection of much-studied natural areas. At least one site within the larger complex was part of John Curtis' inventory of natural areas in the 1950s. The remnants have a high and evenly distributed diversity of classic dry prairie plants. Among the rarer plants found on the two sites are Hill's thistle and pommade-prairie (*Psoralea esculenta*). The sites are also known for harboring rare insects, especially the state endangered leafhopper (*Attenuipyga vandeuzeei*).

TPE has been active on these sites since 2002. At least four TPE field trips have visited the sites since then. Volunteer crews have applied infrequent fire to the larger of the two remnants to control returning brush. Special thanks to the Swensons who have always shown an interest in the natural areas of their dairy farm, for allowing TPE access over the years, and for patience in the acquisition process. A big thank you also goes to Amy Staffen and Scott Sauer in maintaining ties with the Swensons through the past decades and for keeping the project alive



Swenson Hill Prairie in 2014



Great spangle fritillary

Banded hairstreak on a butterfly plant at the Swenson property.



Amy Staffen walks the newly acquired TPE prairie (Photos courtesy Scott Sauer)



Land Protection

Prairie Bluff Chapter Protects Skinner Prairie

Tom Mitchell

TPE closed the deal to protect lands at Meinert Prairie and Skinner Prairie -- both decades-long interests of the Prairie Bluff chapter. In the early days of prairie enthusiasm, Nick Faessler was looking for pasque flowers when he found them on a patch of ground divided by a steep ravine, west of his home farm on the Wisconsin-Illinois state line. At about the same time Gary Felder was seeing thousands of pasque flowers on a hillside north of Monroe, once known as Skinner Diggings, an early lead mining site. Faessler was just learning about prairies, and this unfarmed, unplowed ground in Stephenson County, Ill., had shooting stars, puccoon and violets, along with cedars and brush. He contacted the owner Richard Meinert, and he got permission to initiate land management, burning either side of the ravine, battling sweet clover, wild parsnip and poison ivy, leading field trips every July. He invited the Illinois Natural History Survey to add this site to its list of Prairie State remnants. As the Meinerts looked at retirement from farming, Faessler looked for permanent protection – a gift of 6.4 acres – with a buffer as it turned out. Thanks to Faessler as well as Richard and Joanne Meinert. Felder was a member of the Green County Conservation League in Monroe. He hunted and roamed the county, first encountering Skinner Prairie in the spring of 1987. He wrote about it in an early edition (December 1988) of this newsletter, enthusiastic about the combination of his interests in local mining history and natural history. Felder catalogued all the grasses, forbs, birds, mammals and butterflies that he found at Skinner Prairie among the old mining pits and rock piles, including rarities like prairie turnip, Indian plantain, green milkweed,

small skullcap, badgers and the upland plover. Faessler recently remembered that prairie enthusiasts first burned Meinert Prairie and Skinner Prairie on the same spring day in 1991, and nearly three decades later, we permanently protected both sites – a lesson in patience and perseverance.



Nick Faessler, Gary Eldred and Richard Meinert gather behind compass plants at Meinert Prairie. (photo by Jerry Newman)

Land Protection

Meinert Prairie: A Prairie Bluff Partnership & Protected Gem

Nick Faessler

Meinert Prairie, a hidden remnant near the Illinois-Wisconsin border, has been a restoration passion of Nick Faessler's for three decades. Now, thanks to the Meinert family and TPE, it will be protected into the future. Richard and Joanne Meinert donated the prairie to TPE in December 2018. Nick first found this little patch of flowers, with few grasses, more than 30 years ago. Like most prairies deprived of fire, it had been overrun with eastern red cedars, sumac and other invasives, but a remnant prairie remained. The Meinert family gave permission to initiate land management, burning either side of the ravine, battling sweet clover, wild parsnip and poison ivy, and leading field trips every July. Thanks to Faessler as well as Richard and Joanne Meinert.

Rogala - Chapter's First Land Protection Project

Jim Rogala

In December, the Coulee Region Chapter completed its first land protection project by accepting a donated conservation easement on Jim & Diane Rogala's property in La Crosse County. The property contains small hill prairie remnants (outlined in yellow on the map) with southwest facing slopes within an oak/hickory forest that was once an oak savanna. The scattered remnants total about 5 acres and contain most of the typical hill prairie plant species found in this part of the state. Species with the highest conservative index include: downy paintbrush, smooth cliff brake, pasque flower, hairy puccoon and hoary puccoon. Many other species typically found on hill prairies are present, including short green milkweed, cylindrical blazing-star, fringed puccoon, silky aster, aromatic aster, white camass and bird's-foot violet.



Rogala Prairie near La Crosse, Wis. Yellow outline are remnants; orange outline shows reconstructed prairie. (Photo courtesy Jim Rogala)



Land Management

Birds, Butterflies & A New Board Member

Rickie Rachuy

This year will be a busy one for us. We've been working cooperatively over many years with the landowner and the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation on prairie restorations at Casper Bluff, Wapello and now, the neighboring Oneota site. Along with a few smaller projects, we will pick, process and sow prairie seed on 92 acres by the end of 2018, so we hope our volunteers will come out in force. What's unique about these three sites was their use by Native Americans in the past—Casper features numerous mounds while Wapello and Oneota were settlement areas. In addition, Ed Strenski and his crew have many acres of land management work planned. Mowing, brush cutting and burning are part of a never-ending cycle to maintain prairie remnants and keep invasives out of lands previously restored. Making Ed's life more difficult is the news brought to us by volunteer birder Barbara Bernard about a slew of yellow-breasted chats that have moved into a patch of Hanley Savanna we call 'The Pines.' Bird diversity has been improving over the years we have been working on the property, and the chats are a welcome addition to an ever-growing list. We started with a casually observed list of 36 species and by the end of 2017, Barbara had grown that list to 101! The chats were first observed several years ago on the neighboring Lost Mound Fish & Wildlife Refuge property, and it seems they have now found the brushy, brambly habitat they like at Hanley Savanna. We have designed a new T-shirt for our chapter volunteers. It features a Monarch butterfly in honor of the many, many pounds of milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) collected by our volunteer seed pickers, and as a reminder to all that TPE works tirelessly to maintain the plants that host these butterflies. Check it out on the sales page of the TPE website. We have a new board member to introduce. Susan Lipnick joined the NIPE board in November 2017. A retired attorney, Susan is a collaborative musician and piano teacher who volunteers as a patient/family visitor for local hospice providers and is a tutor to non-English speakers. She has already jumped in and whipped our chapter page on the TPE website into shape. Thank you and welcome Susan.



Illustration of yellow-breasted chat



Monarch Butterfly illustration by Rickie Rachuy



NIPE volunteers L to R: Diane Strenski, Noah Haskin, Zoe Pearce, David Virtue and Bill Reed.

(Photo by Ed Strenski)

Land Management

St. Croix Valley Word from the Intern

My name is Brooke Dreshek, and I have a bachelor degree in Conservation and Environmental Planning. I have always loved being outdoors but working with the environment became a passion of mine after my first internship as a Vegetation and Refuge Management Intern. After graduation, I was lucky enough to land an internship with TPE as a Habitat Biologist. I'm so thankful for a position that allows me to be creative and independent. The primary focus of my position is creating maps of three properties that are managed by TPE for field trips, and mechanically and chemically managing invasive species. By the end of the summer, I plan to have a map that shows exact locations of invasive species, as well as rare or endangered plants found on each property. I will also be involved in a few surveys to get a better understanding of the flora and fauna present. I've already learned so much and look forward to what the rest of the field season has in store.



Brooke Dreshek

Education

Leopold Land Ethic Workshop a Success

Don Nelson

The Prairie Enthusiasts' Coulee Region Chapter, Friends of Kickapoo Valley Reserve and the Valley Stewardship Network, in conjunction with the Aldo Leopold Foundation, sponsored a Land Ethic Leaders workshop June 1-2 at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve's Visitor Center near La Farge, Wis. The 25 participants met Friday to view *Green Fire*, a documentary detailing Aldo Leopold's life and his environmental legacy. On Saturday, the participants used Leopold's "Observe, Participate and Reflect" framework to explore the outdoors, share their environmental experiences and interests, engage in guided discussions and consider the impact of their own environmental decisions. Leopold believed that ethical behavior toward the natural world evolve in the "minds of a thinking community." The workshop's participants formed such a community as they explored their personal land ethic and learned how their perspective might align or differ with those of others. While Leopold and his work were a central focus of the workshop, the participants learned that many individuals have sought a more ethical relationship between people and the larger land community. Participants in the Leopold Land Ethic Workshop dug deep to better understand themselves and the natural world. (Photo courtesy Aldo Leopold Center) As a result of the workshop, participants will design and implement an environmental service project that emphasizes ecological inquiry, purposeful work and active reflection. The projects will provide additional opportunities for the participants to explore, renew, and deepen their own personal connections to the land.



Participants in the Leopold Land Ethic Workshop dug deep to better understand themselves and the natural world. (Photo courtesy Aldo Leopold Center)

Education

Prairie Days a Success

Joe Maurer & Caroljean Coventree

On Oct. 7, we celebrated our annual “Prairie Days” at Simply Dunn in Downsville, Wisc. Joe Maurer opened with a short talk on his prairie-inspired art and later led a drawing workshop. Maurer inspired us to consider the possibility of a corridor of protected property from our Seymour project over to the Beaver Creek Reserve. Speakers also included chapter scientist Mark Leach and Southwest Chapter member Gary Eldred who discussed “Population Dynamics” - a big picture look at restoration and conservation. Denny Johnson presented a fascinating talk on native bees of Wisconsin, and Amy Delyea Petska led a hands-on children’s workshop making balls of native pollinator seed and seed ornaments. Big fun.



*Kids learn about prairies and show off their pollinator Q-tips.
(Photos by Karen Olson)*

Consolidated Statement Of Activities

For the Year Ended December 31, 2018

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Revenues, Gains and Other Support			
Contributions	\$597,977	\$715,137	\$1,313,114
Membership	65,295	-	65,295
Grants	60,399	176,175	236,574
Special events	22,417	-	22,417
Fee for services	165,803	-	165,803
USDA program income	35,846	-	35,846
Sales and rents	51,205	-	51,205
Investment income (loss)	(1,669)	(85,384)	(87,053)
Other	132	-	132
Net assets released from restrictions	128,878	(128,878)	-
Total Revenues, Gains and Other Support	1,126,283	677,050	1,803,333
Expenses			
Program services	951,599	-	951,599
Supporting activities:			
Operations and grant administration	80,643	-	80,643
Fundraising	28,172	-	28,172
Total Expenses	1,060,414	-	1,060,414
Total Change in Net Assets	65,869	677,050	742,919
Transfer to net assets with donor restrictions	(19,688)	19,688	-
Total Change in Net Assets	46,181	696,738	742,919
Net Assets - Beginning of Year, Restated	542,442	10,171,077	10,713,519
Net Assets - End of Year	\$588,623	\$10,867,815	\$11,456,438



Consolidated Statement Of Financial Position

For the Year Ended December 31, 2018

ASSETS

Current Assets:	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 562,241
Accounts receivable	16,663
Other assets	<u>17,985</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>596,889</u>
Property and Equipment:	
Land and improvements	9,335,012
Equipment	236,895
Ruth Hine Collection	1,500
Less: Accumulated depreciation	<u>(243,879)</u>
Net Property and Equipment	<u>9,329,528</u>
Other Assets:	
Restricted cash and investments	1,576,037
Investments	<u>28,212</u>
Total Other Assets	<u>1,604,249</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>\$ 11,530,666</u>

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities:	
Accounts payable	\$ 48,992
Deferred revenue	2,013
Accrued salaries and expenses	<u>23,223</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>74,228</u>
Total Liabilities	<u>74,228</u>
Net Assets:	
Without donor restrictions	588,623
With donor restrictions	<u>10,867,815</u>
Total Net Assets	<u>11,456,438</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	<u>\$ 11,530,666</u>

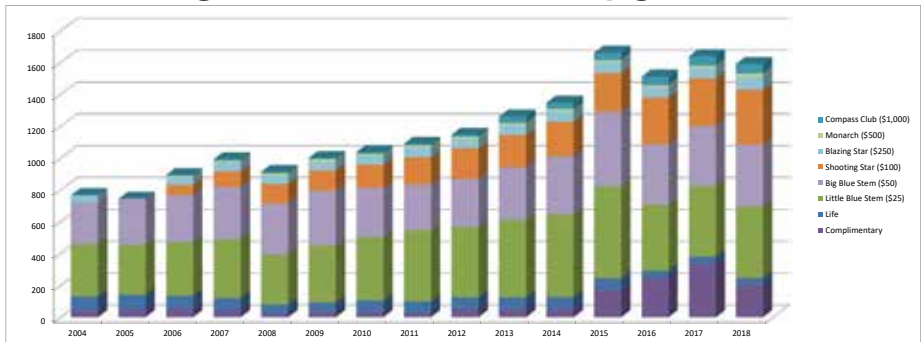
2018 Compass Club Members

Our Board President issued a successful call to the Board of Directors for 100% participation in the 2018 Board Giving. We know that we cannot ask our members and friends to donate to the organization over and above their dues without setting an example. In 2018 the Compass Club saw a growth in giving with 46 members contributing \$96,000. This program recognizes our members who contribute \$1,000+ in unrestricted income.

Anonymous
 Anonymous
 Ted Ross & Kathie Ayres
 Jennell Ballering
 Chuck Bauer & Chuck Beckwith
 Kathie & Tom Brock
 Susan & Jim Cargill
 Stephen & Susan Carpenter
 Dennis & Nancy Connor
 Ronald and Sheila Endres
 Nick & Linda Faessler
 Gary Gates
 Steve Glass
 Mike Miller & Susan Goode
 Patrick Handrick
 Daniel Hildreth
 Willi Van Haren
 Jeff & Erin Huebschman
 William Hunt
 C. Lynne & Dr. Paul Jacobsen
 Jan Ketelle
 Gary Konkol
 Kimberly Kreitinger & Eric Preston

Jack Kusmaul
 Max & Shelley Lagally
 Roma Lenehan
 Bill Ramsden & Doreen Lynch
 Alice and Walter Mirk
 Gerd & Ursula Muehlelehner
 Richard Oberle
 James & Rumi O'Brien
 Ron Panzer
 Jim & Ulrike (Rickie) Rachuy
 Jeff & Debbie Ralston
 Cary & Dr. Scott Reich
 Jim & Diane Rogala
 Dick Seebach
 Penny & Gary Shackelford
 Jim & Rose Sime
 Sandy Stark
 Brende Hofer & Dennis Steadman
 Doug Steege & Kris Euclide
 Peggy & Jon Traver
 Peter and Lynne Weil
 Kristin Westad
 Gary Zamzow & Elizabeth Frawley

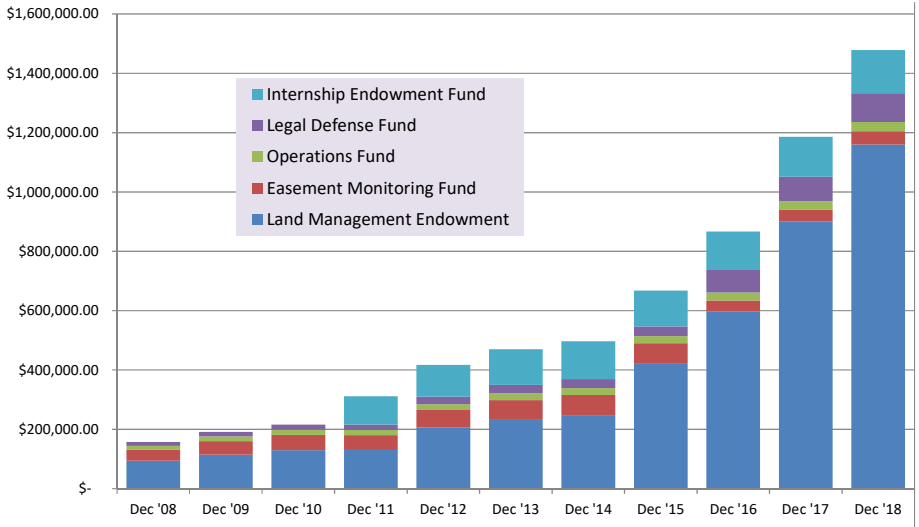
The following chart reflects membership growth since 2004:



TPE memberships were 1,640 as of December 2017, including 227 new memberships. Membership dues help spread the word about the dire predicament of prairies and oak savannas, but also broadcast our successes. In addition they support our chapters—30 % of dues goes directly to your local chapter.

TPE Trust & Investment Earnings Report

The endowments and restricted funds are managed by TPE's Investment Policy. The funds are composed of 60% stocks and 40% bonds and are re-balanced every January back to the 60%/40% ratio. TPE has its investment portfolio held with TIAA-CREF which has served us well. Investments as of December 31, 2018 of \$1,478,165.00 are restricted to the funds described as follows:



TPE Land Management Trust \$1,159,492:

This formal trust has its own trustees, separate from TPE. The funds TPE receives from the Trust are to be used solely for land management activities. In 2017 there were several donors who gave significant donations that totaled nearly \$250,000.

Easement Monitoring Endowment \$45,387:

This endowment is restricted to costs of monitoring easements granted to TPE.

Legal Defense Fund \$97,214:

This fund is set aside in case the need ever arises to litigate or defend any TPE held easement or fee owned property.

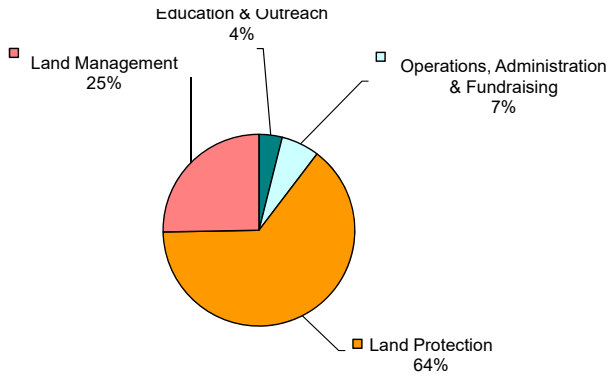
Operations Endowment \$30,591:

This endowment will eventually provide proceeds to help cover the costs of TPE administration.

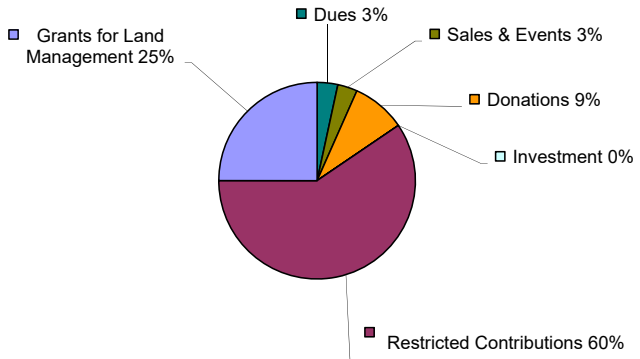
Olive and John Thomson Internship Endowment \$145,481:

This endowment provides annual proceeds to help cover the costs of internships for students doing land management, inventory, protection, education or outreach. In 2018 this fund was used to cover the costs for one intern with the Empire Sauk Chapter, working primarily at the Schurch-Thomson unit of Mounds View Grassland.

Expenses



Income



2018 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



2018 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Scott Fulton
Vice-President Jerry Newman
Treasurer Alice Mirk
Secretary Jim Rogala

Many Rivers Deanna Pomije
Chippewa Savannas Caroljean Coventree
Coulee Region Jim Rogala
Empire-Sauk Richard Henderson
Glacial Prairie Alice Mirk
Southwest Wisconsin Gary Eldred
Northwest Illinois Jim Rachuy
Prairie Bluff Jerry Newman
Prairie Sands David Hamel
St. Croix Valley Evanne Hunt
Minnesota Driftless Stephen Winter
Emeritus Gary Eldred

2018 COMMITTEES/CHAIRS

Executive Committee Scott Fulton
Communication Caroljean Coventree
Outreach & Education
Finance Alice Mirk
Fundraising Jack Kussmaul
Land Management Richard Henderson
Land Protection Mark Martin

2018 CHAPTER PRESIDENTS

Chippewa Savannas Joe Maurer
Coulee Region Jim Rogala
Empire-Sauk Karen Agee
Glacial Prairie Alice Mirk
Northwest Illinois Laura Dufford
Prairie Bluff Chris Roberts
Prairie Sands Mary (Ray) Goehring
Many Rivers Henry Panowitsch
Minnesota Driftless George Howe
Southwest Wisconsin Jack Kussmaul
St. Croix Valley Evanne Hunt



The
Prairie
Enthusiasts



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