



# Guide for Starting a New Chapter

Organizing a chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts is a great way to get together with friendly, knowledgeable people who share your interest and passion to manage and preserve our disappearing prairies and oak savannas

Chapters form in a variety of ways. They can evolve from an existing organization or simply by a few people who are interested in prairies and oak savannas and want to share their interest with the public.

## **Prerequisites**

New chapters are authorized and formally created by The Prairie Enthusiasts Board of Directors. Your Chapter is ready for Board consideration when you can provide the following information:

- Official chapter name
- Designated Chapter Chair, The Prairie Enthusiasts Board Representative and Treasurer, and any other key leaders involved in forming or leading the Chapter in its first year
- Name and contact information of your chapter contact person for the website
- Names of ten current members from your proposed geographic area
- Proposed Chapter Guidelines

## **Minimum Membership Requirements**

The Prairie Enthusiasts requires a minimum of ten (10) members to start a Chapter. These can be current members of the organization who live in an area not covered by an existing chapter, members who are part of the general membership, members of another chapter outside their geographical area, or new members you recruit to join.

## **Chapter Guidelines**

Chapters are required to submit a set of Guidelines which minimally address the following:

- Structure of the Chapter, e.g., how officers are appointed or elected, how long will they serve, any additional officers and duties, etc.;

- How your representative to the Board of Directors for The Prairie Enthusiasts is appointed or elected and for how long;
- How your Chapter aligns with the Core Focus and Mission of the organization.

We will provide sample Guidelines to help your Chapter make these key decisions.

### **Geographic Area of New Chapter**

You can define the geographical boundaries of your Chapter provided that:

- the area defined is not already part of an existing chapter's boundaries;
- the area encompassed by your Chapter is of a feasible size to make participation in Chapter events relatively easy for anyone within its boundaries

Final approval for boundaries is granted by The Prairie Enthusiasts Board of Directors.

## **Chapter Finances**

### **Memberships**

Donors who make a gift of any amount are considered members of the organization for one year from their last gift date. New and renewing members send their gifts to Chapter Support, who process them and send them an acknowledgement. All donations are allocated between your Chapter and Chapter Support according to the current policy adopted by The Prairie Enthusiasts Board of Directors. These allocations cover your Chapter's share of the costs for our Chapter Support team and other organization-wide expenses.

### **Restricted Donations**

Donations made for a specific purpose, such as the purchase of land in your Chapter's area, are placed in a restricted account for that purpose.

### **Sales**

If your Chapter sells items and/or services for earned revenue, sales are reported to Chapter Support using an Income Advice Form (IAF) and in accordance with the *Treasurer's Handbook*.

### **Chapter Expenses**

All bills incurred by the chapter are submitted to the Corporate Treasurer using a Purchase Advice Form (PAF) and in accordance with the *Treasurer's Handbook*. Chapter Support processes payment and coordinates as needed with the vendor directly.

Donor reports and financial statements are sent to your Chapter Treasurer and Chair to review and distribute as appropriate within your Chapter.

## **What your Chapter receives from The Prairie Enthusiasts**

- 501(c)(3) tax exempt status with the United States Internal Revenue Service as a nonprofit organization.
- Brochures and other promotional materials at no cost.
- Tracking and reporting on membership data, membership renewal reminders, gift processing and fundraising and grant writing.
- *The Prairie Promoter* publication is mailed and published on the website three times annually. Your Chapter will be given space to share news and promote upcoming opportunities. Your members can also submit articles and items of interest to the Editor to be considered for publication.
- Coverage under The Prairie Enthusiasts General Liability Insurance, Prescribed Burn Insurance and other applicable insurance coverage.
- Representation on The Prairie Enthusiasts Board of Directors.
- Financial services, tracking and reporting.
- Local, State and Federal tax filing and reporting
- Licensing services as required by Chapter activities.
- Information about your Chapter, upcoming events and protected sites promoted on The Prairie Enthusiasts website.
- Design, production, subscription tools and other support for all your communication needs, including email and social media.
- A wealth of resources and networking opportunities with other chapters and experts.

## **How to Get Started**

As the hub of the organization, our Chapter Support team provides guidance, support and information to help you form a Chapter in your area. We can also connect you with other Board and Chapter leaders willing to guide and mentor you along the way. Contact us either by email at [info@theprairieenthusiasts.org](mailto:info@theprairieenthusiasts.org) or by phone at (608) 676-0985. We look forward to supporting you on your journey!