



The Prairie Enthusiasts

Southwest Wisconsin Chapter

Chapter Board Meeting held Saturday, July 11, 2026 at Roger & Pat Smith's home,
Boscobel

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm by Becky Fernette, Chapter Chair.
Present: Roger Smith, Gary Eldred, Gary Adams, Bob Costanza, Becky Fernette,
James Haas, Jack Kusmaul, Ross Shrago, Steve Querin-Schultz, and Kay Wienke.
Guests: Bob Retko, Julie Pluemer, Pat Smith, Don Pluemer, plus Greg & Haley from
Wyoming.

Announcements: Becky reported the Chapter received a thank you note from
Steve Querin-Schultz regarding his mother's memorial.

Agenda: Burn School & Chain Saw Training were added to the agenda under
Events.

Treasurer: Julie Pluemer has agreed to serve the Chapter as Treasurer. Moved by
Jack Kusmaul & seconded by Ross Shrago to approve Julie Pluemer as Treasurer.
Approved unanimously. Thank you to Steve Querin-Schultz for his many years of
service as Treasurer.

Minutes of May 30, 2026 Meeting. Motion made by Steve Querin-Schultz &
seconded by Roger Smith to approve the minutes of the May 30, 2026 Board
Meeting. Approved.

Treasurer's Report- Steve reported on cash balances for May 2026. So far, our
revenue is 72% of our budgeted amount (\$43,234/\$60K). The Equipment (EQP)
restricted balance is for fire equipment requested by the Richland Center/Lone
Rock Area groups. The James Dutton Grant is for prescribed fire at Iris Drive &
Eldred Prairie. Reid with Chapter Support is applying for a \$5000 grant for fire
breaks at Iris Drive. Our Endowment Distribution will be reflected in the June
financial report.

Members are encouraged to give monthly donations to the organization rather than
a lump sum. This can be placed on your credit card but with an additional fee or
you can sign up to have the amount taken from your checking account on a monthly
basis. Kay Wienke stated that if you give \$1000/year, divide that by 12 and give
\$83.33/month. This makes it easier to monitor donations and keeps cash coming
into the organization on a more reliable schedule.

Chapter Board Representative Report- Kay Wienke provided a written report. She added that since the June meeting, Katie Hahn from the Chippewa Savannas Chapter was elected to serve as Secretary.

Land Management- Written reports were submitted for all 8 sites. It has been requested to acquire Fire Numbers for each of our 4 sites that currently do not have these. They are \$40 each. Jack Kussmaul will pursue this. It will allow people to find the sites easily and better for Emergency Personnel as well.

Events: Grell Prairie Walk- there were 15 people who attended this walk with Becky Fernette & Marty Grell.

Gays Mills Area Group met with one new member attending. There were 13 total.

Richland Area Group (Vernon & Richland Co) will meet on July 12. There are 17 people signed up. This will be at the Pavick/Block property near Yuba. Prairie walk & lunch.

Graef Prairies Walk- Sunday, August 2, 1:30-3:30

Sylvan Road Prairie Walk- Sunday, Aug. 16, 1:30-3:30

Butterflies of Borah Creek- Saturday, Sept. 12, 10-12

Future- Burn School Part 2 will be offered in Fall at Empire Sauk and Spring at Borah Creek. SW Chapter has 15 people willing to continue Burn Training and we are working on making that happen. Rob Schubert, etc. from Empire Sauk will facilitate. Cost this year was \$521. We would anticipate a similar cost in the spring. Aiming for earlier class so participants can take part in more burns after the class.

In light of the new Chain Saw Policy, we have a quote for Chain Saw Training from Luke Saunders who did a school for us in 2021. The quote is for \$1216 with a limit of 10-12 students. Suggestion was to charge rates for non-members, members, site stewards & board members so those who are most active pay the lowest price. Luke indicated he could be available to do the class in Nov. or Dec.

A Prairie Ecology workshop with Dan Carter was suggested. Since there are a group of people with good knowledge, an advanced class might be useful.

Question of how we know what other Chapters are offering. The best is to go to The Prairie Enthusiasts web site and review the Events.

Scholarship- Jack reported there were only 2 applicants, both from UW Stevens Point. Both are chapter residents. Molly was selected for \$1000 grant and 1 year membership.

Barn- Becky plans to put up more panels, painting and general clean-up before the fall events there. The Foundation work has not been done yet.

Member & Volunteer Recruitment- Member numbers are holding steady at 150. Kay indicated it is good advertising to place Prairie Promoters in libraries, gas stations, realty offices, etc. Each newsletter has a membership envelope inside. Kay and Becky can get these for anyone who wants them to distribute. They do not need to be current newsletters.

Becky sends letters to all new & lapsed members.

Volunteers for Annual Gathering- The annual gathering is Sunday, Sept. 20 & Becky needs volunteers to come at about 10:30 am to set up. Jack Kussmaul volunteered to help afterward for clean-up. Contact Becky with your availability. There will also be a need for someone to lead a Prairie walk that day. Gary Adams & possibly Gary Eldred might do this.

Equipment/Tools Wish List- Land Management is to create a wish list of equipment the Chapter should/could purchase in the future to facilitate work. Chain saws were mentioned. Fire was discussed. PPE, UTV with water container, fire helmets & chainsaw helmets were mentioned. With the new Chain Saw Policy First Aid Kits will be a needed purchase. Becky has asked Chapter Support if there is a possibility to purchase these needed items in bulk.

Site Stewards are to review their needs.

Also, need to compile a list of equipment already owned by the Chapter. Jack Kussmaul will accumulate this list & coordinate the Wish List.

Recruit Chapter Secretary- Kay has agreed to take notes until the end of this year. There is need to recruit someone who might take on this task. The role takes minutes, assists Chair with agenda creation, keeps records of minutes, sends letters to new or lapsing members, maintains the membership list.

Future Board Meetings- Annual Gathering/Board Meeting. Sunday, Sept. 20.
10:30 am Prairie Walk, Noon Potluck, Chapter Update at 1 p.m. with board meeting after.

Teams- Wednesday, November 18, 6 pm

Teams- Wednesday, January 20, 6 pm

Teams- Wednesday, March 17, 6 pm

Adjournment- Meeting was adjourned at 2:11 pm.

Minutes submitted by Kay Wienke, interim notetaker; edited by Becky Fernette

Attachments:

#1: Chapter Representative Report

#2: Land Management/Site Reports

Attachment #1

June TPE Board Meeting - Report from Chapter Board Representative Kay Wienke

- Jim Rogala was elected to his last 2 year term as President. Secretary election is being delayed because the candidate needs approval from their workplace.
- Chapters are encouraged to spend their budgeted amounts for this year as additional funds will not be likely due to the need to decrease the Organization's deficit.
- Monthly donations are encouraged because it spreads our income out over time instead of having months with little coming in and other months with large contributions.
- Jay Rutherford will meet with Chapter Treasurers to discuss proposed changes to Chapter financial reporting.
- [Borah Creek Management Plan 2026](#) was approved.
- Chain Saw Policy approved.
- Millville Conservancy Final Project Proposal approved. Thank you to Jack Kussmaul.

Future Meetings of TPE Board

- [September 15](#), 2026; 7-9p.m.
- November 24, 2026; 7-9p.m.
- February 7-8, 2027 MEETING & RETREAT
- [March 30](#), 2027; 7-9PM

Attachment #2: Land Management Committee Report for July 11, 2026 Meeting

Thomas Wet (Kristin): On a suggestion from George Riggin, I mowed a small patch of reed canary grass as the first step in a 3-step treatment. I will mow again later this summer, then spray in the fall. Still waiting on a fence quote from Fink. Treating stray cattails and reed canary grass in the former dense cattail patch.

Iris Drive: (Bob R): James Haas agreed to be Assistant Site Steward for Iris Drive. James will focus on enlarging the burn breaks of the east burn unit. As Burn Boss, James will organize and conduct the prescribed burns. We started to cut a portion of a new burn break and tested cutting and herbicide application techniques that would be applicable for Chapter work days. I will focus on seed

collecting, seed cleaning/preparation, and frost seeding into the old crop lands. Recently, I have been working to control outbreaks of Bird's foot trefoil at the lower SE area of the west burn unit and the west parking area. I have also treated a dense stand of reed canary grass located at the SE corner of the west burn unit with Fusilade DX (grass-specific herbicide). The effectiveness of Fusilade DX on reed canary grass appears to be very promising.

Feist Prairie: At Becky's request, Dan Carter visited Feist on June 12, 2026 and made the following recommendations: 1) Remove cedars in the remnant, 2) Leave some trees along the north boundary to block pesticide/herbicide drift and plant larger native shrubs like serviceberry, 3) Continue removing invasives in the remnant and the cleared areas, and 4) Conduct dormant season burns.

Bush Clover (Becky): Work party on June 7 to remove woody invasives. Discussed mowing this area in the fall. Dan Carter visited BC on 6/12 to develop the site management plan. He recommended 1) Girdling and treating the aspens in the fence line near the road, 2) Mowing the north side, 3) Continuing woody invasive removal, and 4) Redirecting the run-off from the farm field to the east, 5) Dormant season burns.

Borah Creek (Steve): We've been mowing large patches of wild parsnip before they go to seed, continue to mow burn breaks, and mowed the cattle yard around the barn. We cut the vegetation around the barn foundation to provide access for the foundation repair. We plan to mow the large areas of spotted knapweed before it goes to seed.

Sylvan Road (Tom): Storm damage toppled trees in the interior of the property and onto roads and trails. The roads and trails have been cleaned up though we have a "leaner" basswood tree over Banner Road near the Hampton property. The township intends to soon clear it using a boom truck. Trail maintenance is ongoing.

The DNR Wetland Surcharge grant is inching forward again after permit-related delays. DNR Water Regulation engineering issued a determination stating that we can move ahead without Hydrologic & Hydraulic modeling of the project site, thereby paving a path to permit issuance. I'm presently navigating permits with the DNR and Iowa County and have hopefully cleared a new set of internal hurdles. The NRCS has helped design the ditch fill to meet regulatory specifications for an approved scope of work that will be included in the permit. Once those negotiations conclude, we'll select a contractor and establish a schedule. As a reminder, it's a one-time reimbursable project so we'll manage the budget as we go and be paid back lump sum by the DNR schedule. As a reminder, it's a one-time reimbursable project so we'll manage the budget as we go and be paid back lump sum by the DNR.

The stream crossing (previously permitted) that allows some access to the isolated North Block needs repair. It would be sensible to get a repair estimate and do the work at the same time as the ditch backfill project in order to save mobilization costs, etc.

Eldred Prairie (Ross): Eldred looks really nice this year after most likely due to the fire this spring. Lots of blooming Butterfly milkweed and found a number of patches of purple milkweed. The season began with going after Crown vetch which seems to be decreasing every year. We had a couple of days of effort going after garlic mustard, but after discussing with others it was

determined that the area where it is once it gets opened up once the Elderberry and Giant Ragweed is removed the garlic mustard will probably just dissipate. The bracken fern issue is in a 'wait and see' mode after a visit by Dan Carter.

For the past month we've been primarily working on wild parsnip removal which is on the mostly on the North side. Sweet clover will be next. There's been some beginning effort but the Sweet Clover is fairly extensive. We are mowing the North side where we seeded this last winter. There will be an ongoing assessment as to the effectiveness of the seeding over the last few years.

Double Oak Savanna (James): Brushcut a colony of dog bane and aggressive patches of woodland sunflower on the eastern ridge.