

The Nature Conservancy

Midwest Regional Office

328 East Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414

(612) 379-2134

March 2, 1978

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FILE _____

TO: Spencer Beebe
FROM: Dianne Hennes *DH*
RE: Eliot Porter - prairie trip

Spencer:

Geoff asked me to answer your memo of 2/17 and gather some information about prairies in the midwest to pass on to Eliot Porter. We would suggest that he visit these prairies, which are not only outstanding natural areas, but also have expert guides available nearby.

1. Samuel H. Ordway, Jr. Memorial Prairie - McPherson County, South Dakota. Located 20 miles north and 29 miles west of Aberdeen. A map and descriptive brochure is enclosed. Paul Bultsma, manager of the preserve, lives in a ranch house on the area, and bunk house visitor facilities are available for over-night guests. Paul can be reached at:

Paul M. Bultsma, Manager
S. H. Ordway Memorial Prairie
Star Route, Box 17
Leola, South Dakota 57456
Phone: (605) 439-3475

2. Konza Prairie Natural Area, Kansas. A map and descriptive press release are attached. Konza Prairie is under a lease to Kansas State University, which uses the area for grassland research. It is perhaps the most spectacular of the prairies TNC owns. Dr. Lloyd Hulbert, professor at the University and dedicated TNC volunteer, is manager of the area. His address:

Dr. Lloyd C. Hulbert
Division of Biology
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas 66506
Phone: Office: (913) 532-6620 Home: (913) 539-2636

3. Missouri Prairies. TNC owns several fine prairies in



National Office, 1800 North Kent Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209

Spencer Beebe
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Missouri which are leased to and managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Maps to several of these are attached in the xeroxed booklet, "Public Prairies of Missouri". Tom Toney, of the Missouri Department of Conservation, is the prairie manager. His address is:

Thomas E. Toney
Route 4
Clinton, Missouri 64735
Phone: Home: (816) 885-3246 Office: (816) 885-5633

Mt. Vernon Prairie is a particularly fine Missouri prairie, and exceptionally diverse in floral species.

Early summer (May-June) is probably the best time to visit the prairies to catch the early floral species, however, the taller grasses will be more evident later in the summer and early fall. Eliot Porter should probably contact the individual prairie managers for their expert opinions.



Why Save A Prairie?

Everyday, America's natural heritage is being lost — to development, to the plow, to progress. We can no longer observe, study and admire the "old muddy Missouri" in South Dakota as it was before the four mainstem dams were built. There are few natural prairie lakes remaining whose shores are not lined with cabins. These natural areas are lost forever; our children will never know them as nature formed them. The Nature Conservancy is insuring that future generations will be able to enjoy and explore a yet spectacular part of South Dakota, the prairie.

In preserving the Ordway Prairie, The Nature Conservancy is providing a natural area for researchers to study the biotic diversity of the prairie. Research on the native prairie ecosystem could yield many benefits to mankind. Agricultural research scientists depend on the broad genetic base of wild grasses to help them develop new disease and drought resistant strains of hybrid seed. There is research interest in the way nature renews soil fertility. Medical researchers have only recently begun analyzing the extracts of many common plants. Research on natural lands can open up new possibilities for effective utilization of our precious natural resources. Natural lands such as the Ordway Prairie provide an ecological resource bank for researchers.

Management of Ordway Prairie

All management activities on the Ordway Prairie are designed to preserve and enhance the natural qualities of the prairie. Native prairie vegetation is a result of years of insect and pathologic plagues, drought, fire, grazing by elk and endless herds of buffalo, years of abundant moisture, and periods of complete rest from use. The Nature Conservancy is using natural management tools such as controlled burning and grazing to simulate these factors. Studies are being conducted on the prairie to develop the correct combination, timing and intensity of the various management tools.

Ordway Prairie is a designated model preserve of The Nature Conservancy. Activities and programs on the Ordway Prairie will be monitored, and the information gained from them disseminated for use on other grasslands in the Midwest.

A full-time manager lives at the headquarters of the Ordway Prairie nine miles west of Leola. He is developing a management program to restore the prairie as nearly as possible to its presettlement condition. He is also overseeing the development of the Ordway Prairie Biological Research Station, which was funded by a grant from the Bush Foundation. The research station is being used by grassland researchers from the entire Midwest. The manager is assisted in his duties by a volunteer management committee composed of neighboring ranchers, representatives of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Soil Conservation Service, and local businessmen.



How You Can Help

You can become a member of The Nature Conservancy. In this way, you can help to continue the Conservancy's preservation of natural lands by making contributions of dollars to acquire and maintain natural lands, or by working with local Chapters or preserve committees to help save natural lands in your area. Most importantly, as a member, you will have the knowledge that your efforts are safeguarding natural areas for this and future generations to observe, study, and enjoy. You will receive a quarterly publication, *The Nature Conservancy News*, which will keep you up to date on the Conservancy's progress in natural areas preservation nationwide, its stewardship programs and policies, and news of Conservancy Chapters and volunteer activities. Membership in The Nature Conservancy includes membership in a State Chapter.

To become a member of The Nature Conservancy, return the enclosed envelope, along with membership dues for the membership category of your choice. Your contribution to The Nature Conservancy is fully tax deductible.



"It is important to scientific study and to the health and sanity of man, that there be preserved some unique areas for scientists to observe nature's continuing evolution; for future generations to know historic landmarks as they were when history marked them; and for dwellers on a crowded planet to have resort to the grandeur and the peace of nature."

— Samuel H. Ordway, Jr.

More About The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy is a private, non-profit conservation organization whose resources are devoted solely to the preservation and protection of this country's remaining natural lands. The Conservancy identifies natural areas, accepts gifts of natural lands, acquires land by direct purchase, and, as a private agency, assists governmental agencies in acquiring lands for public use when requested. The Nature Conservancy and its 40,000 members and volunteers have successfully preserved 1,127,960 acres of forests, prairies, marshes, mountains, beaches, islands, lakes, and swamps in the past 25 years.

The Samuel H. Ordway, Jr. Memorial Prairie is a piece of America's natural land heritage preserved by The Nature Conservancy for observation, study, and appreciation by this and future generations. This magnificent 7,600 acre preserve, located in the transition zone between the tall and short grass prairies, is a part of the prairie pothole region. Its 400 wetlands, in combination with its vast land areas, provide habitat for an unusually diverse community of vegetation and wildlife. Waterfowl are abundant on the preserve; 1000 to 2000 breeding pairs are present in a wet year. Among these nesting species are mallard, blue-winged teal, gadwall, pintail, shoveler, canvasback and redhead ducks. Many species of shorebirds are also evident, and the majestic ferruginous hawk builds its large stick nests on the hillcrests. Mammals inhabiting the preserve include pronghorn antelope, coyote, jackrabbit, badger, muskrat and mink. Over 300 plant species have been discovered.

Location of Nature Conservancy Preserves in South Dakota

Samuel H. Ordway, Jr. Memorial Prairie, McPherson County, 7,600 acres
Located 9 miles west of Leola, or 20 miles north and 29 miles west of Aberdeen.

Altamont Prairie, Deuel County, 62 acres.

Located 10 miles north and 7 miles east of Clear Lake. This preserve was one of the first prairies acquired by The Nature Conservancy. It provides a scenic view of the Minnesota River Valley from the top of a glacial ridge that once served as an Indian lookout.

Sioux Prairie, Moody County, 200 acres.

Located 35 miles north of Sioux Falls.

Vermillion Prairie, Clay County, 22 acres

Located 15 miles northwest of Vermillion, adjacent to the Missouri River floodplain.

Cloviss Prairie, Brown County, 157 acres.

Located 21 miles north and 7 miles east of Aberdeen. Clovis Prairie is a natural prairie with good tall-grass composition and shallow wetlands.

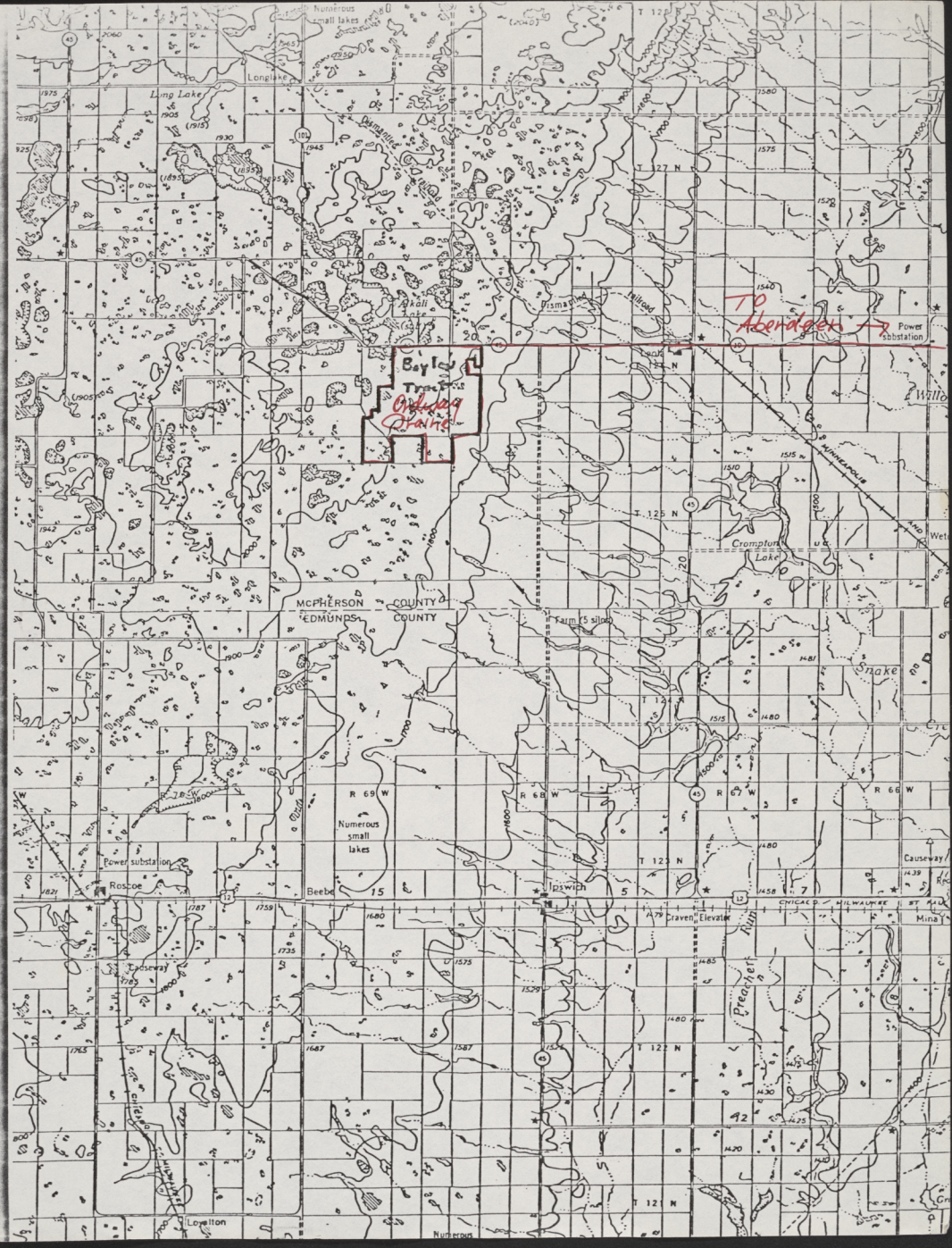
The Samuel H. Ordway Jr. Memorial Prairie is available for research and field trips by advance arrangement with the manager. For further information, contact the Manager, S.H. Ordway Memorial Prairie, Star Route, Box 17, Leola, South Dakota 57456.

The Samuel H. Ordway, Jr. Memorial Prairie

Part of South Dakota's
Land Heritage

Preserved by
The Nature Conservancy





Bayley Tract
Old Log Drains

TO Aberdeen → Power Substation

MCPHERSON COUNTY
EDMONDS COUNTY

R 69 W
Numerous small lakes

Power substation
Roscoe

Isiswich

Draven Elevator

CHICKEN MILWAUKEE ST. PAUL MINN.

Lowilton

Nurston

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

MANHATTAN

HUNTERS ISLAND

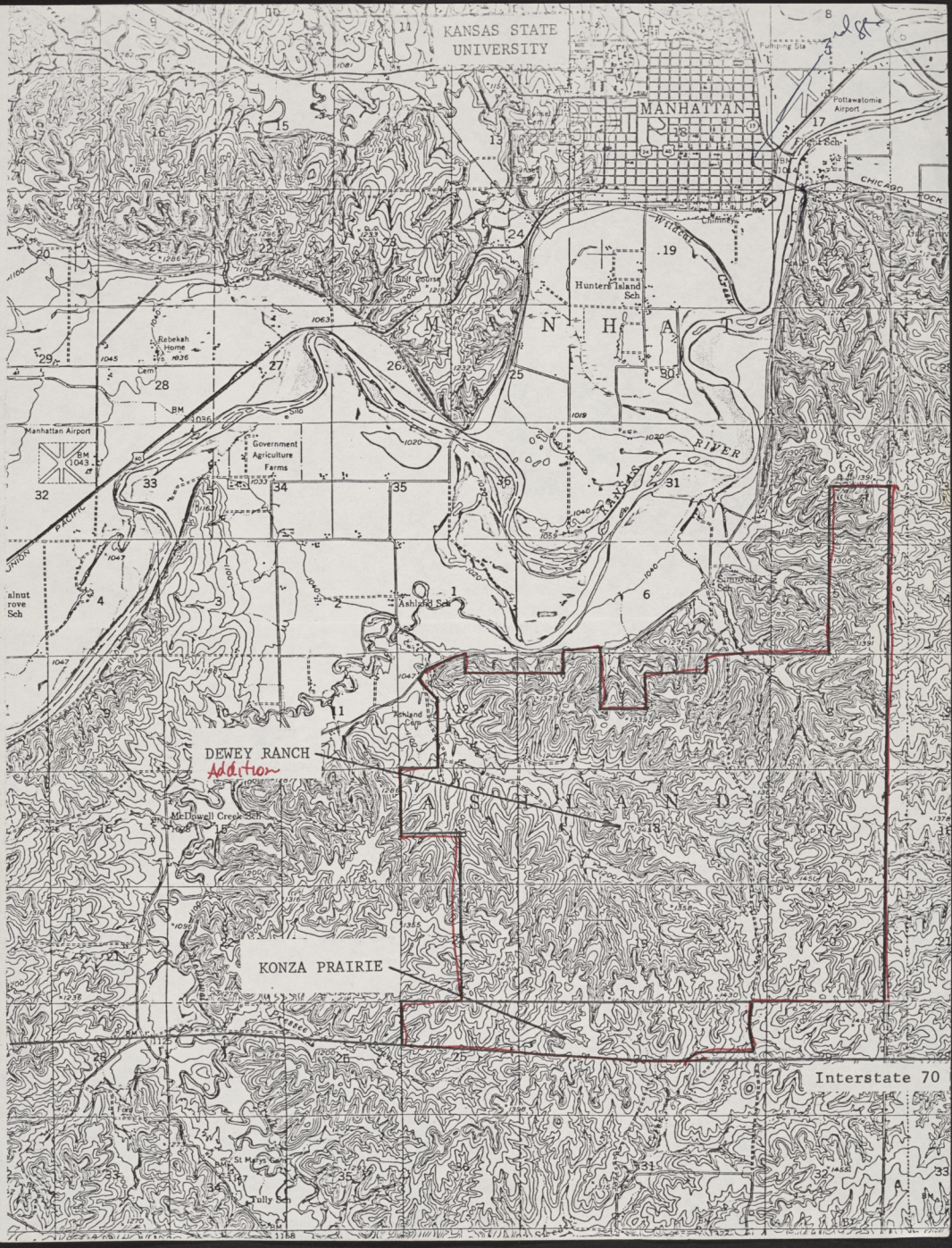
HUNTERS ISLAND Sch

MANHATTAN RIVER

DEWEY RANCH
Addition

KONZA PRAIRIE

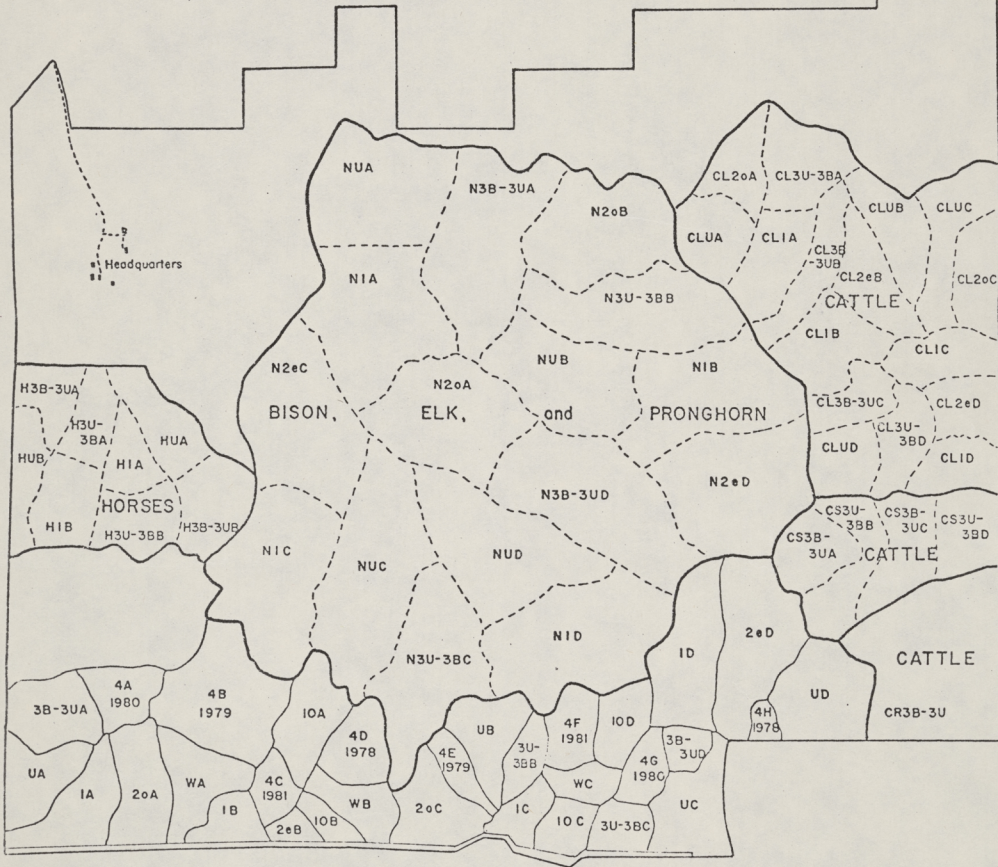
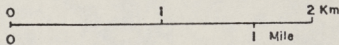
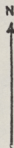
Interstate 70



KONZA PRAIRIE RESEARCH NATURAL AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

LEGEND

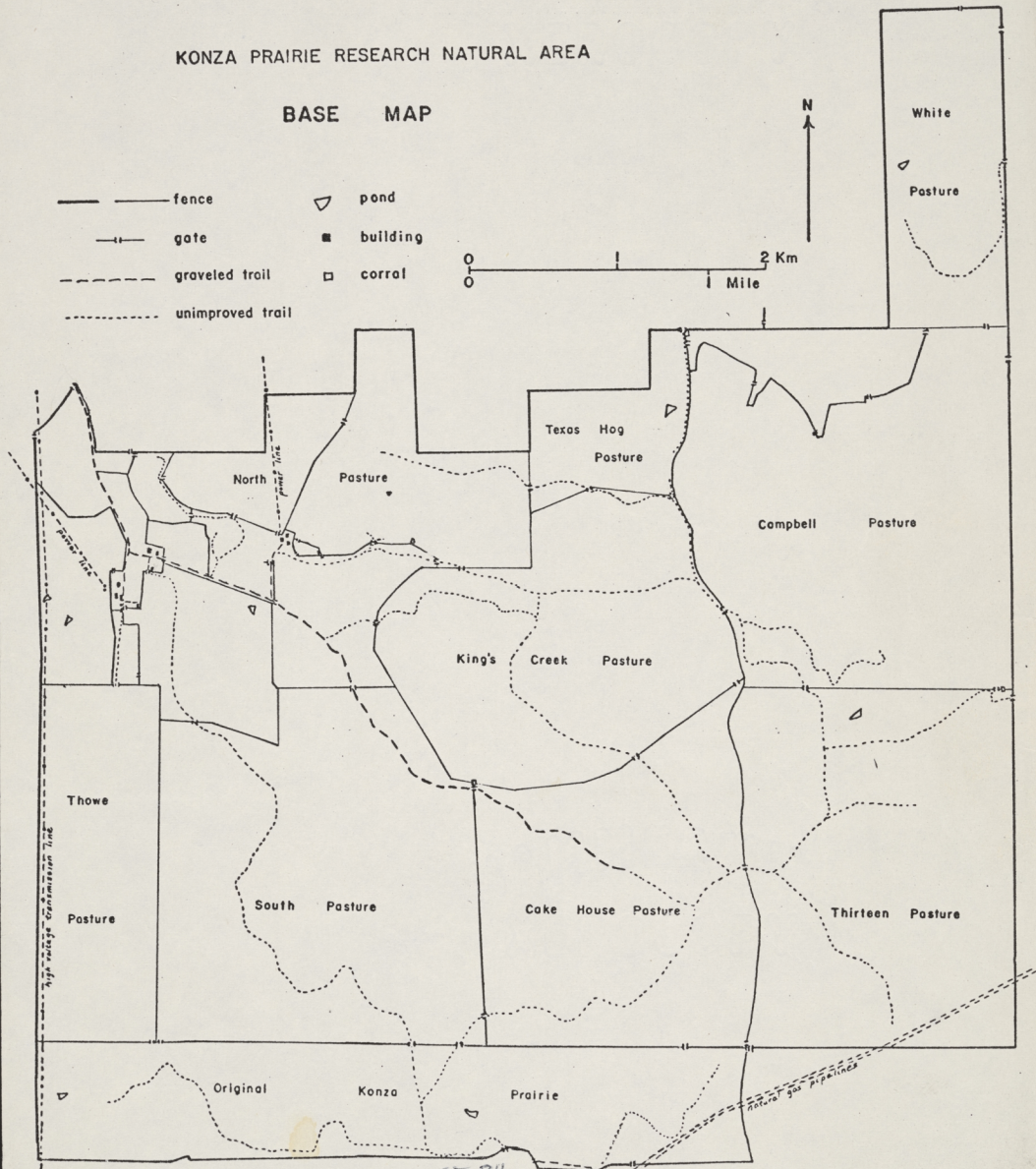
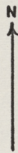
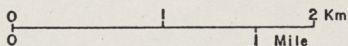
- CR** - Cattle, 3.25 ha/animal unit yearlong, ranch-type operation
CS - Cattle, 8.0 ha/a.u. yearlong, winter supplemented
CL - Cattle, 8.0 ha/a.u. yearlong, not supplemented
H - Feral horses, 8.0 ha/a.u. yearlong
N - Native herbivores: bison, elk, and pronghorn, 8.0 ha/a.u.
 If above designations are lacking - No large herbivores
U - Unburned
W - Burned after years with $>12X$ median ppt.
1, 2, 4, or 10 - Number of years between burnings
e, o - Burning in even or odd years
3U-3B - Unburned for 3 years then burned for 3 years
3B-3U - Burned for 3 years then unburned for 3 years
A.B.C.D - Replications



KONZA PRAIRIE RESEARCH NATURAL AREA

BASE MAP

- | | | | |
|-----------|------------------|---|----------|
| — | fence | ▽ | pond |
| — — | gate | ■ | building |
| - - - | graveled trail | □ | corral |
| - - - - - | unimproved trail | | |



Site 311

The Nature Conservancy

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News

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63-71

ANONYMOUS DONATION OF \$3.6 MILLION FOR PRAIRIE CONSERVATION

Washington, D. C. --- After months of negotiations and using the largest gift ever made to The Nature Conservancy, an anonymous cash donation in excess of \$3.6 million, the organization has acquired 7200 acres of tallgrass prairie. The 11 square mile virgin grassland is about 50 miles west of Topeka and a few miles south of Manhattan, Kansas.

In announcing the acquisition today, Patrick F. Noonan, President of The Nature Conservancy, called the anonymous donation which made the purchase possible, "without question the most generous single private gift ever made in the history of Conservancy conservation efforts. The contribution is a challenge to all that must be matched by equal commitment if we are to be successful in preserving our nation's imperiled natural heritage." Noonan said, "The concern so clearly evidenced here, multiplied by the action of conservationists nationwide, will make it possible to

--more--

pass on important elements of the natural world to future generations."

Nathaniel P. Reed, Honorary Chairman of the American Land Trust, and former Assistant Secretary of the Interior, said, "The land purchased today was identified as a top priority for the Trust, not only in Kansas, but in the entire Midwest. It is gratifying to know that this vital tallgrass prairie will serve as both an important center for present and future grassland research and as a living link to our nation's pioneer history. On behalf of the Trust and its National Committee, special thanks go to the donor of the generous gift which served to purchase this magnificent land."

To be known as Konza Prairie, the land adjoins a 916 acre prairie purchased by the Conservancy in 1971 and was known locally as The Dewey Ranch. The prairie rises from the floodplain of the Kansas River to rolling grass covered hills some 400 feet above. A number of wooded draws dot the land. The upland prairie areas contain over 25 grasses and grass like types with the entire area supplying 325 more species.

Mammals found on the prairie include coyotes, jackrabbits, and a variety of small rodents. Red-tailed and Swainson's hawks hunt above the prairie, while prairie chickens, upland plovers, and meadow larks all nest in the tall grasses.

Conservancy officials said the prairie will be leased to Kansas State University and will become an addition to the present Konza Prairie Research Natural Area. Local real property taxes will continue to be paid on the addition as they have been over the last five years on the original prairie research center.

Lloyd C. Hulbert, Professor of Biology at Kansas State University and Chairman of the Konza Prairie Administration Board, said, "It is essential that we maintain natural grasslands such as the Konza. They serve as benchmarks for our present day land management practices. Research on the original prairie ecosystem can help us learn the principles that explain the prairies' dynamic self-perpetuation, and can help us evaluate the effects of our present land management practices."

Richard Pough, a leading conservationist and President of the New York headquartered Natural Area Council, was president of the Conservancy during the organization's formative years during the mid-50's and is a long time champion of prairie preservation. Commenting on today's announcement Dr. Pough said, "The prairie has been one of the most neglected of the continent's original plant and animal communities. Protection of this large sample of the tallgrass prairie is a great step forward."

The Konza Prairie is a part of the system of grassland preserves created by The Nature Conservancy during the last ten years. According to Grace Lieberman, who is responsible for overall management of all Conservancy areas in the Midwest, the organization's grassland projects now protect samples of all three prairie types, tall, mid, and short grass. Approximately 40,000 acres are included in the prairie preserves.

The American Land Trust, which named Konza Prairie as a Kansas protection goal, was established early in the Bicentennial year in an innovative effort to save vital portions of the nation's diverse ecological heritage. Using the experience of The Nature Conservancy, the Trust is seeking \$200 million in donations of land or of funds to protect land, with at least one prime area in each state.

The Nature Conservancy, founded in 1950, is a national conservation organization whose resources are devoted to the preservation of the natural world and the diversity of life it safeguards. The national organization works by finding, protecting (generally through acquisition), and managing natural areas. To date the Conservancy and its 28,000 members have been responsible for the preservation of 1,088,137 acres involving 1698 projects in 47 states. The organization also has cooperative identification programs underway with 8 states and the Tennessee Valley Authority. Approximately 60% of all Conservancy preserves are retained by the organization and managed by volunteer land stewards.

The Konza Prairie is a project of the Conservancy's Midwestern Regional Office in Minneapolis. Other regional offices are in San Francisco, Boston, and Atlanta with National Headquarters in metropolitan Washington, D.C.

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Background Information on Konza Prairie

History

The Nature Conservancy's newly acquired 7,200-acre Konza Prairie is named for the tribe of American Indians who lived in northwest Missouri and northeast Kansas at about the time that white men first entered the region. Their villages were scattered along the Missouri River and along the Kansas River, as far west as the junction of the Big Blue River (or Blue Earth River) at Manhattan. The Konza Indians raised corn, squash, and other crops in garden plots in the valleys by their villages. They hunted the land to the south and west of their villages, though not to the north because it was Pawnee territory. A regular hunting ground of the Konza Indians, the Konza Prairie is less than ten miles from one of their early villages..

Many meanings have been suggested for the name Konza, such as "wind people," "swift wind people," "swift," "south wind people," "small wind," "windy," and "makes wind near the ground." Of these, the most widely accepted translation is "south wind people."

Later, Konza Prairie became part of the large ranch created in the 1880's by C. P. Dewey, one of the early settlers of Riley County, Kansas. A three-story farmhouse built of native stone, a 38-stall stone barn, and a number of smaller buildings still stand on the ranch lands.

Konza Prairie

The Konza Prairie lies in the heart of the most extensive remaining tallgrass prairie region, the Flint Hills. On the upland prairie of the Konza acreage over 25 species of grasses and grass-like plants are present. Big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian-grass, and switchgrass dominate in some sites, while grama grasses, dropseeds, buffalograss, and sedges dominate on others. Interspersed with the grasses are numerous broadleaf plants, such as leadplant, scurfspea, goldenrods, asters, and colorful dotted gayfeathers and prairie clovers. The diversity of plant life on the Konza Prairie totals over 300 species. Throughout the growing season, the upland prairie presents an ever-changing display of color and life formed by the rich complex of thriving plant and animal life.

Our Remaining Grasslands

Prairie was once the most extensive natural environment on the North American continent. About 25 million years ago, when the Rocky Mountain uplift intercepted the prevailing westerly winds, a rain shadow was cast over the plains to the east. A grassland environment developed, based on a spectacular diversity of plants and animals adapted to the harsh conditions of the plains. Eastward, where rainfall exceeds 20 inches annually, the tallgrass prairie developed. Lush grasses standing 6 to 10 feet tall, colorful wildflowers, abundant wildlife, sweeping vistas, wooded streams,

and a landscape shaped by hot summers and severe winters were the components of the native tallgrass prairie.

The tallgrass prairie soil was fertile. As farmers and homesteaders began the task of turning the tough sod, the vast prairies were gradually converted to the most productive agricultural region in the country.

Studies have shown that the native prairies supported an interesting association of adapted animal species. Bison, antelope, elk, and wolf roamed the grasslands; prairie chickens courted each other on their booming grounds. Today coyotes are at the top of the food chain. But each square mile of a Kansas prairie may contain 650 million insects, 600 least shrews, 330 short-tailed shrews, 1,900 ground squirrels, 250 voles, 1,700 deer mice, 700 plain harvest mice, 185 jackrabbits, and assorted snakes, birds, badgers, and pocket gophers. It has been well said that the native tallgrass prairie is "more than grass."

Today only scattered relicts of the tallgrass prairies remain, generally in areas too steep or rocky to plow, or where soils were unsuitable for cultivation. Once our grasslands have been severely overgrazed, damaged by herbicides, fertilized, plowed or interseeded with exotic grasses, they have been destroyed and cannot be restored for perhaps centuries, if ever.

The Konza Prairie Research Natural Area

The Konza Prairie presents a superb opportunity to protect

an outstanding example of native grassland for research use. The area contains unplowed native grassland in good condition; has deep permeable soils; is comprised of wooded segments, floodplain, and upland; and is located only six miles from Kansas State University. In addition, the tract contains a complete set of farm buildings that would be suitable for housing research facilities. All these factors make the prairie an exceptional research opportunity.

The Konza Prairie Research Natural Area will be established through a cooperative effort between The Nature Conservancy and Kansas State University. Much can be learned from comparative studies of natural and man-manipulated ecosystems, and the Konza Prairie is ideal for such research. By studying a native tall-grass prairie ecosystem, we will gain knowledge and scientific understanding of grassland management.

Conservancy Prairie Preserves

The Nature Conservancy's prairie preserves now encompass approximately 40,000 acres in the states of Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Texas, Kansas, and Ohio. Major preserves are: the Samuel H. Ordway, Jr., Memorial Prairie, 7,600 acres in South Dakota; Arapaho Prairie, over 1,200 acres in Nebraska; Project '76 Prairie System, over 3,500 acres in Missouri; and Bluestem Prairie, 1200 acres in Minnesota.

