



## Introduction and General Description

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program in Kansas has been driven by two guiding beliefs. The first is recognizing the value of our native plant communities, not only for their biological diversity, but also their sustainability and their productivity. The second has been to build into the Partners Program the flexibility necessary to make it accommodate fish and wildlife and the private landowner/producer.

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program in Kansas has utilized this philosophy to assist private landowners to voluntarily restore, enhance, and develop thousands of acres of highly functional wetland, grassland,



**Tall gayfeather.**

# KANSAS

and woodland habitats throughout the State. Since 1990, the Partners Program has partnered with over 700 Kansas landowners. The number of new requests for assistance continues to accelerate.

Gail Combs, Kansas farmer and Partners cooperator, says this about the Partners Program, *"This program does so much good and works so well with me as an agricultural producer and an environmentalist, that it hardly seems possible that a government program could work this well."*

## Kansas Activities:

- \* Wetland restoration
- \* Wetland creation
- \* Prairie restoration
- \* Prairie enhancement
- \* Riparian restoration
- \* Riparian enhancement
- \* Bottomland hardwoods
- \* Oxbow restoration
- \* Environmental education

## Habitats of Special Concern

The tallgrass prairie is considered to be North America's most altered biome. Less than 4 percent of this globally unique grassland remains intact. The State of Kansas harbors 80 percent of the remaining North American tallgrass prairie.

More than 700 plant species



**Federally threatened Meads milkweed.**

compose this unique plant community. Over 250 bird species, 60 species of mammals, 35 species of reptiles, amphibians, and countless species of insects, all form this rich tapestry of life that we call the tallgrass prairie.

## Tallgrass Legacy Alliance

The Partners Program in Kansas has made the tallgrass prairie one of its top priorities. In April 1999, the Partners Program initiated an alliance of individuals and organizations called the Tallgrass Legacy Alliance.

The mission of the Tallgrass Legacy Alliance is to preserve, enhance, and restore the tallgrass prairie. This will be



**Tallgrass prairie**

accomplished through educational and financial partnerships with private landowners, operators, and private and public entities, in a manner that will strengthen and improve the economic, social, and cultural foundations of the region.

Tom Moxley, rancher and President of the Tallgrass Legacy Alliance says, “*The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Partners Program is working on the ground for producers and the environment in the State of Kansas.*”

## **Threats**

Kansas historically was ranked fifth in the Nation for acreage of tallgrass prairie, but today Kansas has almost as much tallgrass prairie as all other prairie States combined, excluding Oklahoma. Even so, 82.6 percent of the Kansas tallgrass prairie has been lost.

Presently, a variety of issues threaten the stability of the region. Some of these are as follows:

- < Invasive species
- < Fragmentation
- < Lack of State and Federal incentives to manage prairies in a sustainable manner
- < Decline in agricultural profitability
- < Loss of native plant and animal diversity
- < Lack of public understanding and appreciation of tallgrass prairie

## **Conservation Strategies**

### ***Native Prairies***

The cornerstone of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program in Kansas is the recognition that in

order to save the prairies, we must first keep the ranching community healthy and on the landscape. This premise is facilitated by working through producer organizations such as the Kansas Livestock Association, the Kansas Farm Bureau, and numerous other State, Federal, and private partnerships.

The Partners Program works hand in hand with private landowners to tailor conservation projects to truly fit the needs of the individual producer and the needs of the environment.

As an example, invasive species control benefits both ranch profitability and biological diversity. The two together generate stability. Assistance with improved grazing strategies can lead to improved profit margin and greatly improved habitat for a large number of prairie species, such as the lesser and greater prairie-chicken.

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In general native prairie restoration and enhancement projects average \$50 per acre to complete.

### ***Prairie Streams***

Protecting and enhancing streamside corridors improves fish and wildlife habitats and water quality by limiting livestock access. Riparian restoration activities cost about \$6,000 per mile of stream.

### ***Wetlands***

Wetland restorations provide economic opportunities in the form of recreational use and, at the same time, offer tremendous water quality and trust species benefits for society as a whole. A “win-win” project is the definition of success for the Partners Program.

The cost of wetland restorations in Kansas is currently estimated at \$400 per acre.



**Michigan lily and black-eyed Susan.**

## **Partners**

Kansas Livestock Association  
Kansas Farm Bureau  
Kansas State Conservation Commission  
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks  
Kansas Biological Survey  
Kansas University  
Kansas State University  
Kansas State Extension  
Kansas Association of Conservation Districts  
The Nature Conservancy  
Stream and Prairie Research  
Wildlife Management Institute  
Natural Resource Conservation Service  
National Cattleman's Beef Association  
American Sport Fishing Association  
Quail Unlimited

National Turkey Federation  
Texaco  
Pittsburg State University  
Emporia State University  
Haskell Indian Nation Schools  
Baker University  
Pheasants Forever  
Ducks Unlimited  
Environmental Protection Agency  
USDA - Farm Services Agency  
Resource Conservation and Development  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
Western Resources

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## Accomplishments

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The primary accomplishment of the Partners Program in Kansas is the development of a statewide network of partners, sincerely committed to working towards an environmentally sound, fiscally stable, and socially acceptable method of land stewardship within the agricultural heartland of America.

- 700 landowner projects
- 20,000 wetland acres restored
- 40,000 grassland acres restored
- 30 miles of riparian protection
- 3,000 acres of bottomland hardwood restored
- Numerous environmental education workshops



Pre-work photo of wetland site.

## Future Needs

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- Restore 30,000 wetland acres.
- Restore/Enhance 2.5 million acres of native tallgrass prairie.
- Restore/Enhance 1.5 million acres of mid and short grass prairie
- Enhance 500 miles of prairie streams
- New partnerships with 5,000 landowners



Finished wetland project.

## CONTACT



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