

3RD
ANNUAL

STATE

**OF
THE**

PRAIRIE

C O N F E R E N C E

NOV. 18-19, 2011 • HOUSTON, TEXAS

**BUILDING
PRAIRIES:**

**FROM YOUR
BACKYARD TO THE
BACK 40**

Workshops, lectures, and field experiences for ranchers, restorationists, educators, and individuals working to build prairies for wildlife, cattle, ecotourism, and urban and suburban environments.



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Dear Prairie Supporter:

Each year *State of the Prairie* brings together the sharpest minds in prairie conservation from throughout the Gulf Coast and Midwest to spark lively conversations and provide practical methods to restore, conserve, and educate about our valuable, vulnerable coastal prairies. We seek to engage and inspire a diverse audience of private landowners, natural resource professionals, governmental agencies, educators, landscape architects, naturalists, volunteers, and others looking for real-world solutions.

There has been a recent surge of interest in building prairies to boost biodiversity, augment cattle production and ecotourism, connect us with our heritage, and provide pockets of nature in an increasingly urbanized world. This year's presentations, field experiences, and our new *Coastal Prairie 101 teacher workshop* will speak to these needs.

We invite you to join us at this year's *State of the Prairie* Conference. Together we can protect and rebuild prairies for wildlife, for ourselves, and for our children.

Sincerely,

Jaime González
President, Coastal Prairie Partnership

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS





Photo by Steve Upperman

DAY 1 - HOUSTON ZOO - BROWN EDUCATION CENTER

NOVEMBER 18, 2011 FROM 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

COST | \$50 GENERAL ADMISSION OR \$20 STUDENTS
 REGISTRATION FEE INCLUDES LUNCH AND LIGHT BREAKFAST

The first day of the State of the Prairie Conference will be held at the Brown Education Center at the Houston Zoo. Presentations will focus on prairie restoration, protection, and biodiversity (see information below).

FRIDAY NOV. 18	MORNING SESSIONS
ALL EARLY SESSIONS IN HOUSTON ZOO'S BROWN EDUCATION CENTER AUDITORIUM PRAIRIE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION PRESENTATIONS	
8:15 AM - 9:00 AM	Registration Light Breakfast Available
9:00 AM - 9:15 AM	Opening Remarks Introductory remarks and acknowledgments
9:15 AM - 10:00 AM	Splendor in the Grass –The History, Importance, and Future of Our Prairies Speaker: Doug Ladd, Director of Conservation Science, Nature Conservancy of Missouri, St. Louis, Missouri
10:05 AM - 10:50 AM	Restoration and Management of Coastal Prairie A Ranch Case Study Speaker: Bill Wilson, Co-owner, Sabine Ranch, South Jefferson County, Texas
10:55 AM - 11:45 AM	360° Expert Panel Invited experts and audience will field questions gathered prior to conference and during first two talks
11:45 AM - 12:00 PM	Awards Ceremony Prairie Builder and Texas and Louisiana Volunteer of the Year Awards
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	LUNCH Videos to be shown in Brown Auditorium during lunch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Last Stand of the Coastal Prairie</i> by Texas Parks & Wildlife • <i>Attwater's Prairie Chicken</i> by Houston Zoo



Photo by Steve Upperman

FRIDAY NOV. 18	AFTERNOON CONCURRENT SESSIONS		
	BROWN AUDITORIUM {Room capacity 250} PRAIRIE ECOTOURISM & RESTORATION	CLASSROOM A {Room capacity 35} LANDOWNER TOOLS	CLASSROOM B {Room capacity 35} PRAIRIES FOR CITIES & SUBURBS
1:00 PM - 1:50 PM	Ecotourism: Ideas, Success Stories, and Assistance Speaker: Miles Phillips, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist with Texas AgriLIFE <i>College Station, TX</i>	Conservation Easements for Texas Landowners Speaker: Tom Kelsey Attorney, Berie Lamberth <i>Houston, TX</i>	Experiments with Urban Prairie Design Speaker: Marc Pastorek, Landscape Designer, <i>Covington, LA</i>
2:00 PM - 2:50 PM	The Power Of One... YOU can re-build Coastal Prairie Speaker: Bill Neiman Owner, Native American Seed Co. <i>Junction, TX</i>	Cattle Production on Coastal Prairies Speaker: Clifford W. Carter Principal, Carter Ranch Consulting, <i>Victoria, TX</i>	Designing Prairies in Urban Areas: Bush Library Case Study Speaker: Emily Manderson, Environmental Designer, University of Texas Wildflower Center <i>Austin, TX</i>
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM	Building Prairie Wetlands for Wildlife Speaker: Greg Green, Regional Biologist - Texas Gulf Coast, Ducks Unlimited, <i>Richmond, Texas</i>	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program: a Tool For Rebuilding Louisiana Prairies Speaker: Jim Bergan, Director of Land and Water Protection Strategies The Nature Conservancy, LA <i>Baton Rouge, LA</i>	Factors affecting habitat quality in small scale grassland plantings Speaker: Larry Allain, Ecologist, USGS - National Wetlands Research Center, <i>Lafayette, LA</i>



Photo by Lisa Spangler

DAY 2 - FIELD EXPERIENCES

SAT. NOV. 19, 2011 | 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

COST | \$25 FIELD EXPERIENCE 1 OR 2 AND
\$10 FOR TEACHER WORKSHOP

FIELD EXPERIENCE 1: BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK & NASH PRAIRIE

Description: Visit a prairie restoration site at scenic Brazos Bend State Park just south of Houston before visiting one of the best coastal prairie remnants on the upper Texas coast, the Nature Conservancy of Texas's pristine Nash Prairie.

Limit: 25 participants

Food & Drinks: Participants will be provided a light lunch and refreshments.

Meeting Place: Participants should meet at [Brazos Bend State Park](#) at 9:00 AM

Transportation: Personal transportation required, carpooling highly encouraged.

Field Trip Organizer: Cheryl Sedivec and Susie Doe, Texas Master Naturalist - Coastal Prairie Chapter

FIELD EXPERIENCE 2: SAN JACINTO BATTLEFIELDS STATE HISTORIC SITE & UH COASTAL CENTER

Description: Learn about Texas Parks & Wildlife Department's plans to restore the battlefields to its original prairie landscape and the role that the prairie played in winning Texas's independence at San Jacinto. This field trip will also include a visit to the wonderful UH Coastal Center which is home to pristine remnants and learn a lesson about the local invertebrate community.

Limit: 25 participants

Food & Drinks: Participants will be provided a light lunch and refreshments

Meeting Place: Participants should meet at [San Jacinto Battlegrounds State Historic Site](#)

Transportation: Personal transportation required, carpooling highly encouraged.

Field Experience Organizer: Pat Merkord, Native Prairies Association of Texas

FIELD TRIP OPTION 3: COASTAL PRAIRIE 101 TEACHER WORKSHOP

Description: Workshop designed for formal and informal educators to build skills and give resources for teaching about the coastal prairies of Texas and Louisiana. Participants will receive curriculum, introductory PowerPoints, DVDs, and other resources. SBEC credits available for classroom teachers.

Limit: 25 participants

Food & Drinks: Lunch provided

Meeting Place: [Environmental Institute of Houston](#) (Clear Lake, Texas)

Transportation: Personal transportation required

Field Experience Organizer: Jaime González, Community Education Manager, Katy Prairie Conservancy

PRESENTERS AND PRESENTATIONS



LARRY ALLAIN, Ecologist, USGS - National Wetlands Research Center

Biography: After receiving a bachelors degree in Horticulture from the University of Southwestern Louisiana in 1975 Larry worked as a nurseryman, eventually running his own nursery and landscaping company. In 1992 he returned to the University of Southwestern Louisiana to get his masters in biology. From 1995 to the present he's worked as a botanist at the National Wetlands Research Center where his research focuses on coastal prairie ecology including fire effects, invasive species, and restoration. Larry is a past president of the Cajun Prairie Preservation Society, a current board member of the Coastal Prairie Partnership, a founding member of the Louisiana Native Plant Initiative, and has authored several papers and digital products on coastal prairie.

PRESENTATION TITLE: Factors affecting habitat quality in small scale grassland plantings

Presentation Description: Grassland habitat is rapidly declining and the abundance of grassland animals is declining faster than those of any other habitat type. Small grassland plantings at schools, businesses, and homes can contribute to prairie animal conservation but their value as animal habitat varies. Factors such as patch size, heterogeneity, location in the landscape, plant diversity, plant species planted, and vegetation structure can greatly influence habitat quality. Groups that can benefit most from small plantings include reptiles, birds, and insects. How habitat factors should be considered in grassland planning and examples of species that might be attracted is explored.



JIM BERGAN, Director of Land and Water Protection Strategies, The Nature Conservancy, LA

Biography: Jim Bergan earned his B.S. in Forestry and Wildlife Management at Purdue University. He attended Texas Tech University and earned his M.S. in 1986 while working at the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory in South Carolina. Bergan completed his Ph.D. in 1990 working on "Survival and Habitat Use of Mallards Wintering in the Playa Lakes Region." He worked in Florida as the South Florida Waterfowl Program Leader at Lake Okeechobee with special focus on mottled duck management and research, ring-necked duck wintering ecology, and wetland habitat restoration. Bergan began work for The Nature Conservancy as the Mad Island Marsh Project Director in Matagorda County in 1991. Prairie and wetland restoration was a major focus of this community-based conservation project. In 1998, Bergan became the South Texas Program Manager to work on conservation efforts in the Laguna Madre. In 2000, Bergan became the Director of Science and Stewardship and moved to the state office in San Antonio. In April 2011, Bergan took the position of Director of Land and Water Protection Strategies with The Nature Conservancy in Louisiana and is now based in Baton Rouge. His interests are wetland ecology, grassland restoration, waterfowl/shorebird ecology, invasive species, restoration ecology, and endangered species management.

PRESENTATION TITLE: Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program: a Tool For Rebuilding Louisiana Prairies

Presentation Description: The goal of the Coastal Prairie CREP II is to enroll up to 15,050 acres into CRP through the establishment of native grasses. The focus area is in 7 south central Louisiana parishes that historically possessed the majority of tallgrass coastal prairie habitat in the state. The Nature Conservancy has contributed \$750,000 to support landowners and their efforts to establish high diversity (6 species of grasses/forbs) grassland habitat. The total investment by state, federal and NGO partners is \$26.7 million and thus, while the Conservancy's investment is significant, it is leveraged at a ratio of 35:1. Such a public-private partnership is deemed as being the only structure available that may lead to large scale prairie revegetation in Louisiana. Since the program launched in March 2011, signup by landowners has been slow due to high crop prices.

However, project is to be carried out over the next 5 years and with better marketing of the program and the ebb and flow of commodity prices, we maintain optimism that program goals will be met.

CLIFFORD CARTER, Principal, Carter Ranch Consulting of Victoria, TX

Biography: *Clifford Carter for the past 15 years has been a Ranch consultant in Central and South Texas. Since 1999 he has been the Ranch Consultant/Planner for the Coastal Prairie Conservation Initiative (CPCI) in the coastal prairie area of Texas. The CPCI is a project working to restore the coastal prairie grasslands to prairie conditions suitable for the Attwater's Prairie Chicken, the most endangered bird in Texas. Prior to that time he was the Regional Range Specialist for the Southern United States and Puerto Rico for the USDA NRCS. Clifford is a technical advisor for the State GLCI Committee as well as technical advisor to the Coastal Bend Prescribed Burn Association. Clifford also works part time as a Ranch Consultant for the Victoria Soil and Water Conservation District.*

Clifford has a degree in Range Management from what is now Texas State University. After graduating from college and serving in the Air Force Reserves, he joined the Soil Conservation Service (now the NRCS) as a Range Conservationist in Uvalde. During his 34 years with the SCS he served as Area Range Conservationist and one of 5 State Range Specialist for Texas, State Range Conservationist for Florida, and Regional Range Specialist for the Southern US and Puerto Rico from Regional Technical Center for the SCS in Fort Worth, Texas. Clifford retired from the SCS in 1996 and has been a Ranch Consultant in South Texas since that time.

PRESENTATION TITLE: Cattle Production on Coastal Prairies

Presentation Description: *The Coastal Prairie has been a prime cattle grazing area in Texas since the Civil War. Grasslands on the Coastal Prairie have basically the same vegetative composition as the Great Plains grasslands from Texas to Canada. Lack of grassland management has led to the loss of many of dominant grass species such as big bluestem, Indiangrass, crinkleawn, as well as many of the climax forbs such as Engelmann's Daisy, compass plant and many palatable native legumes. Overstocking has been a major contributor to the demise of the Coastal Prairie, but continuous moderate year-long grazing has also played a major role in the demise of this grazing resource. Prescribed burning, grazing management systems and livestock water distribution are keys to overcoming Coastal Prairie vegetative problems.*



GREG GREEN, Regional Biologist - Texas Gulf Coast, Ducks Unlimited

Biography: *Mr. Green has more than 13 years experience in the environmental field with an education background that includes a Master of Science in Rangeland Ecology and Management from Texas A&M University and a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Conservation from Louisiana Tech University. His experience includes development, design, implementation and management of a variety of habitat improvement projects in coastal marshes, freshwater wetlands, riparian forests, and native grasslands. He oversees the delivery of Ducks Unlimited's conservation efforts on properties in Texas owned by public agencies, as well as municipalities, corporate entities and other NGOs. Mr. Green has worked for DU since 2003 in Texas and California. Prior to his employment with Ducks Unlimited, Mr. Green was a Restoration Specialist for the Galveston Bay Foundation, where he coordinated and implemented several Community-Based Restoration projects for events such as Marsh Mania and Trash Bash.*

PRESENTATION TITLE: Building Prairie Wetlands for Wildlife

Presentation Description: *The geology of the relatively flat Texas coastal plain created a complex mosaic of grasslands, oak savannas, and freshwater depressions. An estimated 30% of the upper Texas coast consisted of these depressions, also known as prairie wetlands, which are extremely valuable to fulfilling annual life cycle needs of migratory and resident wildlife. Degradation and loss of prairie wetlands along the Texas Coast for agriculture and development have decreased the overall forage available to waterbirds, causing considerable alarm within the bird conservation community. Conservation actions to manage and restore wetland functions to address habitat deficits must be increased in order to maintain populations at targeted levels. Various wetland management strategies and restoration techniques will be presented as encouragement for land managers and conservation practitioners to further consider and incorporate wetland improvements with prairie conservation activities.*



DOUG LADD, Director of Conservation Science – The Nature Conservancy of Missouri

Biography: *Douglas Ladd is Director of Conservation Science for the Missouri Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. He has been involved with vegetation ecology, fire management, conservation planning, natural area assessment, and ecological management, restoration, and research for more than thirty years, with particular emphasis on prairie and woodland vegetation, ecological restoration and fire ecology. He has also conducted lichen research in the Midwest for over two decades, and is currently collaborating with Richard Harris of the New York Botanical Garden on a study of Ozark lichens, which has resulted in the discovery of several species and genera new to science. He has undergraduate degrees in botany and chemistry, and a master's degree in botany from Southern Illinois University. In addition to numerous articles and reports, he is the author of two plant field guides, Tallgrass Prairie Wildflowers and North Woods Wildflowers, and coauthor of Discover*

Natural Missouri and Distribution of Illinois Vascular Plants. A research associate at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis and the Conservation Research Institute and Morton Arboretum in Chicago, Ladd resides in Webster Groves with his wife Deborah.

PRESENTATION TITLE: Splendor in the Grass –The History, Importance, and Future of Our Prairies

Presentation Description: *North America's prairie landscapes have shaped the human and biological history of the mid-continent, and are part of the most endangered, least protected habitat type on earth. The rarest phase of these grasslands is tallgrass prairie, including the coastal prairies of the Gulf region. We'll explore the biological origins and ecology of these uniquely North American systems, as well as their relationships with humans through history. Sustaining the full diversity and functionality of our prairie systems and their component plants and animals is vital to human society. Current conservation efforts must be intensified and augmented with other actions if we are to conserve these grasslands for present and future generations.*



Emily Manderson, Environmental Designer, University of Texas Wildflower Center

Biography: *Emily Manderson is the Senior Environmental Designer of the Ecosystem Design Group at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, at the University of Texas at Austin. The Ecosystem Design Group conducts basic research in ecological engineering, ecological restoration and land management, offers workshops to professionals and the general public, and provides fee-supported ecological consulting expertise to clients across Texas. As part of the Ecosystem Design Group, Emily works with design teams composed of engineers, architects, landscape architects, and developers to integrate sustainable design, practices, and philosophies into projects. Her main interest is discovering ways to apply ecological design that allow natural systems to occur simultaneously within the built environment in a manner that is holistically beneficial to that site and*

to the context at large. A few of her current projects include: Tall grass prairie restoration in an urban mixed use development, innovative stormwater technical consulting using features such as bioswales, raingardens, greenwalls, as well as co teaching the first graduate course on the fundamentals of the Sustainable Sites Initiative.

PRESENTATION TITLE: Designing Prairies in Urban Areas

Presentation Description: The majority of the human population now lives within an urban context which comprises of a landscape that typically has been drastically altered from its historical state. People rarely have the opportunity to see and experience what once was the native habitat of their region. Designing prairies within the urban context has a myriad of benefits including ecological, economic and cultural. This talk will pull from consulting projects such as the George W. Bush Presidential Center in Dallas, TX and Mueller Airport Redevelopment in Austin, TX as well as our native plant research at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to provide examples of process, lessons learned and success stories of urban prairie design, implementation and maintenance.



BILL NEIMAN, Owner, Native American Seed Company

Biography: Bill Neiman started his first company, Neiman Environments Landscape Construction Company, in 1974 when he was nineteen years old. From 1979 to 1990, Bill also operated Neiman's Native Plant Nursery in Flower Mound, Texas, one of the first outlets for native plants in the North Central Texas area. He also farmed numerous sites certified by the Texas Department of Agriculture for organic food and seed production. In 1989, Native American Seed was formed to specialize in the harvest and sale of wildflower seeds and prairie grasses native to the Texas-Oklahoma-Louisiana bioregion. Each year Native American Seed provides thousands of pounds of wildflower seeds to the Texas Department of Transportation for use in highway beautification programs as well as coastal prairie grasses and wildflowers for restoration projects throughout the Gulf Coast region.

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PRESENTATION TITLE: The Power Of One...YOU can re-build Coastal Prairie

Presentation Description: Take a ten-year tour reviewing the practical steps how a handful of coastal prairie restorations were implemented. See this inside look for yourself. It can be done. The miracle lies within the seed. Neiman, with an 11th grade education from El Paso, Texas, proves the only thing needed to restoring more coastal prairie is YOU! Plain speaking, straightforward, tell it like it is, he spins tales of a lifetime working outdoors and freely shares the story of 'one man's love of the land.'



MARC PASTOREK, Landscape Designer/Owner, Pastorek Habitats LLC.

Biography: Marc Pastorek has been a landscape designer, contractor and manager since 1985. He and his wife Candi are owners of Pastorek Habitats, LLC, a meadow consulting and restoration firm located in Covington, Louisiana. Since 1993, Marc has had a strong interest in the dynamics of prairies and savannas of Louisiana and Mississippi, logging many hours in the field with Dr. Charles Allen and Dr. Malcolm Vidrine, founders of the Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society. He collects and processes native seed from his farm in Pearl River County, Mississippi and from other prairies and savannas in the two-state region including the Cajun Prairie Society's restoration site in Eunice, Louisiana, proudly referred to as "the best restored prairie in the United States." He is past-president of the Mississippi Native Plant Society and the Cajun Prairie Society and is an adjunct teacher at the School of Landscape Architecture, LSU.

PRESENTATION TITLE: Experiments with Urban Prairie Design

Presentation Description: The native grassland, otherwise known as the biodiversity garden, is a practical and substantial facet to the natural landscaping movement. Examples of public fire-maintained prairie gardens have emerged in arboretums, botanic gardens and nature centers at educational facilities and outdoor classrooms. These types of public spaces give us the best examples of how we can restore habitats in the cityscape. Crosby Arboretum in Mississippi and The Lady Bird Wildflower Center in Texas were pioneers in interpreting biodiversity and managing land using natural methods. They are examples of how a design can be scaled down to fit into the home landscape or the schoolyard. Entrepreneurial folks can fill niches in the growing demand for locally specific seed to be used in projects designed by artists, engineers and architects. Green buildings, inspired by a sense of challenge to walk with a lighter footprint on the earth are perfect settings for the low maintenance landscape of the prairie. Street medians, office parks, airports and golf courses can stand a strong dose of natural design. Green roofs, gardens that have minimal available soil in which plants can grow, are good candidates for displays of native grasses and wildflowers. Prairie plants are highly adaptable to adverse environmental conditions. Attracting clientele open to the idea of cutting edge design with grassland plants can only be done by knowing the plants of the habitat and understanding the dynamics of the process. Prairie restorationists, seed growers and other researchers should continue to experiment with techniques that make the prairie more visually appealing so the plantings look more acceptable to the layperson in the initial stages of growth.



MILES PHILLIPS, Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist – Nature Tourism, Texas AgriLIFE

Biography: Mr. Phillips is an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist with Texas Agrilife Extension Service. His specialty is Nature Tourism and he is a member of the Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences Department at Texas A&M University. In his current position he supports program development for the extension agents in all 254 counties. He also works directly with clients across the state. He is a member of the Texas State Tourism Agency Council, the Texas Travel Industry Association Nature Tourism Council and one of the 8 members of the National Extension Tourism Design Team.

He has conducted Ecotourism development work in Texas, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, West Virginia, and South Carolina. Prior to his work in ecotourism Mr. Phillips worked as a consulting environmental engineer doing site assessments, construction oversight and managing large scale ("Superfund") environmental remediation projects. He credits a month long trip to southern Africa in 1994 as

motivating his career redirection into ecotourism development. In his current position he supports program development for the extension agents in all 254 counties. He also works directly with clients across the state. He is a member of the Texas State Tourism Agency Council, the Texas Travel Industry Association Nature Tourism Council and one of the 8 members of the National Extension Tourism Design Team. He has conducted Ecotourism development work in Texas, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, West Virginia, and South Carolina.

PRESENTATION TITLE: Ecotourism: Ideas, Success Stories & Assistance

Presentation Description: *Are You an Ecotourist? Ecotourism is a word that many have heard but that still leaves many wondering exactly what it is, if they have done or how to develop it. This presentation will discuss terms, trends and concepts related to ecotourism. I will share success stories and provide information on available assistance for communities, individuals and businesses. Time will be available for Q&A.*



BILL WILSON, Co-owner, Sabine Ranch, South Jefferson County, Texas

Biography: *Bill Wilson is a 7th generation rancher from Beaumont, Texas. A graduate of the University of Texas at Austin with a BBA in Accounting, he is also a Certified Public Accountant. Bill has worked in agriculture for over 43 years starting as a farmer of rice, soybeans and corn and cattle raiser. In 2004 Mr. Wilson and good friend Mr. Walter Umphrey purchased Sabine Ranch and began a long term coastal prairie and prairie wetland restoration project. In 2006 Sabine Ranch was awarded the Lone Star Land Steward award by the State of Texas for the coastal region for its work in restoring the coastal prairies. Mr. Wilson is a member of many organizations and societies related to the conservation and cattle industries and resides (whenever possible) “on the ranch.”*

PRESENTATION TITLE: Restoration and Management of Coastal Prairie: A Ranch Case Study

Presentation Description: *Sabine Ranch is a 12,000 acre ongoing experiment in the recovery, restoration and management of coastal prairie and coastal wetlands. The project began in 2004 and utilized a sustained and vigorous attack on invading species that had denigrated or, in some cases, eliminated native prairie lands. Utilizing various methods including mechanical clearing, “roller chopping,” chemical application, fire, water management, and cattle grazing this ongoing project has over the past 7 years achieved a great deal of success. While this project has some site-specific aspects, many of the applications for restoration and redevelopment of coastal prairie habitat will be useful in similar projects.*