



# Tallgrass Prairie

## Quick Facts:

- 55 grassland species in the U.S. are threatened or endangered (1994 statistics)
- 82.6 to 99.9 percent of prairie has been lost in 12 states and Alberta, Canada
- 99.2 and 99.6 percent of prairie has been lost in Iowa and Minnesota, respectively

## Management Needs:

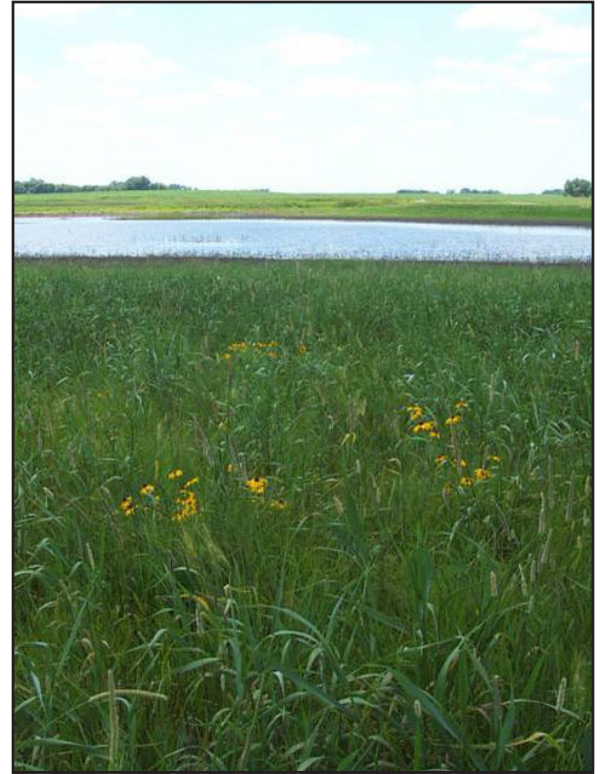
- Inventory remaining prairie
- Protect what prairie remains
- Define best management practices for remnant isolated patches of prairie
- Increase acreage of restored prairie by working with the public and private sectors to increase the amount of land in conservation status
- Restore connectivity between prairie patches

## Current Status

The Northern Tallgrass Prairie, once one of the Midwest’s largest and most biologically productive ecosystems, has become functionally non-existent over the past 100 years. Once spanning 38 million acres across parts of Manitoba, Minnesota, Iowa and the Dakotas, it is estimated that less than 200,090 acres of prairie remain today in the U.S. portion of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie. Of the prairie that does remain, most is found in small, scattered parcels with little or no value for wildlife.

For years following the initial conversion of native Midwestern prairies, many prairie remnants were surrounded by agricultural grasslands (haylands and pastures) which helped support their structure and natural function. However, few of these agricultural grasslands remain today, causing many remaining prairie remnants to become isolated islands surrounded by row-crop fields and other development. Loss and fragmentation of prairie landscapes combined with changes in natural processes have had negative consequences for many grassland plants and animals.

If we are to conserve tallgrass prairie, we must protect remnant prairies and restore, where possible, prairie habitats across the landscape. The Service works with partners on prairie conservation programs such as research on prairie restoration methods and techniques, and we recognize the value in developing incentives for conserving tallgrass prairie and grasslands on private land. The Service is also active in prairie restoration and protection on many national wildlife refuges in the Midwest. Neal Smith NWR in Iowa is



## Hot Topics:

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**Waterfowl Production Areas**

**Protecting and Restoring Prairie -** Controlled burning and native prairie seed propagation

**Prairie Learning Centers -** Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge and Fergus Falls Wetland Management District

a good example; here research, restoration and environmental education are focal points of refuge management. At St. Croix Wetland Management District in Wisconsin, the Service and the Wisconsin DNR are working jointly on a native grass and forb seed nursery, to be used to restore tallgrass prairie on wetland management areas and state lands.



- National Wildlife Refuge
- ⊕ Ecological Services
- Fisheries Resource Office
- National Fish Hatchery
- | Sea Lamprey Control
- ★ Law Enforcement
- ▲ Private Land Office
- ⊙ Wetland Management District HQ