



Dunn Ranch Prairie

The open, rolling hills of Dunn Ranch Prairie are home to vibrant wildflowers, booming prairie chickens, and majestic American bison. Native grasses wave gently in the wind as upland sandpipers and meadowlarks soar over pale purple coneflowers, prairie blazing stars, and the federally threatened Mead's milkweed.

The remarkable beauty of this site is the result of over a decade of intensive restoration work. Located in northwest Missouri in the Grand River Grasslands, Dunn Ranch is now a showcase site for grassland restoration.



Dunn Ranch Prairie © Hilary Haley/TNC

Restoration

Dunn Ranch Prairie represents the best opportunity in the central tallgrass prairie ecoregion to restore a fully functioning tallgrass prairie. Remarkably, almost 1,000 acres have never been plowed, and the topsoil is 40 inches deep in most places.

To return the prairie to its original splendor, Dunn Ranch staff removed hundreds of trees, established a seed nursery and processing facility, and protected surrounding acres through direct purchase and conservation easements.

Native seed harvesting and reseeded are conducted annually. Bison were reintroduced to the site in 2011; their selective grazing will benefit other native plants and animals. Prescribed fires are also an important management tool, as they safely replicate fire cycles that were historically present on the prairie.

Today, species that were previously unknown at the site have emerged, such as sensitive briar, purple giant hyssop, shooting star, and eared false foxglove. Dunn Ranch is home to one of the last populations of greater prairie chickens in Missouri, and a reintroduction of the federally endangered Topeka shiner (a small minnow) is planned for 2013.

By the Numbers

- **3,258:** Acres at Dunn Ranch Prairie
- **70,000:** Acres in the Grand River Grasslands
- **37:** Bison reintroduced at Dunn Ranch in 2011
- **10,000:** Pounds of seed harvested each year at Dunn Ranch
- **< 1:** Percent of native tallgrass prairie left in Missouri

Community

Restoration work at Dunn Ranch Prairie is closely connected with the local community.

Much of the surrounding landscape is privately owned; the help of nearby landowners is essential for the successful recovery of native grassland birds and other wildlife. Dunn Ranch staff works with neighbors to put management practices in place that benefit crops, livestock, and native prairie species.

Additionally, engaging educational opportunities abound for children and adults alike. School groups and community members often visit to enjoy the scenery, catch a glimpse of the bison herd, or simply to explore.

Economy

Dunn Ranch Prairie contributes to the local economy by working with nearby contractors, vendors, and producers. The site draws tourists who patronize local businesses. Although tax exempt, the Conservancy voluntarily pays property taxes.

Looking Ahead

Work is ongoing and the site continues to expand. The bison herd will grow to about 350 head, and annual seedings will further increase plant diversity. Staff will continue to work with neighbors to improve migratory corridors for grassland birds.

Dunn Ranch Prairie is now a living landscape of tallgrass prairie and a restored piece of America's natural heritage.

To visit Dunn Ranch Prairie or to invest in our work, call (660) 867-3866 or visit nature.org/missouri.



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