

# Conserving Fragmented Prairies Workshop - AGENDA

July 25-26, 2022 - Marquette and Wood River, Nebraska

Hosted by [The Nature Conservancy's Platte River Prairies](#) and [Prairie Plains Resource Institute](#)

This field-based workshop will focus on a range of topics related to restoration and management of fragmented prairies. We will visit sites that illustrate both successes and challenges as a way to foster conversation and sharing of experiences between participants. Discussion highlights will be captured and shared out with participants and a broader audience following the conclusion of the workshop.

The vast majority of the workshop will be held outdoors, so bring appropriate clothing, rain gear, sunscreen, insect repellent, drinking water, and other supplies. All food and lodging will be the responsibility of participants. Restaurants and hotels can be found in the nearby towns of Aurora and Grand Island, which sit between Day 1 and Day 2 field sites.

There is no cost for this workshop, but participation is limited, so register early (see registration form) to ensure you get a spot. Masks may be required for indoor sessions. We hope to host the workshop rain or shine but may have to adjust or cancel portions if we get severe weather.

## **July 25, 2022**

12:30pm – Arrival and introductions at Prairie Plains Resource Institute's [Whitney Education Center](#) west of Marquette, Nebraska.

1pm to 5:30pm – Tour and discuss prairie restoration (reconstruction) facilities and equipment, restored prairies, and [Gjerloff Prairie](#).

5:30pm to 7pm – Supper break (on your own – restaurants in Aurora)

7pm to 9pm – Optional evening tours to Lincoln Creek Prairie or Helzer Family Prairie (see below)

## **July 26, 2022**

8:30am – Arrival at The Nature Conservancy's [Platte River Prairies \(Derr House\)](#).

8:30 to Noon – Tour and discuss Platte River Prairies sites, including remnant and restored prairies, fire and grazing management, and research/monitoring results.

Noon to 1pm – Lunch (bring your own)

1pm to 3pm – Finish Platte River Prairie site tours and wrap-up workshop.

3pm - Depart

## Evening tour descriptions – choose one

### **Lincoln Creek Prairie:**

Although relatively small in acreage (16 acres), [Lincoln Creek Prairie](#) is special for a number of reasons. It is very accessible to the community of Aurora (population 4,500) from a residential street and contains both wild prairie and wooded areas, as well as maintained park-like areas. Lincoln Creek is important to the history of Prairie Plains because it is where the early attempts to plant high diversity prairies — 100+ species — from harvested seed took place. This area became a nucleus for our land management and high-diversity prairie restoration activities through the 1980s. It's also the site of Chris Helzer's Square Meter Project! Prescribed fire and woody vegetation control are the primary management tools used to maintain this preserve. Bill Whitney, founder and former executive director of Prairie Plains will lead this tour.

### **Helzer Family Prairie:**

This 100 acre isolated prairie was largely farmed except for a few small, scattered unplowed remnants. Most of the farmed area was seeded to grass in 1962 and prairie plants have slowly moved from the remnants into the planted grassland. For the last 20 years the site has been sporadically overseeded with native wildflowers and grazed with conservation objectives in mind. It is currently being managed with an experimental grazing approach called 'open gate rotational grazing'. Seven acres of the remaining cropland was planted with a high diversity prairie seed mix in the winter of 2021-22. The site has gradually improved in biological diversity over time but is definitely a work in progress. There is lots of smooth brome and sweetclover, but also lots of wildflowers, regal fritillary butterflies and many other invertebrates, badgers, coyotes, and an occasional prairie chicken.