

Dear Students, Colleagues and Friends,

I couldn't state it better than our Missouri Prairie Foundation Executive Director did below and in the attached announcement. American prairies really can and do evoke our national spirit. Our native grassland remnants are a reminder of our heritage as our forebears moved across rich, fertile lands to follow the bison herds and celebrate the freedom which prairies represent.

Before people ever created a human wake across waving fields of big bluestem, milkweed and a host of other native plants, a great range of other creatures inhabited the earth, sky and waters of these lands and many still do. All of this we celebrate. We protect and restore. And today we, at the Missouri Prairie Foundation, would like to invite you to do the same through the first designated National Prairie Day.

Saturday, June 4th 2016 we will be gathering for our 7th Annual Prairie BioBlitz at Linden's Prairie in Lawrence County Missouri to celebrate the first National Prairie Day in our own *Show-Me* style – and we'd love to have you [join us](#). But as the founders of National Prairie Day we'd also invite you to create a celebration at a native grassland near [you](#) whether you hail from the windy North, the wide spaces out West, the short grass vistas of the Southwest or the verdant mosaics in lands to the east of us.

When I came back to the prairies of my native state, I joined the Missouri Prairie Foundation with an eye toward biomimicry, aquifer protection and the spread of green infrastructure to an ever-greater number of communities. But as you can see below, prairies and our native grasslands offer a host of services including the simple ability to breathe deeply and rejoice in these good lands.

We're just getting started with the website and all the plans for this great day (so this may be the first you've heard of all the doin's)! Feel free to modify the announcement below, which is also attached, for your own event. *Create your own event and list your favorite prairies at www.nationalprairieday.org*. National Prairie Day doesn't belong to our organization alone. It belongs to all of us – just like the prairies we honor through this National designation.

Here's to you and our prairies too,

Margo

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Give good people good information and they'll do good things.

(If you've just received this single newsletter, it may be because I thought you'd be interested in this particular subject. You may or may not get others. If you want on my list regularly, e-mail me. If you want off my list, e-mail me. Thanks!)

American prairie evokes our national spirit: expansive, exhilarating in its abundance, full of life and promise. Today—from the tallgrass prairie east of the Rockies, and westward through mid- and shortgrass prairies that stretched to the Pacific coast—our native grassland legacy has

been dramatically reduced to scattered remnants of its once vast 160-million-acre domain across North America.

However, these remnants—from pocket prairies that delight us with their beauty and diversity of plants, insects, birds, and other grassland wildlife—to the larger tracts that support cattle ranching, antelope, and other large animals—remain vitally important to us:

Water Quality: It's possible for as many as seven inches of rain from one storm to be absorbed by prairie with no runoff—helping to keep soil on the land and out of waterways. With its complex and deep roots, prairie is like an incredible sponge that helps control flooding.

Soil Health: Soil scientists have determined that prairie soil hosts the most diverse communities of microorganisms of any terrestrial ecosystem on earth. Understanding how these micro-biota interact with soil and plants can help improve how agricultural land is managed—and perhaps with fewer chemical inputs.

Carbon Storage: An acre of intact prairie can absorb one ton of carbon in its roots and soil per year. We obviously need to conserve and restore all self-sustaining processes that help neutralize our CO₂ emissions.

Protection in Drought: Prairie plants are adapted to drought. Cattle producers have found that their livestock gain weight faster, and are healthier, when they eat prairie forage rather than non-native grasses—and prairie plants remain green and palatable in dry summers.

Pollinator Habitat: In the Midwest, no other ecosystem hosts more native pollinating insects than prairie. In Missouri, more than 250 native bee species occur on the totality of our remaining prairies, along with at least 200 total beetle, fly, butterfly and moth species that also play a role in pollination. Because one-third of all our food crops are pollinated by insects, protecting native pollinator habitat is crucial to food security.

Beauty and Spirit: Prairie is at once open “Big Sky Country,” and also replete with infinite detail—hundreds of plant species, jewel-like spider webs, complex calls of insects and birds. This aesthetic contrast is rejuvenating to the soul and exhilarating to the senses.

National Prairie Day provides a day of focus across the United States to inspire learning, appreciation, exploration of our national prairie legacy, and success of national, regional, statewide, and local prairie conservation efforts from coast to coast.

public awareness • education • prairie conservation • restoration • enjoyment • curiosity •
celebration

For press kits, educational materials, and other information: www.nationalprairieday.org