



Southeast Prairies

landscape includes the rolling hills of western Richardson, Pawnee, southern Johnson, and southern Gage counties. The landcover is primarily cropland, but there are also many tall-grass prairie remnants



dominated by big bluestem and Indiangrass and reseeded native and exotic grasses. The native prairies are of two types: hay meadows and grazed pastures. The hay meadows are generally in better ecological condition. The Big Nemaha River drains the eastern portion of the region while the Big Blue River drains the western portion of the region. Eastern deciduous woodlands are found along the bluffs and floodplains of these streams and their tributaries. The larger streams in the area have highly incised stream channels, though several smaller higher quality streams, including Wildcat, Turkey, Rock, and Yankee creeks, still remain.

The abundance of native and restored grasslands in the regions supports a stable population of greater prairie chickens and other grassland birds. Burchard Lake WMA and Pawnee Prairie WMA areas are the largest protected areas in the landscape. These areas are strongholds for the largest remaining massasauga populations in Nebraska. The Barneston Bluff area in Gage County on the Big Blue River contains rocky woodlands, which support populations of timber rattlesnakes and copperheads.

Natural Legacy Demonstration Site

Burchard Lake Wildlife Management Area - Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Burchard Lake WMA contains 560 acres, with a 150-acre reservoir, surrounded by native grasslands and hardwoods. The upland tall-grass prairie here is managed for a variety of species through prescribed fire and patch-burn grazing. There are greater prairie-chickens and two permanent blinds that are used to view the lek. Henslow's sparrows and massasauga benefit from land management practices.

Stresses Affecting Species and Habitats

- ❖ Specific livestock grazing and haying practices that may reduce native plant diversity and promote uniform habitat structure
- ❖ Lack of fire has led to invasive tree encroachment, primarily Osage orange, honey locust, and eastern red cedar in prairies and woodlands and exotic herbaceous plant invasion, primarily sericea lespedeza, crown vetch, old world bluestem, and smooth brome in prairies and garlic mustard in woodlands
- ❖ Invasion of European phragmites in riverine environments
- ❖ Conversion of native prairies to cropland
- ❖ Agricultural chemical and sediment run-off into streams
- ❖ Streambed degradation
- ❖ Mining of rare metals could become a threat in the near future
- ❖ Poorly-sited utility-scale wind turbines

Conservation Strategies

- ❖ Implement invasive tree clearing programs on conservation lands and private lands in conjunction with prescribed fire and planned grazing
- ❖ Conduct annual surveys and implement control programs for garlic mustard, sericea lespedeza and old world bluestem with a concerted effort on conservation lands
- ❖ Identify and protect priority streams from siltation and contaminants
- ❖ Coordinate with landowners interested in using conservation easements and voluntary fee title acquisition to protect high-quality prairies and establish riparian buffer strips
- ❖ Implement integrated public and private lands management. For example, work with private landowners with properties bordering WMAs to manage larger habitat blocks
- ❖ Work with mining and energy companies to choose development sites that avoid native plant communities and avoid impacts to key native wildlife habitat

Collaborative Conservation Opportunities across State Borders

Coordinate with Kansas organizations, particularly efforts to benefit like species of greatest conservation need on NE Southeast Prairie/KS Eastern Tallgrass Prairie Conservation Region border (i.e., Marshall, Nemaha, and Brown Counties in KS). Nebraska Tier I at-risk species identified also in the Kansas wildlife action plan include greater prairie chicken, Henslow's sparrow, massasauga, timber rattlesnake, regal fritillary, pistolgrip, plain pocketbook, pondmussel, and threeridge. Species lists may be modified as new information becomes available. Methods for sufficient information exchange could aid the collaborative process.

Coordinated wildlife management actions (e.g., prairie restoration and rehabilitation) should mirror strategies identified in Kansas' Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan. Collaborative conservation efforts across state borders should include researchers, federal and non-profit environmental program coordinators, and landowners, particularly those with properties extending over state lines. It will be necessary to identify and develop funding sources for implementation of conservation actions beyond state boundaries.

Tier I At-risk Species

Plants:

Missouri Sedge¹

Animals:

Greater Prairie Chicken

Henslow's Sparrow

Loggerhead Shrike

Wood Thrush

Massasauga³

Timber Rattlesnake

Iowa Skipper

Regal Fritillary

Married Underwing

Whitney Underwing

Pimpleback

Pistolgrip²

Plain Pocketbook³

Plains Harvest Mouse

Aquatic Communities:

Headwater, Warm Water Stream*

Mid-order, Warm Water Stream

Terrestrial Communities:

Eastern Riparian Forest

Cottonwood-Peachleaf Willow Riparian Woodland

Mesic Bur Oak Forest and Woodland*

Dry-Mesic Bur Oak Forest and Woodland*

Dry Upland Bur Oak Woodland*

Sandbar Willow Shrubland

Riparian Dogwood-False Indigobush Shrubland

Freshwater Seep

Eastern Cordgrass Wet Prairie*

Eastern Sedge Wet Meadow

Eastern Bulrush Deep Marsh

Cattail Shallow Marsh
Upland Tall-grass Prairie*
Lowland Tall-grass Prairie*
Perennial Sandbar
Sandbar/Mudflat

* Priority for conservation in this BUL

¹ This is the only BUL where the species is known to occur

² Known to occur in only one other BUL

³ Known to occur in only two other BULs

⁴ Known to occur in only three other BULs