

2023
Oklahoma
IMPACT REPORT

The Nature
Conservancy 
Oklahoma





Joseph H. Williams
1933-2023



Friends,

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN OKLAHOMA has been built upon a firm foundation of grassroots conservation. Local businesspeople, entrepreneurs, companies, ranchers, landowners and other leaders over the years have given their influence, time and money in support of our most beautiful and vulnerable ecosystems.

I am pleased to announce that through the generous donation of Andie and Bob Jackson, we are launching the Pearl Jackson Crosstimbers Preserve in 2023. Named in honor of Bob's grandmother, this preserve is a beautiful cross-section of the crosstimbers ecoregion with pockets of open prairie. While we get started stewarding the land, we are consulting with partners, local landowners and leaders to set a vision for public access in the years to come. We look forward to welcoming guests once everything is in place. In the meantime, you can read more about the Jacksons and the preserve on page 6 and visit nature.org/oklahoma for updates. Although Mr. Jackson unfortunately passed in February of 2023, the legacy of his family will live on.

In addition to Bob's passing, we sadly lost two more conservation visionaries who played a pivotal role in establishing TNC in Oklahoma and the leadership of our team. Simply put, without the hard work and dedication of Joseph H. Williams and Jenk Jones, Jr., conservation in Oklahoma wouldn't be what it is.

Joseph H. Williams' contribution to conservation surpasses Oklahoma's borders and is nearly impossible to quantify. Joe passed away April 27, 2023, at the age of 89 in his South Carolina home, surrounded by family. He will be remembered as a loving husband, father and grandfather, savvy businessman and visionary naturalist.

Joe approached conservation with the same determination, vision and leadership as his business—paving the way for innovation and growth within TNC. His journey began when he joined the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Association, a small 501(c)(3) supporting a bill to form a federal national preserve. Although the bill they supported did not move forward, Joe was not deterred. In the mid-1980s, he met with TNC's

senior leadership who supported his vision and encouraged him to form the Oklahoma chapter of TNC. By 1986, Joe had put together the inaugural board, where he sat as chair, and the Oklahoma chapter was in business. However, his service did not end there. His exceptional leadership skills were noticed, and he served on TNC's National Board of Governors, now called the Global Board of Directors, for a decade, from 1987-1997. During his tenure, he served as chair for two, two-year terms, when most only served one term.

In this part of the world, tracts of significant scale covering tallgrass prairie were rarely listed for sale. Even today, land is usually kept in the family—passed down from generation to generation. So, when the historic Barnard Ranch outside Pawhuska, OK, was listed for sale at a bargain price, he knew it was the opportunity of a lifetime. Joe motivated our state and national boards to act—leading to TNC's first-

ever national fundraising campaign in support of a singular preserve. Years later, his hard work paid off. TNC raised \$15 million, over \$35 million in today's dollars, and purchased the 29,000-acre tract in November of 1989.

Additionally, Jenk Jones, long time publisher and editor of the Tulsa Tribune, and a member of the Board of Trustees of TNC in Oklahoma, passed away earlier this year at the age of 87. Even before joining the board, Jenk was a staunch supporter of the Conservancy's work,

volunteering for many years at the Joseph H. Williams Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. As a docent where he enjoyed telling the story of how the preserve came to be and directing visitors from around the world to a place they were almost certain to see one or more of the bison herd. The latter being the task that perhaps gave him the most joy, even piling visitors in his own car to take them to the location himself so he could see their excitement first-hand. He did so in a special way that combined the keen mind of a career newspaper man and storyteller, and an eidetic memory that rivaled a steel trap all the way to his final days.

Jenk was passionate about telling the stories of conservation success as a way to excite old and young alike, all in the hope of moving the mission forward here in the state he loved dearly. He wrote three books about Conservancy preserves for this reason, combining his skills with the work of photographers as a special way to showcase the Tallgrass Prairie and J.T. Nickel Family Wildlife and Nature Preserves. Jenk was working for conservation up until only a few weeks before his passing when he hosted several guests on a tour of the Conservancy's most recent acquisition which will be called the Pearl Jackson Crosstimbers Preserve. Jenk was a wonderful friend and will be missed.

These visionaries established an inspirational foundation of conservation in Oklahoma—a foundation upon which we continue to build. I am proud to share we are building upon their legacies as TNC plans to conserve 210,000 additional acres of tallgrass prairie in Oklahoma and Kansas over the next seven years as a part of our Flint Hills Initiative. Without their leadership, we would have never conceived such an aspirational goal.



MIKE FUHR
State Director



Jenk Jones, Jr.
1936-2023

Oklahoma at a Glance



120,976
Acres Protected

85,313
Acres Owned & Managed by TNC

10,993
Acres of Conservation Easements

7,910
Acres of Prescribed Fire in 2022

8
Ecoregions Where We Work

Our mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

From grasslands to forests, rivers to mesas, we envision an Oklahoma where our rich natural heritage is valued and protected, and people are inspired to conserve nature for future generations.



Delores and Jerry Etter

DELORES AND JERRY ETTER HAVE SHOWN UNWAVERING dedication to the Joseph H. Williams Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. Over the years, their generous contributions have financed numerous projects directly benefiting the preserve and have provided valuable research opportunities for graduate students.

The Ethers first fell in love with the prairie while on a tour with Harvey Payne as a part of their 50th high school reunion. Since then, they have consistently supported the myriad conservation needs of the preserve. For example, in just the last three years, they have directly contributed to the purchase of a small land inholding, fencing and critical pond cleanup which helps the preserve deal with drought.

In addition to their financial support of the preserve, they established the Delores and Jerry Etter Graduate Research Scholarship Fund at the Tulsa Community Foundation. This scholarship provides essential financial assistance to graduate level research related to the tallgrass prairie ecosystem. The program provides up to five \$10,000 scholarships for one year of funding. The Tallgrass Prairie Preserve has long been an excellent area of research of the ecosystem, but this scholarship advances the much-needed research and conservation of the remainder of one of the world's most vulnerable ecosystems.

The Ethers have certainly gone above and beyond being major donors—true champion of the prairie. Through their active support of the preserve and dedication to ongoing research, they are strong ambassadors of meaningful conservation and TNC's mission.

2023 Conservation Champions

The Ethers were honored as Conservation Champions for going above and beyond in their support of the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve and their research scholarship.



Introducing The Pearl Jackson Crosstimbers Preserve

The Vision of Andie and Bob Jackson

IN THE 1980S, BOB JACKSON BECAME THE OWNER OF HIS grandparents' land nestled in the gentle hills of Creek County, Oklahoma. Although he lived in St. Louis, where he practiced law, he decided to continue operating the ranch. As he became increasingly involved in managing the ranch and his love grew stronger, he was distressed to think that it might be developed, saying, "I don't want anyone to pave it over." Ultimately, Bob made the decision to donate the land to TNC.

"Actions speak louder than words," says Mike Fuhr, state director. "The Jacksons' donation affirms their support of conservation in Oklahoma. Their generosity forgoes personal gain and will leave an enduring mark on our state. TNC aims to honor their vision by creating a place for people to connect with the natural world. Plus, a preserve of this magnitude promises ongoing ecological benefits for nature and people—enhancing water and air quality, fighting climate change and safeguarding biodiversity."



Portrait of Pearl Jackson
Courtesy of the Jackson Family

“Actions speak louder than words. The Jacksons’ donation affirms their support of conservation in Oklahoma.”

Mike Fuhr

Named after Bob’s grandmother, the Pearl Jackson Crosstimbers Preserve is an ideal specimen of the crosstimbers ecoregion. It features open tallgrass prairie and woodlands of post and blackjack oak—some which are 200 to 300 years old. The Jacksons have stewarded the property exceptionally; implementing prescribed fire annually since the 1970s. Consequently, the preserve is in outstanding ecological condition, rich with plant and animal life. Seldom-seen bobwhite quail and bobcats, as well as whitetail deer, turkey, songbirds and more, are just a few examples of the diverse animal population of the preserve.

Located near Sapulpa, and just 25 minutes from midtown Tulsa, the Pearl Jackson Crosstimbers Preserve, once open, will provide a new gateway for the public to connect with nature while conserving its ecological significance. Collaborative efforts are underway with businesses, agencies, Tribal partners and ranchers to equitably plan for on-site conservation management, outreach and educational opportunities.

Before the preserve can welcome visitors, the staff must lay the groundwork. “Fences must be improved, roads need to be repaired, and headquarters and facilities must be established. We need to complete a comprehensive biological survey and so much more,” emphasizes Katie Gillies, director of conservation. “But it’s a privilege and a humbling responsibility to be a part of this project. Given the preserve’s exceptional outstanding condition, I’m motivated to get prescribed fire on the ground as soon as possible to maintain the health of the preserve.”

Representing a new chapter for TNC in Oklahoma and a testament to community-driven conservation, the Pearl Jackson Crosstimbers Preserve transcends its physical boundaries. The Jacksons’ incredible generosity and vision, presents the opportunity of a lifetime to create a world-class preserve in the heart of Oklahoma’s green country.



6,191

Acres Burned at Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

32,572

Partner Acres Burned Near Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

300

Acres Burned at Oka' Yanahli Preserve

1,100

Partner Acres Burned Near Four Canyon Preserve

2,321

Acres Burned at J.T. Nickel Preserve

176

Partner Acres Burned near J.T. Nickel Preserve



Burning Better Together

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Help with Prescribed Fire at J.T. Nickel Family Nature and Wildlife Preserve

FIRE IS A STRONG, ENCHANTING ELEMENT WHICH DESERVES respect. It brings people together around campfires, turns bland food into exciting meals, its warmth brings comfort and it is an essential tool for conservation. When used correctly, prescribed fire invigorates plant life, enriches soil health, encourages biodiversity and helps fight climate change.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes and The Nature Conservancy share a vision of restoring and stewarding land using prescribed fire. On April 11, 2023, a team of 12 people, including 3 people from the Tribes, burned 2,397 acres at TNC's J.T. Nickel Family Nature & Wildlife Preserve, the single largest burn at the preserve in over a decade.

“It’s simple to introduce a flame to the earth,” says Jeremy Tubbs, preserve director. “However, conducting a safe and effective controlled burn takes

2023 Conservation Champion

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes were honored as Conservation Champions for going above and beyond in implementing prescribed fire at the J.T. Nickel Nature and Wildlife Preserve.

considerable time, money and coordination. We’ve been planning this burn for two years with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Fire Management and Prevention team; waiting on the weather to cooperate. I was eager to burn and am proud to say that together we executed a burn over double the size of our average burns. We simply wouldn’t have been able to do this by ourselves. This success is a shining example of how strong partnerships deliver significant results. It’s always a pleasure to work with this crew—and I never doubt what we can accomplish together.”

Phillip Daw, acting fire management officer and burn boss for the Tribes’ fire management program says that prescribed fire not only improves ecosystems, but it keeps people safe. “We’re always trying to help any way we can. Our crew helps our tribal members when we burn our land in western Oklahoma—removing accumulated organic matter, reducing the likelihood and severity of destructive wildfires. We also offer our services to organizations like TNC. Burning more acres through prescribed fire benefits everyone.”

After each burn, everyone comes together to share in a moment of celebration and reflect on the shared accomplishment. In moments like these, relationships develop and the partnership grows stronger. Together, TNC and the Tribes serve as a beacon of conservation and collaboration for the benefit of Oklahomans.



The Economic Value of the Blue River

OKLAHOMA'S FARMERS, RANCHERS, businesses and residents benefit from shared infrastructure like bridges, roads and sidewalks. Similarly, our natural resources, like the Blue River Watershed, offer services and infrastructure—all of which contribute to the local economy, called natural capital. Just like built, financial, human and social capital, natural capital provides a flow of ecological goods and services. To ensure the sustainable use of natural resources and the continued flow of ecosystem services, it is important to recognize the value of natural capital. Earth Economics, a leader in ecological economics, recently completed an in-depth analysis of the economic and social benefits provided by the Blue River Watershed in south-central Oklahoma.

The Blue River is 141 miles of pristine ground and surface water, flowing through Ada, Durant and Tishamingo, emptying into the Red River, which lies along the border of Texas and Oklahoma. Historically, the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Caddo, Kickapoo, Tawakoni, Osage and Wichita Nations were the original caretakers of this area.

Today, the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations steward the river and continue spiritual and cultural practices.

The Blue River feeds the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer, an underground lake. Together, they supply drinking water for approximately 126,000 area residents. As populations grow and if climate significantly impacts the watershed, taxpayers and the community must adapt by finding alternate water sources. In fact, replacing the watershed as a source of drinking water would conservatively cost \$31.2 million per year.

“As one of only two free-flowing rivers in Oklahoma, and most pristine watersheds, TNC has classified the Blue River as one of its five priority watersheds in Oklahoma,” said Kim Elkin, Oklahoma’s watershed health director at the time. “Its natural capital will only increase as we adapt to extreme weather events like flash-flooding, long-term drought and other impacts of climate change. We must be proactive in protecting intact ecosystems that provide essential services, like the Blue River Watershed.”

Economic Value

In total, the ecosystem services of the Blue River Watershed contribute between **\$928 million and \$1.7 billion** in ecosystem service benefits.

The watershed provides Oklahomans with clean drinking water, water for irrigation and habitat that supports wildlife, **an annual value of \$121 million to \$271 million.**

Source: Fletcher, A., Casey, P., Schmidt, R. 2020. Ecosystem Services in the Blue River Watershed. Earth Economics, Tacoma, WA.



Conservation Visionaries

The Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma is honored to recognize the following individuals, corporations, foundations and organizations whose contributions have supported our work between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023. We deeply appreciate every gift and regret that space constraints prevent us from listing all donors. Thank you for your generous contributions.

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Ways of Giving

Funding Life-Income Gifts with QCDs

Individuals 70½ or older may use qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) from their IRA accounts to establish life-income gifts benefiting a charity. A maximum QCD of \$50,000 may be used to establish a charitable gift annuity (CGA) or charitable remainder trust (CRT). Spouses may each contribute a maximum QCD of \$50,000 to fund a CGA or CRT up to \$100,000, if they individually have an IRA with sufficient assets (\$50,000 each). Starting in 2024, the \$50,000 maximum QCD that can be used to fund these life-income gifts will be indexed to inflation.

What does this mean?

- If you are 70½ or older, you may still use your IRA account to support The Nature Conservancy.
- Individuals turning 72 in 2023 are not required to take a required minimum distribution.
- If you have a large IRA account and are interested in funding a life-income gift, this opportunity may be of interest.

Want to know more? We can help!

There are many ways to give to TNC. To learn more about making a gift to support our conservation work in Oklahoma, please contact Stephanie Vogel, Director of Philanthropy at (405) 269-4207 or stephanie.vogel@tnc.org, or Barry Maxwell, Associate Director of Philanthropy at (918) 639-6129 or barry.maxwell@tnc.org.

The Nature Conservancy does not provide legal, tax or accounting advice. Please consult your accountant or legal advisor.



Pollinator Outreach

“As the immediate impacts of climate change increase drought in Oklahoma, the ways in which we support pollinators become more complex. Sometimes that means I invent games to teach children how monarchs need nectar to successfully migrate to Mexico. Other times it means encouraging master gardeners to implement functional gardens that are not only beautiful, but are full of native plants—requiring less care and supporting wildlife. Sometimes it means working with local news crews or a big-budget monarch documentary. No matter the audience I help people think more deeply about the impact of their decisions in outdoor spaces.”

—Stephanie Jordan, Pollinator Outreach Coordinator

THE SUMMER KICKED OFF IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMONWEALTH URBAN Farms with a kid-focused bug festival. Teaching kids to marvel at insects—even the spooky ones—and understand the relationships between plants and insects lays the groundwork for future environmental stewardship and encourages empathy. I brought an observation hive where visitors could watch, listen and learn about the activities of honeybees and their queen. The children played an interactive migration game—dressing up as monarchs and collecting enough symbolic nectar to complete their migration to Mexico.

As the monarchs came through Oklahoma during the fall migration, we were busy at different festivals and events. This is a crucial time, as people are energized by monarch activity. We handed out hundreds upon hundreds of seed packs, stressing the importance of biodiversity on large and small scales—providing larval host plants and nectar for monarchs and other pollinators. We also gave away guides which help people understand which nectar-providing plants are best suited for their region at reputable vendors. Our annual Pollinator Festival at Scissortail Park was a big crowd pleaser. There were myriad opportunities for education and inspiration, expanding efforts to support pollinators. The event concluded with an evening bike ride symbolizing the migration.

Thanks to a highly motivated team of volunteers, two residential lots in the heart of OKC are being converted to a thriving pollinator park. The space serves as a micro-preserve for local residents—both human and wild—to escape the concrete and crabgrass and immerse in nature. It’s also a space schools use for outdoor classroom activities. This year, I was able to host a science class from ASTEC Charter School who had just completed a unit on prairie ecology at this site. They helped seed the prairie restoration area and collected data for future projects.



The Gift that Keeps on Giving

Nancy and Gerald Hatfield's Conservation Legacy

"We have observed and experienced how **The Nature Conservancy is the best** at managing our shrinking footprint of nature and seeking solutions to the challenges facing nature in today's environment."

“ ‘NOTHING IS CERTAIN EXCEPT DEATH AND TAXES,’ originated with Ben Franklin in 1789. Today we have an opportunity given to us by the IRS to give our assets to a non-profit organization such as The Nature Conservancy that we believe in and trust. A gift of assets is not taxed and reduces the amount of tax on any remainder of your assets that you may plan to give to family and friends. So we choose to assure that those assets existing at our deaths clearly benefit what our heart desires.

We love God's green earth. All of his creation gives us joy and solace every day of our lives. We believe that those assets we were blessed to acquire belong first to God's ministry and second to the work needed to protect our precious natural resources.

We have observed and experienced how The Nature Conservancy is the best at managing our shrinking footprint of nature and seeking solutions to the challenges facing nature in today's environment. That is why we intentionally chose to be a TNC legacy donor so our assets can continue to support the work of The Nature Conservancy in the future.

We encourage everyone to follow their passions and allocate their assets with intentionality.”

Nancy and Gerald Hatfield
Proud TNC Supporters in Tulsa, Oklahoma

Meet our Legacy Club Members

The Legacy Club is a special group of supporters who have included The Nature Conservancy as a part of their long-term financial planning. Whether by making a specific bequest, designating a gift from an IRA or establishing an annuity or remainder trust, there is a vehicle to suit everyone's circumstances. Legacy giving isn't just for the wealthy; every gift makes a difference!

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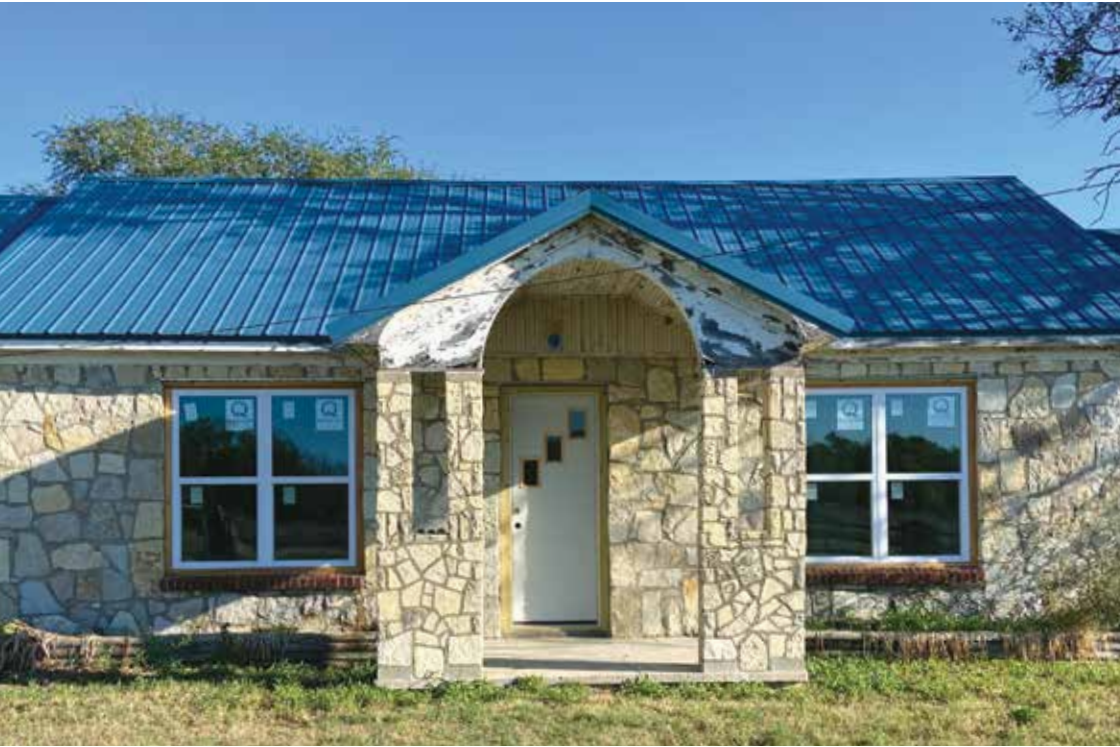
A photograph of Harvey Payne, a man with a friendly expression, wearing an orange short-sleeved button-down shirt and a grey baseball cap. He has his arms crossed and is standing in a green field with a herd of bison in the background under a cloudy sky.

Harvey Payne

TNC TRAILBLAZER AWARD WINNER

"I'm humbled and appreciative to receive this honor. Like most individual awards, it's truly a community effort. In fact, the most rewarding part of my job has been the people I've been able to work with over the years. Not only are they kind and generous, but they understand the value of conservation. These folks are making a real-world difference—for generations to come—and it's touching to see."

TNC Trailblazer Awards recognize outstanding achievements of teams or individuals whose significant accomplishments are aligned with TNC's goals and values. The awards not only honor the achievements but just as importantly, honor how they were accomplished.



Renovations at Oka' Yanahli Preserve

"Around the preserve, this is known as 'the stone house.' It may not be a creative name, but the updates to this house have been long overdue. With these renovations, we can host essential staff and researchers on the preserve. Previously, we would've had to provide temporary housing, like RVs. Now, we have safe, reliable lodging."

-Haley Bloomquist, Preserve Director

Thanks to the Generous Donors Who Made this Possible

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30 Years of Bison Restoration at Joseph H. Williams Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

ALONG WITH THE BREEZE-BENT GRASSES AND COLORFUL wildflowers, the tallgrass prairie of the rolling Flint Hills was dotted with bison, otherwise known as the American Buffalo, for millennia. These iconic animals continue to shape the evolution of the ecosystems which they inhabit and contribute to the health and wellness of people who live alongside them.

These titans are a keystone species—playing an integral role in the vulnerable tallgrass prairie ecosystem. Their grazing behavior and the effects they have on the prairie naturally promotes biodiversity and helps an array of wildflowers, plants, insects and amphibians flourish. In 1993 the Adams family donated 300 bison to the Joseph H. Williams Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, restoring balance and harmony to the land. Today, the herd consists of approximately 1,800 which freely roam over 29 square miles.





“At the time, I was the preserve manager,” recalls Bob Hamilton. “The day we released the bison was tremendous; not just for me, but for everyone who was there, the community, and everyone who has visited since. It’s humbling to see these animals back where they belong—on the open prairie. But we brought them here for a specific purpose. We can’t manage the preserve effectively without them. Along with prescribed fire, these animals are our number one conservation tool for this ecosystem.”

On the preserve, a bison’s primary job is to maintain the health of the prairie. As they roam, they pick up seeds in their fur—spreading them from field to field. When they wallow, the herd leaves behind hundreds of small craters, creating small pools in the rainy season where wildlife can find water. As they graze, an adult female will consume about 30 pounds of forage per day, creating space for new plants to grow.

“The release of the bison was a special day—for many reasons,” says Harvey Payne, community relations manager and former preserve director. “In fact, General Norman Schwarzkopf was the headlining speaker. I think back to his words, ‘We should rejoice in the knowledge that the great-grandchildren of these children here will experience what our great-grandparents experienced here. They’ll experience the tallgrass prairie.’ I think he’d be proud to see how the bison program has evolved.”

In addition to their conservation contributions, bison hold significant value to people—especially Native Americans whose relationship with the animal was severed during colonial settlement. Today, the InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) is leading the effort to restore buffalo to Indigenous communities and their ancestral lands while revitalizing historical relationships.

“The significance of buffalo extends beyond their physical presence on the land,” said Troy Heinert, Sicangu Lakota, ITBC Executive Director. “They represent a positive force toward spiritual and cultural revitalization, ecological restoration and conservation, food sovereignty, health, economic development and much more as each buffalo is brought back home.”

Since 2020, more than 1,000 bison have made their way from TNC preserves to ITBC member Nations across the United States including 200 from the Joseph H. Williams Tallgrass Prairie Preserve.

“Our team is excited to support the return of buffalo to Indigenous communities,” says Mike Fuhr. “This restoration is about more than land. It is about connecting Indigenous People to their tribal identity.”

Special Support for the Joseph H. Williams
Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Provided by


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Introducing the Flint Hills Initiative

The Flint Hills offer dramatic, rolling panoramas of breeze-bent grasses, wildflowers and unbound skies—a grand grassland wilderness where prairie chickens, bison, seldom-seen birds, rare fishes and a host of other wild creatures can be found. The strength and resilience of tallgrass prairie grew from fire, grazing, extreme temperatures and precipitation. It's a place where people connect with the prairie and its wildness.

Tallgrass prairie is the most altered habitat type in North America, only about 4% remains of the original 170 million acres. Habitat degradation and loss, fragmentation, climate change, poorly sited wind development and isolation are the most serious threats to the Flint Hills. Yet, a substantial swath of tallgrass prairie remains relatively intact in the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas and northeastern Oklahoma. Roughly two-thirds of the world's remaining tallgrass prairie is found here.





Our vision for the Flint Hills is not merely a dream—it is a collective commitment to preserve the legacy of the prairie for future generations. We honor the wisdom of those who came before us, who understood the vital importance of this ecosystem. We stand united, guided by a shared passion to safeguard the tallgrass prairie’s irreplaceable beauty and natural significance.

By embracing sustainable ranching, supporting conservation efforts and spreading awareness, we can inspire others to join our cause. Through determination, resilience and the power of community, we can ensure that the tallgrass prairie remains a beacon of hope—a testament to reconcile the needs of people with nature’s wonders. We will safeguard the prairie’s majesty, celebrate its timeless spirit and secure its legacy of harmony between humanity and the land we call home.

More acres of tallgrass prairie have been lost than nearly any other ecosystem in North America; only about **4% remains** of the original 170 million acres.

Meet the New Staff



Josh White

Digital Media and Content Manager

"Joining the TNC team has impacted my life and my family in so many meaningful ways. I'm constantly learning from my peers, and have taken up native gardening and monarch rearing as a direct result of my work with Stephanie Jordan and the Okies for Monarchs crew. There's nothing more important to me than preserving our planet and ensuring food and energy security for future generations."



Braxton Cagle

Blue Boggy Land Steward

"I'm new to the world of conservation. As a land steward at the Blue Boggy Preserves, I help with whatever is needed—from fixing pumps to being out in the field spraying invasive plants. I enjoy this work because of the people that are on my team and it helps me get into nature and the outdoors. When I am not working, you can find me hunting, fishing, or enjoying the latest video game with friends."



Emily Gross

Donor Relations Manager

"I have always enjoyed being able to connect people with their passions. I love witnessing firsthand the power of supporting nature conservation initiatives that protect our planet and being a part of an amazing team. Oklahoma holds a special place in my heart, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this impactful work and look forward to the journey ahead!"



Julie Etchison

Development Program Manager

"I am delighted to marry my personal and professional passions as the new development program manager for TNC Oklahoma! For the past eight years, I've served in various development roles for nonprofit organizations in the Tulsa community, focused on optimizing operations and creating win-win partnerships. On weekends, you'll find me on a hiking trail or my paddleboard, hoping to spot a new bird species through my binoculars."



Clay Pope

Partnerships & External Affairs Mngr.

"I'm excited to have the opportunity to come on board as TNC's new partnership and external affairs manager. As a sixth generation Oklahoman, I feel a special tie to our state and its natural resources. I've lived and worked in rural Oklahoma my entire life and have a deep love of the state's land and its people. It's an honor to have the chance to help TNC in it's mission to protect and conserve this special place we call home."

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Braxton Cagle - Land Steward
Austin Weeks - Land Steward

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Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

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Tony Brown - Project Director
Kevin Chouteau - Livestock Technician
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Steve Reisdorph - Guest Services Assistant
Harvey Payne - Community Relations Manager

Remote Employees

Joan Dwoskin - Senior Attorney
Elizabeth Skrynecki - Senior Paralegal
Nick Walters - IT Support

A wide-angle, aerial photograph capturing a sunset over a diverse landscape. The sun is a large, bright, glowing orb in the upper right quadrant, casting a warm, golden light across the sky and the terrain below. The landscape is a mix of green grasslands, dense forests, and rolling mesas. The foreground shows a dirt road winding through a grassy field. The overall scene is peaceful and majestic, highlighting the natural beauty of the region.

From grasslands to forests, rivers to mesas,
we envision an Oklahoma where our rich natural heritage is valued and
protected, and people are inspired to conserve nature for future generations.