

& Buestem

New Board Members Step into Service, Leadership Roles

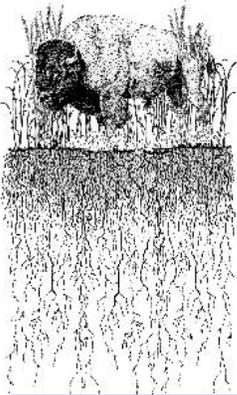
Courtney Masterson studied at the University of Missouri- Kansas City, earning a Bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences, and later studied at the University of Kansas, where she earned her Master's degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Courtney is a former Senior Research Assistant at the Kansas Biological Survey and KU Field Station. She currently works as the owner-operator at Native Lands LLC, an ecological restoration and native landscaping company.



Kelly Yarbrough Frasier, from Texas, holds a B.A. in Studio Art and English from Austin College. She earned her M.F.A. in Drawing from K-State University, and actively shows work in the region. Kelly is also a member of the 2018 Konza Environmental Education Program docent class. Kelly works as the Director of Programming for Prairiewood Retreat & Preserve and manages the Blue Sage Gallery at Prairiewood. She also founded and manages the Tallgrass Artist Residency.



Josh Brewer is originally from Arkansas. He attended Duke University, where he received his B.S. in Evolutionary Biology and English as a double major. Josh moved to Manhattan in 2017 and soon after became a member of the Friends of Konza Prairie. He currently works as the agency marketing director for 502, a strategic marketing agency.



Research Education Conservation



Cure for Cabin Fever:

Sunday, January 27, 2019, 2:00-5:00 p.m.

Join us at the Konza Prairie Meeting Hall (stone barn)- at the headquarters of the Konza Prairie Biological Station. Come and enjoy live music- speaker- soup potluck feast. Invite your friends.



Program: Jeff Taylor
Research Staff- Division of Biology
"The Role of Bison in Prairie Maintenance"
Photo by Barb Van Slyke



Entertainment:
Kaw Creek duo playing new and traditional songs and tunes on fiddle, guitar, banjo; inspired by the land.



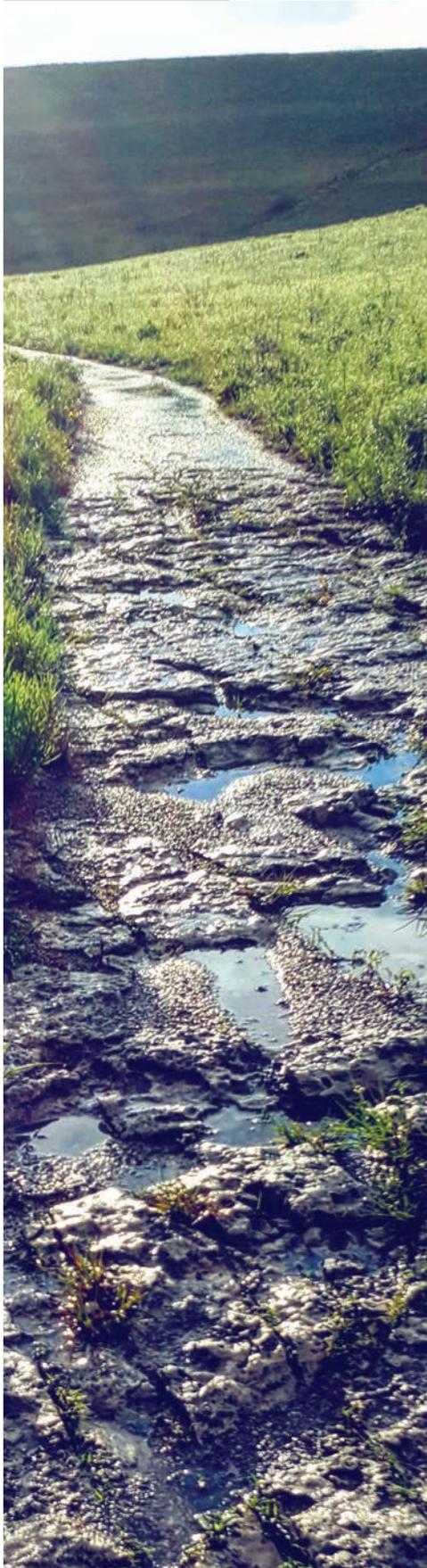
FOKP Calendars on sale now!
Pick up your copy at Flint Hills Discovery Center, Claflin Books and at any FOKP event.

Bison

Winter 2018-2019

What is the value of the Konza Prairie?

Allie Lousch, Board Secretary



The idea of distilling the value of the ecological history, available green space, research, investigation, and exploration of the Konza Prairie Biological Station into terms of money and financial prosperity makes me cringe. I keep thinking what is the cost of NOT supporting the Konza? Sometimes called opportunity costs, there are several factors to consider.

Let's start with a look at what the Konza Environmental Education Program (KEEP) offers as a learning resource for K-12 students of every age across the state. Educators choose from a variety of KEEP-led learning adventures that include the 2.6-mile Nature Trail loop and the ecologically-important points along the trail, Butterfly Hill hike, the Hokanson Homestead, and the Bison Loop Driving Tour. Each of these adventures immerses students into the wild reality of the prairie; its sounds of wind and grass, the unseen nature of water and animals who leave their marks along the footpaths.

Students are expertly guided into one of the last stands of tallgrass prairie by a trained naturalist to experience, observe, record data, and participate in research among the last four percent of what once spanned North America from parts of Texas into Canada. This is not just biology and ecology, it is history – our story as a species, continent, and culture.

In terms of looking towards future careers, KEEP typically hosts up to 3,500 total guests and students each year; many who will experience hands-on inquiry-based learning for the first time in one of Kansas' great natural resources, the Konza Prairie. As for assigning value? How many of those students will gravitate toward the sciences and study to serve the people of Kansas as we face issues of climate, shifting population density, and a need for green space? How many students catch a glimpse of the larger ecosystem which will help to inform their learning forward? What's the value of wonder? Priceless.

The value of civically-engaged volunteers: the Konza Prairie team trains up to 20 docents each year, who then become ambassadors of the Konza and part of a growing community rooted in the land. Docents lead tours for classes and invite students to take a closer look at what lives among the grasses and wildflowers of this rolling prairie laboratory.

Volunteers help to rebuild trails, maintain the Hokanson Homestead, and tell the story of the tallgrass prairie with their time, art, and community engagement. This makes for a healthier community or ecosystem of interconnected people willing to give their time and resources, so others may have the opportunity to feel the wind whip through the fall grasses or take in the unexpected riot of color as spring emboldens the hills with wildflowers and new life.

Then there's the unmatched research. Thanks to the partnerships with entities like The Nature Conservancy, The National Science Foundation's Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) network, and more, Kansas State University conducts and hosts original and cooperative research into the soils, flora, and fauna of the prairie every day, over what has become decades. This temporal research reveals trends about the impacts of climate and human activity on the natural world.

Investing in research on the Konza Prairie is an investment in improving Kansas' long game – how we will live and prosper under changing conditions for generations. This is foundationally important in our regional and global viability as a place to attract and retain people who will work to make our state stronger in agriculture, discovery, and quality of life. Put simply, Konza research contributes to what we learn and how we – as a species – experience weather, water health, and natural resources, and all that these elements touch in our daily living. We have a lot riding on our ability as a state and a species to adapt to a changing world. Konza research is innovative and informing the way forward.

So, with a focus on education and research, I realize that this is less facts and figures and more a letter of love to the Konza Prairie and the people who give in a myriad of ways to advance what we learn and how we experience this magnificent land that continues to feed, shelter, and challenge us.

What is the value of Konza Prairie? What is the cost of not supporting it? Before assigning a value to it, take the time to experience it and consider providing a gift to ensure it continues.



Konza's Blended Focus Areas Drive Purpose

The mission of the Konza Prairie Biological Station is to support and foster **research, education and conservation**. Those three facets are highly interconnected and interdependent.

For example, the **research** on Konza provides information that feeds into our **education** and **conservation** efforts. Likewise, our **education** and public outreach programs increase awareness of the importance of **research**, and our collaborations with groups who contribute to more effective grassland management and **conservation** efforts that extend far beyond the Konza site.

As director, I see both opportunities and challenges as we work to increase our impact in **research, education and conservation**. Konza continues to support the activities of two large NSF-funded **research** programs: 1) the Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) program and 2) National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON). We will facilitate the activities of independent **researchers** from multiple universities and agencies at Konza.

With respect to **education**, we aim to support the high-level of activities led by Jill Haukos, and seek other unique opportunities for public **education**, such as the recent lecture on bison ecology by Jeff Taylor at the Flint Hills Discovery Center.

We are also working with faculty in the arts and humanities at K-State and elsewhere. We also will continue to collaborate with organizations like The Nature Conservancy and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to identify new opportunities.

Recent examples of these types of outreach activities include Konza site visits by NRCS trainees and by land managers and project coordinators from the Nebraska Lincoln Parks Foundation and Prairie Corridor Project.

Of course, maintaining and expanding KPBS **research, education and conservation** activities will also require resources, and one of my goals as director is to identify and secure additional funds to support our activities in each of these areas.

THANK YOU NOTES FROM STUDENTS WHO TOOK PART IN KEEP FIELD TRIPS TO KONZA





From the Stone House
 Director of Education - Jill Haukos

A Slice of History



Photo by Peter M. Dziuk



Photo by Barb Van Slyke

The bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) is a gorgeous, stately tree – a species easily identified by its huge leaves and acorns. Even without leaves, an old bur oak is identifiable due to its tendency to bend and weave and become gnarled and spooky in the dark shadows of winter.

The bur oaks on Konza Prairie have a long and storied history. The huge, 150 year-old specimen that grew along the Nature Trail has been loved, photographed, mourned (as it slowly perished from a fungal disease), and now bid farewell as it gradually decomposes (after burning last year) back into the prairie.

Another bur oak tree that was once a fixture on the south shoreline of Kings Creek is now just a memory, but a cross-section of this old stalwart remains and may be found Konza. In the early 1980's the old, large oak tree fell and blocked the path of the trail. KPBS director Dr. Lloyd Hulbert asked site manager Joe Gelroth to cut and remove the tree from the path, but also to save a cross-section of the tree for educational purposes.

The section languished for many years in the corner of the Hokanson stone barn before it was noticed and removed recently by new docent Forrest Chumley. Forrest was inspired to put some effort into the piece – perhaps sand it down and refinish it to where it could be used in the Konza educational program.

Forrest contacted master woodsman and fellow docent Jan Olewnik, and the two of them worked to give new life to the piece. Jan sanded it and give it a coat of clear finish and then built a stand for it to be displayed upright, where the annual rings could be seen easily. With permission from new KPBS director Dr. John Blair, the bur oak cross section found a new home, where it resides today, in the southwest corner of the lecture room of the stone barn at headquarters.

Plans are afoot to label some of the annual rings to bring a sense of history and perspective of all that the tree experienced during its time of growing along a stream in the tallgrass prairie of the Flint Hills of Kansas.



Bringing the bur oak cross-section back to Konza are Jan Olewnik, Forrest Chumley, and Joe Gelroth.

DICK OBERST

What motivated you to become a Konza Prairie docent?

It was actually my wife, Jacque Staats, who recommended that we look into being docents. I was recently retired and looking for something to do that was different and it just sounded fun.

What are some of your hobbies & interests?

Being outside, taking walks, doing things in the garden-yard-acreage, cutting wood (and all that is involved in that), tailgating and going to K-State football games, looking at art, listening to good music, and traveling with my wife.

What has been the best part of being a volunteer at Konza Prairie?

Being with other people who have similar interests for being on the Konza. I enjoy being with and learning with groups on KEEP hikes and bison loop tours. The groups can be as young as kindergartners to college age. It's never exactly the same. I find that real invigorating and stimulating.

What brings you the most joy in your life?

Being with my wife, family and friends. They all know I'm not perfect, and they still put up with me. They are all very important to me.



photos by Jill Haukos

Welcome to the new docents of the graduating class of 2018:



Left to right: ML Stahl, Carol Pacey, Bill Baack, Brad Williamson, Kelly Yarbrough Frasier, Don Garwood, Stanley Glaum, Forrest Chumley, and Kathy Tuttle. Not pictured: Chris Wilson. Photo by Hallie Hatfield.

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Division of Biology,
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MISSION

Konza Prairie Biological Station (KPBS) is a native tallgrass prairie preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy and Kansas State University and operated as a research station by the Division of Biology. The Friends of Konza Prairie (FOKP) promotes the interests of KPBS as they pertain to its mission of research, education and conservation.

Bison & Bluestem is published by the Friends of Konza Prairie

New and Renewing FOKP Members

Thank you all for your support of the Friends of Konza Prairie!

Members who have newly joined or renewed their membership since the last issue of the Bison & Bluestem include:

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