



COULEE CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2008

Chapter President's Message

Whew! That's my feeling now that conference/banquet is over. As you can read in this newsletter, I certainly presume that it was a success. To a lesser extent, I'm also relieved to be passing the president's torch on to our new chapter president, Jessica Bolwahn. My presumption regarding my success as chapter president is less certain.

I'd love to give a "State of the Chapter" address and declare my success, but that is a difficult task when we don't really have a defined set of objectives and tasks. That is not necessarily a bad thing, at least from the perspective of a person who has participated in more far too many strategic planning processes. But, how do I judge the success of our chapter over the last 4 years of my leadership? Starting at the lowest level of success; we are still a viable chapter with a membership of around 90. Grassroots, volunteer, non-profits do come and go, but we're still here. Let's add in that we've assisted in raising funds to support the structure at the corporate level, with paid staff for the first time in the history of TPE. We have volunteers from our chapter on the Fundraising and Endowment Committee. We met our obligation of hosting the chapter-wide picnic and conference in the last year.

On a more local scale, and the real meat of our mission, we have gotten out on the land. We added a few projects, with Decorah Mound being the most significant. We have a longer list of sites where we can perform our restoration voodoo. We continue to work as a group on lands we own. We sponsor and attend field trips. We have continued to perform outreach and educational activities and have begun to build partnerships in the Coulee region.

The poor writing form above with the repetitive use of "we" has its purpose. As I stated in my first president's message some four years ago, I (or any other chapter president) cannot achieve success alone. I appreciate all the contributions of our chapter members, and will continue to do my part in making this organization a success. After all, the prairies and savannas are counting on us!

Jim

Mark Your Calendars for These Upcoming Events

- *The next CRC meeting will be on Saturday March 29, 2008 at UW-L. Check inside the newsletter for details.*

TPE Coulee Chapter Officers and Officials for 2008

Name	Office	Phone	Email
Jim Rogala	President	608-786-1855	jrogala@usgs.gov
Jessica Bolwahn	Vice President	608-637-3753	Ja4bolwahn@hotmail.com
Barb Christie	Past President	608-634-2110	edbarbc@webtv.net
Scott Cooper	Secretary	608-785-6983	cooper.scot@uwlax.edu
Ned Gatzke	Treasurer	608-269-2033	cngatzke@centurytel.net
Diane Hanson	Member-at-large	608-637-3735	nosnah@mwt.net
Don Nelson	Newsletter editor	608-435-6203	don094@centurytel.net
Jean Stramel	Membership coord.	608-625-4069	jeanstr@mwt.net

Coulee Volunteers on TPE Corporate Board and Committees

Name	Office
Jim Rogala	Corporate Board
Carmeen Johnston	Fundraising and Endowment committee
George Johnston	Fundraising and Endowment committee
Jim Rogala	Land Management committee

Coulee Chapter Business Items

September 08, 2007 Coulee Region Chapter Membership Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Barbara Christie, Greg Nessler, Jessica Bolwahn, Armund Bartz, Anna Motivan, Ned Gatzke, Don Nelson and Jim Rogala. Visitors Present: Tom Goetzman and Sandra Goetzman

Business Meeting Topics:

President Jim Rogala opened the meeting at 10:15 am with introductions and an overview of the meeting agenda.

Coulee Region Chapter Financial Report:

An overview of CRC's finances for 2006 was provided to the members. Treasurer Ned Gatzke explained the report. Ned also reviewed the history and current status of the relationship between CRC and TPE Central in terms of financial accountability and reporting. The transition period between Chapter-centered and Central-centered reporting has resulted in some inconsistencies in the financial figures. Ned feels this issue is being resolved. Jim Rogala reminded the members that Central's figures are "official" as those are the figures reviewed and approved by TPE's accountant. Jim and Ned will provide an update on CRC's 2007 finances in a future CRC newsletter.

Donations by Members for the Use of CRC-owned Equipment:

There was discussion concerning our policy of having suggested donation levels for CRC members who use CRC-owned equipment (that policy is described in the Spring '07 CRC

newsletter). Following the discussion, it was decided by a vote of the members present to rescind the policy.

Planning for 2008 TPE Conference:

Jim Rogala reported on the planning to date for the conference to be held at the Cartwright Center on the University of Wisconsin–LaCrosse campus on Saturday March 8, 2008. Jim reminded the members that as the conference is being held in our region, CRC is responsible for planning and implementing the conference.

Jim reviewed our contract with UWL's Continuing Education Office that lays out our costs and their services. UWL will provide for registration (including online), marketing, space for presentations, meetings and meal functions and technical support for presentations. Participant registration fees will defray the costs of the conference facilities and related expenses. Jim talked about the proposed program including presentations, roundtable discussions, speakers, meal and social events. The program is still in development but suggested themes will likely include goat prairies, prairie wildlife, invasives, land protection and prairie management.

Jim asked that members willing to work with the planning committee to please contact him. Many hands will be needed to make this conference a success.

Changes at TPE Central:

Jim Rogala reviewed some of the changes and activities occurring at TPE's Central Office. Executive Director Renee Mitchell has taken a different position and TPE's Board will be seeking a replacement. Jim also mentioned that the Board has been discussing the possibility of hiring a part-time administrative assistant and part-time development director. Jim mentioned that Central's Fund Raising Committee (CRC's George and Carmeen Johnston are committee members) is working on a Development Plan to guide TPE's fund raising efforts. Jim also talked about the Board's efforts to develop a hunting policy for TPE-owned properties. This is a complicated matter as TPE has property in three different states.

CRC's Role as a Land Trust:

The members discussed what role, if any, CRC should play as a holder of prairie properties within our region. Jim mentioned that while TPE Central in reality "owns" all such property, the chapters play a crucial role in identifying quality properties, working with Central to acquire those properties and managing the properties when acquired. The use of conservation easements was also discussed as a means of protecting high quality properties in cooperation with private landowners. The transfer of non-private properties, such as the Nature Conservancy's Decorah Mound, was also covered. President Rogala suggested that this is a very important issue for CRC and one that will be reviewed at future membership meetings.

Work Parties:

Greg Nessler described several prairie and savannah sites at Sidie Hollow County Park in Vernon County. Greg felt that county officials would be agreeable if CRC wanted to take on these sites as work projects in the future.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:15 pm

Coulee Chapter Spring Meeting – March 29, 2008

We've not met for some time, so we will reserve the entire meeting time for open discussion. Below is a list of some topics that could be a long list or short list, depending on the discussion. Bring your own ideas for topics to discuss.

- Electing selected chapter officers (Vice-President),
- Finalizing our spring work parties,
- Talk about the strategy for using the Hill Prairie display and brochures,
- Discuss having a prescribed burn class in our area, and
- Review the status of old projects, and talk about new opportunities for us.

Your input is crucial to the success of our chapter and we hope to see you at the meeting!

2008 Annual Conference and Banquet

While it was cold, the weather didn't deter 150 intrepid prairie enthusiasts from enjoying the 2008 TPE Annual Conference and Banquet. This year's event was held in La Crosse and sponsored by the Coulee Region Chapter. The participants enjoyed presentations ranging from managing the largest of prairies to identifying the tiniest of mushrooms. Our exhibitors offered information on topics of interest on natural lands restoration and protection as well as on the enjoyment of the plants and critters of the prairie and savanna. As usual, the presenters and exhibitors helped get our collective juices flowing in preparation for a new season of activities out on the prairie. And, of course, the famous TPE Auction and Raffle provided items attractive enough to encourage even the most parsimonious participant to free up a few bucks. For many prairie enthusiasts, the Annual Conference was also an opportunity to share food and a favorite beverage with old friends and new acquaintances. For those of you may have missed the fun this year, we've included photographs to entice you to attend next year's conference (Thanks to Roger Hansen for providing the photos!)



Coulee Chapter Members Socializing



MVC, Conference Sponsor & Exhibitor



So Many Choices...So Little Money!



So Much Food...So Little Time!

Successful conferences don't just happen without the hard work of numerous volunteers. The committee of Scott Cooper, Don Nelson, and Jim Rogala lead the charge, with Armund Bartz and Jessica Bolwahn providing assistance with the conference program. Barb Christie and Diane Hansen (and I imagine Roger helped) organized the raffle/auction. The banquet centerpieces were provided by the Diane and Roger. Many others helped make it happen, including Kathy Bibby, Andrea Benco, Rita Hoffmann, George and Carmeen Johnston, Betty Kruck, Anna Motivans, and Jean Stramel. (With so many helping, we hope that we remembered to include everyone. If we did miss someone, please let us know and we include those individuals in the next newsletter).

The Coulee Region Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts also wants to acknowledge the generous support of our many sponsors including: **Xcel Energy, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Michler and Brown, LLC, Swamp Lovers Inc., Integrated Restorations LLC, Friends of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, and Organic Valley Farms.**

Prairie Education and Outreach

Email Addresses Needed

The planning of our Chapter's volunteer efforts, such as; chapter meetings, field trips, and work parties (see following articles), frequently require last minute communication. Having your email address on hand makes it possible to contact you in a timely and efficient manner. If you haven't already provided Jim with your email address, please forward it to him at jrogala@usgs.gov. Thanks!

Field Trip Plans

The deadline for inclusion into the TPE 2008 field trip flier is March 19 (which may be passed by the time you receive this newsletter). That flier will cover the first part of the year, up until July 6. If you are interested in hosting a field trip, please contact Jim Rogala. When submitting field trips, please include the following items: 1) Date (Day), Title, County/State; 2) Description of what we will see; 3) Time, Contact Person information; and 4) Directions. Trips can serve to show off your own land, get help creating an inventory and develop a management plan, or provide a visit to other lands that would be of interest to our members. Impromptu field trips can be advertised within our chapter via email, just contact Jim Rogala to send out a notification.

Spring Work Parties

If you'd like to schedule a work party on your property, please provide the following information to Jim Rogala: type of work (brushing, burn), location of property (nearest town/city, highway), proposed date and time for the work party, as well as contact person/information. These are great opportunities to hone your skills in conducting prescribed burns and other management techniques. *Note: an updated version of the work party list will be available on our chapter web page.*

Coulee Region Chapter Members' Volunteer Hours Needed!

Please report your volunteer hours for 2007. Provide your total hours in the categories below and either email that information or mail it to Jim at 450 N. Leonard St., West Salem, WI, 54669. You can include all hours related to prairie and savanna work, including work on your own properties. This is important information used by TPE central in illustrating our strength in volunteer time from our members.

I. Land Management & Protection - Examples: Project site visits - inspection, biological inventories/surveys. Land owner contact/negotiations. Equipment purchase, maintenance & inventory. Inventory of sites, database and records keeping, field visits. Management plan draft/review. Management records maintenance. Stewardship or Land Protection Committees. Work parties (include work on unprotected lands).

II. Education and Outreach Total - Examples: Conference planning, field trip planning. Field trip leaders, Presentations & slide shows. Written material preparation (booklets, handouts, articles, etc.)

III. Development / Promotion - Examples: Newsletter production & contributions. Web site maintenance. Grant proposal writing. Receptions, media interviews. Brochure production, Displays. Meetings.

IV. Administration - Examples: Board & committees, Chapter meetings and minutes. Assignments. Mailings (newsletters, fliers, surveys, etc.). Bookkeeping/record keeping. Membership & volunteer database keeping.

Prairie Practice

Prairie Technology (submitted by Mary Lee Croatt)

When we first acquired our land, we were younger. Our bodies were suppler. Our equipment was minimal. Our enthusiasm was at peak. Now our ages hover around the 7th decade. Thoughts of land restoration on our steep bluffs seem overwhelming, if not impossible.

A breath of fresh air came with a visit from our former land consultant, Chris Matson (Chris has left Wisconsin to take a position with Nature Conservancy helping to manage thousands of acres in Florida). He encouraged us to think at a scale beyond our property borders. He inspired us to think outside the box by suggesting new ways of doing our work.

1. Instead of burning parts of the steep bluff that includes our prairie remnant and oak savanna, why not do the whole land peninsula at one time? Invertebrates will come back from the adjacent unburned portion of prairie on the neighbor's land and nearby bluffs.
2. Instead of carrying water bottles and packs up the steep incline, why not use your Polaris Ranger to carry water for spraying at the top of the bluff? Invest in a 15 to 35 gallon spray tank to be connected to the Polaris battery. Let the Ranger also carry the 20 gallon-jugs of water, as well. With our neighbor's permission we could enter our land from the top of the bluff and work downhill!
3. Instead of hand raking on our steep slopes, why not do most of the work with a cordless gas powered leaf blower? This may be a piece of equipment that our Prairie Enthusiasts chapter might invest in for everyone's use.

Alleluia! With these three new solutions for doing our formerly aerobic, exhausting work, we might be able to save our frail bodies from a "death burn" after all!!!

Editor's Note: Like Mary, I'm sure you have some great solutions to problems that face many prairie enthusiasts. Why not submit your ideas for the Prairie Practice section of the Coulee Region Chapter Newsletter?

Information about Prairies and Oak Savannas

Taxonomy 101 for Plants of the Coulee Goat Prairies (submitted by Jim Rogala)

NOTE: This short narrative is provided to introduce you to some species likely found in bloom in specific settings or time frames. These narratives do not include taxonomic details on how to identify these plants, but may point you in the right direction. There are several excellent field guides and taxonomic texts for those interested in a more complete description of the species discussed below - J. R.

Violet Wood-Sorrel: A Spring Flower on the Edge.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

After four years of these little narratives, I find myself running out of the most common showy spring flowers to write about. Starting in the spring of 2004, I've written about puccoons, pasque flower, violets and blue-eyed grass. I can think of one showy spring flower I haven't written about, but it's less associated with goat prairies. The violet wood-sorrel (*Oxalis violacea*) is more often found in mesic prairies, but it is also found on goat prairies, especially on the wooded edges.

The common name of this species is quite informative. The small half-inch in diameter five petal flowers are a gorgeous violet. However, the beauty is not always displayed during the flowering period from late spring to early summer, as the petals are only open under daylight conditions. The flowers are on stem-like peduncles rising up from the ground. The leaves are arranged in whorls of three, giving a clover-like appearance. These are on separate stalks from the flowers. At most times, the leaves are a grayish green, but can appear purplish on the underside under some conditions. The plant is smallish (usually not taller than 6 inches on goat prairies), but certainly showy upon closer examination.

As mentioned above, this species is really not a dry prairie species, but is one of many species that may be associated with the edges of goat prairies. Other mesic species I have seen on the edges of my goat prairies include prairie phlox, alum-root, Illinois tick-trefoil, white camas, wood betony, and yellow star-grass. In this way, goat prairies provide many micro-habitats that can account for the rich diversity in such a harsh environment. I'll try to cover a few more of these edges species in future writings, and you can add them to your list of goat prairie species that you can identify.

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TIFF (LZW) decompressor
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Let Us Hear from You!

Do you have information that may be of interest to other chapter members? We would be glad to share your news items, helpful tips or prairie experiences. Just forward those to me by mail or email. We all look forward to hearing from you!!

Don Nelson, Coulee Chapter Newsletter Editor
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Don't Forget!

**Membership Meeting
Saturday March 29th
10:00am**

UW-L



**COULEE REGION
CHAPTER NEWSLETTER**
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