



# 2006 Annual Report

## Our Mission

We seek to ensure the perpetuation and recovery of prairie, oak savanna and other associated ecosystems of the Upper Midwest through protection, management, restoration and education.

In doing so, we strive to work openly and cooperatively with private landowners and other private and public conservation groups.



## 2006 Board of Directors

### Officers

**President**  
**Vice President**  
**Secretary**  
**Treasurer**

Evanne Hunt  
Richard Henderson  
Chris Kirkpatrick  
Kathy Henderson

### Directors

COULEE REGION  
EMPIRE SAUK  
NORTHWEST ILLINOIS  
PRAIRIE BLUFF  
PRAIRIE SMOKE  
SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN  
ST. CROIX VALLEY

Jim Rogala  
Richard Oberle  
Blaine Schoenhard III  
Nick Faessler  
Joel Dunnette  
Gary Eldred  
Evanne Hunt

### Chapter Presidents

COULEE REGION  
EMPIRE SAUK  
NORTHWEST ILLINOIS  
PRAIRIE BLUFF  
PRAIRIE SMOKE  
SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN  
ST. CROIX VALLEY

Jim Rogala  
Richard Henderson  
Robert Wehrle  
Rob Baller  
Joel Dunnette  
Jesse Bennet  
Evanne Hunt

### Staff

**Executive Director**  
**Membership Coordinator**  
**Restoration Ecologist**

Renae Mitchell  
Victoria Oberle  
Amy Staffen

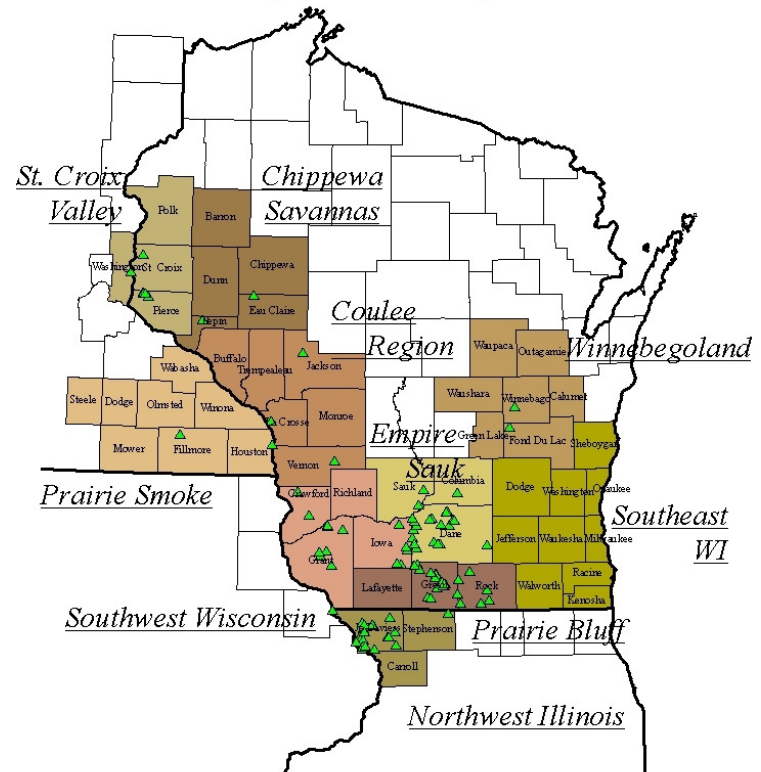
Dear Members and Supporters,

We present this Annual Report as a summary of our many activities and a picture of our financial position. However, it cannot adequately express all the joy and satisfaction we've gotten over the past year as we've watched endangered butterflies alight on the Blazing Star we helped plant, observed how well grasses and forbs returned after burning or listened to the song of a meadowlark calling across the open land we protected. Although we are not listing everyone's names here, we are very grateful to all The Prairie Enthusiasts who have given of their knowledge, labor, funds and time to help ensure the preservation of prairies and savannas. We hope this report helps everyone share our sense of accomplishment!



With much appreciation,  
*Renae Mitchell*  
 Executive Director

The   
**Prairie Enthusiasts**  
 Projects and Properties



<b>2006 Recorded Total Volunteer Hours:</b>		
<i>“Grassroots Conservation at Work”</i>		
<b><u>Land Protection &amp; Mgmt</u></b>	<b><u>Education</u></b>	<b><u>Meetings</u></b>
<b>10,975</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>1,103</b>
<b>We probably had more hours that were not recorded!</b>		

**Inventory:**

The Coulee Region and Empire-Sauk Chapters have both been compiling a database of known remnants and working with partners like the Blufflands Alliance, University of Wisconsin Madison and Natural Heritage Inventory to provide Geographic Information System (GIS) maps for conservation. We plan to incorporate all remnant sites TPE chapters are working on as data becomes available.

## **Land Protection:**

By the end of 2006, our total owned land included over 414 acres with all sites containing prairie and oak savanna remnants and high-quality restorations. In 2007 that amount is expected to double! The Prairie Enthusiasts hold conservation easements on five properties totaling 411 acres. **We've also transferred easements to other land trusts so our total land protection achievements total over 1,000 acres.**

The newest easement was generously donated by Tom and Kathy Brock for 106.24 acres at the **Pleasant Valley Conservancy** in western Dane County. The Brocks also granted title of the Savanna Oak Foundation property (37 acres) at Pleasant Valley Conservancy to The Prairie Enthusiasts in December. Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund credits from these two projects will be used to purchase another significant savanna site. We will be applying for Dedicated State Natural Area status for the Pleasant Valley Conservancy through the WI Dept. of Natural Resources (WIDNR).

**Butenhoff Prairie** (20 acres) was purchased from the Green County Conservation League (GCCL) using Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Funds. Together, GCCL and the Prairie Bluff Chapter have been managing this remnant for over twenty years with good results.

**Shea Prairie** (62 acres) in Iowa County was purchased using a combination of State Stewardship Funds, donations from Dane and Iowa County Pheasants Forever and generous TPE supporters. This property is located within the Mounds View Grassland, one of the three most significant concentrations of prairie sod and grassland bird habitat within the 50,000 acres Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area.

We are increasingly partnering with other agencies like the WI and IL DNRs, Dane County, various townships and land trusts such as the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation, West Wisconsin Land Trust, Mississippi Valley Conservancy and Driftless Area Land Trust, to protect land together. Often the other agency will hold the conservation easement or title to a property while TPE holds management agreements on the portions containing remnants and restorations.



Work Party of the St. Croix Valley Chapter cutting trees and brush.

## **Land Management:**

The **St. Croix Valley Chapter** partners with the West Wisconsin Land Trust (WWLT), the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust (KRLT), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to manage and preserve prairie remnants in western Wisconsin. In 2006, TPE and KRLT used a stewardship assistance grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore and protect fragile prairie habitat on private lands in the Kinnickinnic River canyon. TPE's goal is to create a conservation corridor by connecting the Foster Cemetery Conservation Area (owned by the City of River Falls and maintained by TPE), Rocky Branch (a small savanna and goat prairie near Glen Park), and private lands along the Kinnickinnic.



In 2006, the **Coulee Region Chapter** was active in the management of three sites with remnant prairies and oak savannas and continued to assist in planning for a stream bank prairie restoration project headed by Trout Unlimited. They were managing plantings at the Kickapoo Reserve, Genoa Dairyland Power Plant and the La Crosse County Hillview Nursing Home; conducting prescribed burns at all three sites. They continued to formalize work-party plans for managed properties, as well as member owned properties. Activities also included firebreak work and brush removal.

The **Prairie Bluff Chapter** pulled garlic mustard several times at Abraham's Woods, a 40-acres of old-growth woodland owned by UW-Madison Arboretum in rural Green County. Prairie Bluffer Rob Baller provided prescribed burning training for the Blackhawk Technical College staff. Several Bluffers assisted in burning the remnants there and at Marshall Bluff Bowhunter's Club and Honey Creek. Small trees continue to be cut at Iltis Savanna. The Parsnip Predator has been selling very well and was featured in an article in the June 2006 journal Ecological Restoration.

This year, the **Prairie Smoke Chapter** (PSC) started a very successful cost-share program, in which landowners could get help (both physical and financial) with prairie and savanna restoration and management. PSC member Jaime Edwards secured help from the Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC) whose work crews of three to four well-trained MCC members provided 12 ten-hour days of work. In this arrangement, 12 member landowners picked up 12.5% of the cost, while Prairie Smoke and MCC (some donated time) picked up the rest. The work included cutting and spraying of buckthorn, honeysuckle, prickly ash, box elder and cedars as well as frost seeding. Landowner response was very positive and we anticipate trying to continue this program in 2007.

The Prairie Smoke Chapter now has enough burn equipment to have three sets out at once. They burned 250 acres for 25 landowners. PSC President Joel Dunnette once again led seed collecting trips at Chester Woods Park and Frontenac State Park. Nine seed collecting trips produced a lot of seed, but more importantly it helped educate the 25 members and 30 non-members who attended. Vice President Sue

Wieseler led parsnip and salvage work at NW Prairie Park in Rochester, attended by 22 individuals.

Prairie Smoke funded several bluff prairie restoration projects with a US Fish & Wildlife Grant (\$70,300) including clearing cedars and burning at Magellsen Bluff in Rushford and restoring over 70 acres of rare bluff prairie habitat in Fillmore and Houston Counties. In 2006 they obtained another USFW Grant (\$99,500) focusing on 4 remnant areas that contain endangered species. They partnered with the MN DNR and National Wild Turkey Federation for a State Wildlife Grant to restore bluff prairies and oak savannas on state land. PSC had DNR Prairie Stewardship Planning Assistance Grants (\$5,000) to develop management plans and for landowner education.

**Empire-Sauk Chapter** volunteers put in over 2,600 hours in fencing, equipment repairs, building repair, monitoring easements, weeding, brush and tree cutting, making firebreaks, seed collecting and cleaning, planting and tending to the nursery as well as serving on stewardship committees for various TPE properties. Over \$50,000 worth of seed was collected and cleaned mainly under the direction of Richard Oberle, Tom and Kathy Brock and Tanis Cuff. Volunteers put in nearly 1,300 hours at 58 prescribed burns on over 500 acres.

US Fish & Wildlife Service Grants (\$60,000), State Wildlife Grants for Invasives and Inventory work (\$23,500), NRCS Grants (\$7,800) and several Landowner Incentive Program Grants (\$6,000) were used for management and inventory work. A WI Pheasant Stamp Grant was used to purchase a new ATV for management work.

The **Southwest Chapter** had a State Wildlife Grant which allowed them to hire contractors for management work at Thomas Wet Prairie, Eldred and Bush Clover Prairies and nearby State Natural Areas. Volunteers collected seed at the Hollandale Seed Orchard. Aspens were girdled and cut at Eldred Prairie. Burning was done at several sites including Bush Clover Prairie and Heather's Prairie.

The **Northwestern Illinois Chapter** continued its restoration work at the Hanley Savanna Army Depot and other properties in conjunction with the Jo Davies Conservation Foundation and the Natural Area Guardians. They collected about \$100,000 worth of seed and distributed it to partners, including an innovative prairie nursery and greenhouse project at Twin Ponds Farm.

## **Education and Outreach:**

In March, Prairie Smoke Chapter hosted the 2006 Spring TPE Conference at the Eagle Bluff Learning Center in Lanesboro, with 297 people taking part in an informative program and wonderful evening concert. A fun program was also available for kids.

The Southwest Chapter hosted the Summer Picnic/Annual Meeting at Wyalusing State Park with a delicious catfish lunch, field trips to bluff prairies and a stargazing program in the evening. Record 104 degree temps and humidity off the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers did not dissuade

The Prairie Enthusiasts!

Several chapters held classes to train volunteers in proper prescribed burning techniques.

Over 50 field trips were held at various TPE sites throughout the three state area. Public Forums and educational programs were also held in association with the



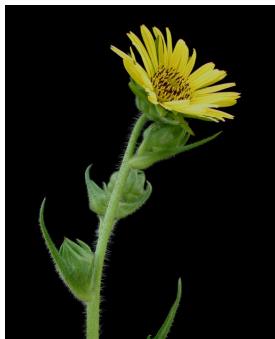
### ***“Prairie Roots, Prairie Patterns, Prairie Communities”***

traveling photography exhibit. Receptions and exhibits:

- April 30 - May 29 Eagle Ridge Resort - Galena, IL
- June 16 - July 10 UW-Arboretum - Madison, WI
- July 13 - July 30 Monroe Arts Center - Monroe, WI
- Aug. 24 - Sept 11 Pump House Arts Center - La Crosse, WI
- Sept 13- Sept 25 Kickapoo Valley Reserve - LaFarge, WI
- Sept. 29 - Oct. 29 Phipps Center for the Arts - Hudson, WI
- Nov. 6 - Nov. 22 UW-Platteville Library - Platteville, WI

Over 4,000 people are estimated to have viewed the exhibit and the remarks they left in our comments book showed they were definitely impressed with the aesthetic, historical and ecological significance of prairies and the skillful talents of our wonderful photographers!

This exhibit was sponsored by a Wisconsin Humanities Council Grant and



donations from Agrecol, Applied Ecological Services, Dr. P. Nelson, Edgerton’s Rainbow Prairie, Driftless Area Land Conservancy, Madison Audubon Society, Prairie Moon Nursery, Midwest Prairies/Ron Martin, West Wisconsin Land Trust, Mississippi Valley Conservancy, David Ladd, Biologic Environmental Consulting, A. Koeppe, Michler & Brown, LLC, M. Vahldieck, Gilbert Mitchell and many committee volunteers and local chapter sponsors.

On October 10<sup>th</sup>, the Prairie Smoke Chapter co-sponsored the Rochester City Council/Mayoral Candidate Forum, which was attended by approximately 40 people. Questions focused on conservation and the environment, with President Joel Dunnette serving as the moderator.

## **Organizational Capacity Building:**

The Prairie Enthusiasts board held a strategic planning retreat which helped us develop new committees and fundraising ideas. The board rose to a gift challenge from Jack Kussmaul, providing \$12,000 through 100% board giving. The Annual Fund drive, which our generous members contributed to raised \$30,000 in 2006.

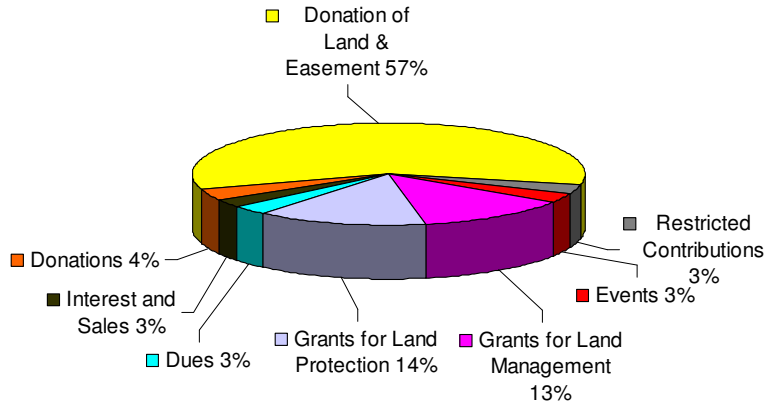
Our Finance Committee developed an Investment Policy for our Endowment and Money Market Funds. Our Land Protection Committee developed policies regarding conservation easements and Monitoring and Management Funds. Board development continued with two new members-at-large, Jack Kussmaul and Paul Jacobsen being brought on to the Board of Directors. New Outreach & Education and Endowment & Fundraising Committees were formed.

Many members donated wish list items thereby helping us improve our member services and office equipment and supplies.

We had very good press coverage for the photography exhibits and other events. We were also featured in articles in “Northwest Quarterly Magazine”, and the “Isthmus,” Our Website was revised to match the style of our brochure and to provide more information. We also developed Prairie Fact Sheets for each of the three states and made these and other materials available for the many chapter volunteers who staff TPE informational booths at the Home and Garden Show, Farmers Markets, Earth Day events and other conservation events.

**THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS, INC. 2006 FINANCIALS**

**2006 TPE TOTAL INCOME**



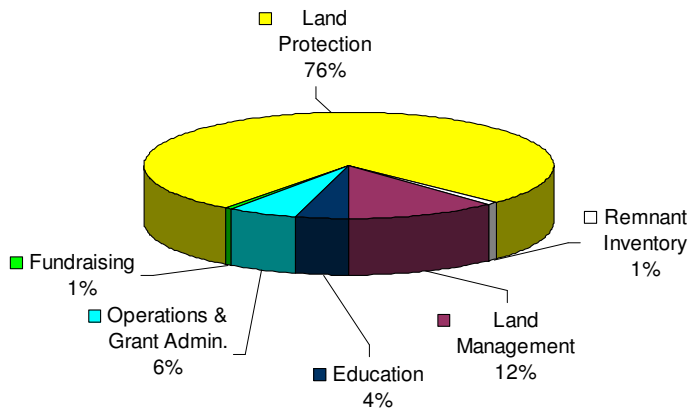
**INCOME**

Membership Dues (70% Central, 30% Chapters)	\$41,307
Interest and Sales	\$34,733
Other Donations	\$49,884
Donations of Land & Easements	\$790,000
Restricted Contributions	\$42,015
Events (Conference, etc.)	\$38,197
Grants for Land Management	\$174,482
Grants for Land Protection	<u>\$193,629</u>
	<b>\$1,364,246</b>

**EXPENSE**

Education (Conference, Newsletter, etc.)	\$54,581
Operations & Grant Administration	\$74,286
Fundraising & Grant-writing	\$8,691
Land Protection	\$1,020,824
Remnant Inventory	\$10,907
Land Management	<u>\$158,872</u>
	<b>\$1,328,161</b>

**2006 TPE TOTAL EXPENSES**



Currently, each TPE member receives approximately **\$40/year in services** (newsletter, website, printing, postage, communications). However, in 2006, we leveraged each membership to bring in over **\$550/member of grants and donations** for prairie protection, education and land management!