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KACHINA PRAIRIE MAY AGAIN FILL AN IMPORTANT NEED

In the April 18th issue of the *Austin American-Statesman*, an article by Ralph K.M. Haurwitz states that prairie restoration is among the options for using the superconducting supercollider site.

"The site of the defunct superconducting supercollider is a wide-open area where field meets sky in a largely unbroken line. Here, on 10,000 acres, is room for buffalo to roam-- and they will, if conservationists and state officials get their way.

Last month, the U.S. Department of Energy said it would grant Texas up to \$6 million to study possible uses of the collider, including restoration of the native blackland prairie, complete with grasses higher than a horse's belly, scores of wildflowers and a small herd of bison."

The plan was submitted by The Nature Conservancy of Texas, but the idea is not new. The original plan for the SSC included restoring the ring area to its native condition. If the prairie restoration does take place, it will be the largest blackland prairie in the United States.

"Remnants of the original prairie would be used as seed sources. A 35-acre remnant is in Ennis, not far from the collider's East Campus, which would be restored along with the larger West Campus, near Waxahachie.

The remnant, known as the Kachina Prairie, is owned by the City of Ennis and managed by the Natural Area Preservation Association in Dallas. Recently, it was

awash in big and little bluestem, blue-eyed grass, anemone, prairie parsley and other native plants. The tract has been mowed once to harvest seed for an experimental plot at the West Campus."

In the June 1992 *NAPA NEWS*, we reported that a cooperative agreement had been made with Dr. Sam Baker of SSC, whereby he would employ Bill Neiman to burn and maintain our prairie in exchange for the privilege of collecting native grass seeds to be used inside the ring. The burn took place in early March of that year. The *Austin American-Statesman* article includes two pictures of Kachina Prairie.

"The proposal is supported by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, which regards the blackland prairie as the most endangered ecosystem in the state."

"Our native blackland prairies once covered more than 12 million acres in Texas. Today, fewer than 5,000 acres remain," said Bill Hobby, a member of the Parks and Wildlife Commission and a former lieutenant governor.

"As late as the 1880s, the blackland prairie was largely intact. Underlain by rich, heavy clay soils, the blackland runs in a triangular strip from the Red River in Northeast Texas to the Colorado River in Central Texas. It supported large herds of bison, as well as pronghorn, an antelope-like deer.

The introduction of the steel plow and other implements made it possible to cut through the thick prairie sod, fueling a cotton boom that converted vast amounts of grassland to cropland."

KACHINA PRAIRIE - Cont.

"The Texas National Research Laboratory Commission, the state agency overseeing activities at the collider site, will study three potential uses besides prairie restoration: advanced research in superconductivity and cryogenics, high-performance computing, and cancer treatment and research."

Whatever the commission decides, we hope the prairie will be included. Kachina has an abundance of seed to share!

NAPA ANNUAL MEETING

The NAPA annual meeting was held on January 25, 1994 at the home of Larry and Susan Battarbee. Preceding the meeting, members enjoyed a tour of the Battarbee back yard. Susan works with the Texas Backyard Conservation Program, and even in January, it was lovely with native trees, grasses and wildflowers. Soft, flowing Weeping Love grass lined the paths, and the Coralberry was covered with bright berries. Susan collects seed from all over the state.

During the meeting of members, the President, Janice Bezanson, told of the new acquisitions during the previous year. These included land in Houston given by ARCO for resale, full ownership of the western section of the Banita Creek Reserve in Nacogdoches by Mrs. Roger Montgomery, White Rock Bend Preserve by June and Archie Bennett, Jr., and the Lynn Grove Preserve by Nevin and Elizabeth Weaver.

Michaux Nash, Jr., gave the financial report. It was announced that Spring at Ivy's would be held on March 26 to 27.

Frances Williams reported on the Land Trust Alliance rally at Big Sky, Montana. Over 700 people attended the meeting. The private preserve movement has grown until now five trusts per day are being formed. Both she and Ned were very

enthusiastic about the information, inspiration and motivation they gained.

During the meeting of Directors, officers were selected. They are: President, Janice Bezanson; Vice-President, Katherine Goodbar; Secretary, Ned Fritz; Treasurer, Michaux Nash, Jr.

Michaux announced that the Sportsmen's Club of America named Dr. Harold Laughlin, NAPA past president, as Conservationist of the Year.

Several pending or potential acquisitions were discussed. Included were a land parcel next to Naconiche Creek that we need to protect our present holdings there, the status of our attempt to buy the Hamblen tract of Winters Bayou, and land near Tyler that Dr. Ben Edwards discussed.

Dr. Geoffrey Stanford, representing Native Prairies Association of Texas, told of 1,200 acres south of Colorado City that will be given to their organization. They plan to restore the land to a short or midgrass prairie and are enlisting our help.

Claude Albritton described his 167 acres near Utopia that was part of a local land grant. He is considering one canyon there as a NAPA conservation easement. He described the land and the view from an overlook as spectacular examples of undisturbed Hill Country terrain and vegetation. There are three miles of nature trails that connect the valleys. Claude invited some NAPA directors to come to Jesus Canyon in April.

June Bennett was thanked for the donation of a conservation easement on the White Rock Bend Preserve. June described the area and was enthusiastic over having a plant inventory.

Following the meeting, a reception was held in honor of all donors of preserves. It was an interesting and productive meeting and we hope that next year, many more members will find it possible to attend.

