

# Prairie Plains Resource Institute Strategic Plan

April, 2010

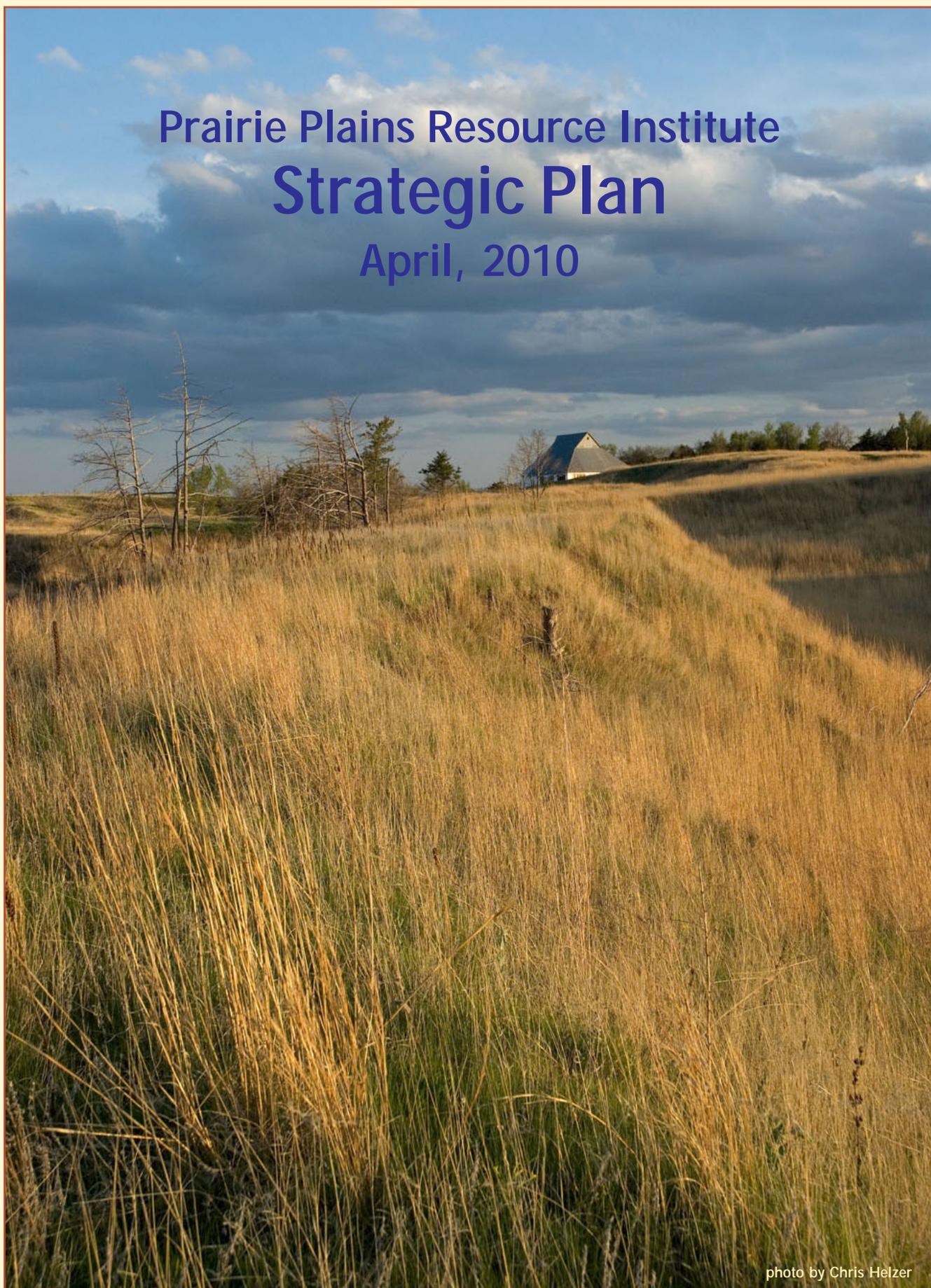


photo by Chris Helzer



## THE NEXT PHASE – 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

### Introduction

The following strategic plan is a modification of the 2004 Strategic Plan. In many ways similar to the 2004 plan, it outlines the basic Prairie Plains project themes: Preserves, Land Stewardship, Ecological Restoration, Land Education and the Education Center. There has been considerable advancement from the 2004 plan. We now have the center - The Charles L. Whitney Education Center - under construction, with plans for educational activity growth when it is completed. We have our first full-time intern who will work on a greenhouse project and farmstead plan. The restoration program has grown since 2004 and SOAR is stronger than ever. Programatically Prairie Plains Resource Institute has a much greater vision than it did six years ago, a point illustrated in this plan by new programs such as the Prairie Plains Conservation Corps and the Ribbons of Prairie program. We believe our scope is geographically large and that we can share what we know globally.

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Next steps are to hone down the essential points, then apply more program details and budgetary costs for each program component.

## Staff

## Properties



# THE NEXT PHASE - 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

## Staff

### WE ARE HERE

Four staff positions:  
Executive Director  
Development  
Coordinator &  
Office Manager  
Education Coordinator/  
Publication Director  
Restoration Ecologist &  
GIS Specialist

### WE WANT TO BE HERE

**NEW** Executive Director  
**NEW** Administrative Assistant  
(.5 FTE hourly)  
**NEW** Educator  
**NEW** Restoration Ecologist/  
Stewardship/Fire Boss  
**NEW** Stewardship/Prairie Plains  
Conservation Corps  
leader; Fire Boss

Center Events & Development  
(Amy Jones)  
Intern Center Program  
(Bill Whitney)  
Restoration Ecologist & GIS  
(Mike Bullerman)  
Education Coordinator/  
Publication Director  
(Jan Whitney)

### OUTCOMES/BENEFITS

Higher capacity in fund  
development and business  
planning and management  
for program growth.  
Existing staff moves into  
creating and directing  
programs, and managing  
interns and volunteers.  
Many more and diverse  
activities underway all the  
time: education, research,  
field work, planning.

## Properties

### WE ARE HERE

7 properties, most are  
located in central NE  
(5800 acres):

- Lincoln Creek Prairie & Trail
- Pearl Harbor Survivors Preserve
- Marie Ratzlaff Prairie Preserve
- Guadalupe Memorial Prairie Ranch
- Olson Nature Preserve
- Griffith Prairie and Farm
- Frank L. and Lillian Pokorny  
Memorial Prairie

Fruit Crate Ad Art:  
*People Places*

### WE WANT TO BE HERE

Increase administrative and  
management capacity to be able  
to acquire new properties with  
exceptional natural, scenic and  
historic values, through fee  
simple or easement gifts or  
purchases, primarily along  
streams and in important  
strategic locations for involving  
people.

### OUTCOMES/BENEFITS

New and exceptionally diverse  
properties will be added to  
the Prairie Plains land  
network, protecting their  
unique values. Properties will  
offer diverse opportunities for  
education, research and  
recreation, helping to reach  
many more people.

# Land Stewardship



## THE NEXT PHASE – 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

### WE ARE HERE

- We have:
- Tools, knowledge and experience to do effective land stewardship work.
  - Basic management plans more on some than others)
  - Some signage

Basic stewardship needs on Prairie Plains properties:

- 1) Woody vegetation and invasive plant control, signage and infrastructure maintenance.
- 2) Documentation of each property: mapping, scientific monitoring, narrative of activities, and photographs.
- 3) Short and long-term management plans addressing goals for grazing, prescribed fire, rare plants, invasive species, wildlife, and education and research.

**Fruit Crate Ad Art:**

*Workin' on the Land*

### WE WANT TO BE HERE

**Employ a new staff member to bolster the Prairie Plains land stewardship program and to become a qualified Fire Boss.** This person will oversee property use, develop ties to local communities, direct stewardship volunteers and interns to help manage preserves. This person will create and lead the Prairie Plains Conservation Corps.

**Create the Prairie Plains Conservation Corps.** This will be a self-contained program; a mobile restoration, stewardship, prescribed fire and service corps working on Prairie Plains lands as well as other people's and organizations' lands. The concept will be exportable across the Great Plains; a training corps for young people in conservation and service.

**Create a more comprehensive plan for the Guadalcanal Memorial Ranch in Sioux County,** given its unique natural, cultural, economic, geographic and scale characteristics.

### OUTCOMES/BENEFITS

**Ecological management of all properties will protect natural diversity and enhance scenic and recreational enjoyment and education for generations. Annual documentation will improve management and record the history of each preserve.**

**Corps will augment Prairie Plains land stewardship, supporting additional land acquisition, and be able to offer assistance to other landowners. It will be a training vehicle for youth to do important conservation and community service in Nebraska and the Great Plains.**

**A good plan will chart a path to economic and ecological sustainability, protecting biodiversity, managing education and research programing and accomodating ecotourism.**

# Prairie and Wetland Restoration



## THE NEXT PHASE - 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

### WE ARE HERE

- 1) 400-700 acres per year high diversity plantings on private and public lands.
- 2) One full-time staff position for restoration, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), trying to catch up with Prairie Plains lands' stewardship needs.
- 3) Equipment adequate to harvest and plant hundreds of acres of high diversity prairie and wetland each year.
- 4) Director is heavily involved in field work; other staff occasionally assist.

**Fruit Crate Ad Art:**  
*Prairies Made by Hand*  
*We Plant Prairies for People*  
*Restoring Stream Corridors - Ribbons of Prairie Through the Great American Breadbasket*

### WE WANT TO BE HERE

- Continue one full-time restoration ecologist position.
- Add a restoration position to do more of the physically taxing work and to manage volunteers and interns; also be a Fire Boss.
- Sow 750-1000 acres of high diversity prairie and wetland habitat per year.
- Train interns, volunteers and temporary employees to assist in restoration. Also, continue sharing some stewardship and GIS duties.
- Create the stream corridor restoration program, *Ribbons of Prairie through the Great American Breadbasket*.
- Develop new contacts and revenue sources for restoration projects, e.g., planning and engineering firms, individuals. Develop and maintain the revenue potential of the restoration program. Make other program areas of Prairie Plains more sustainable and also less dependent on restoration revenue.

### OUTCOMES/BENEFITS

- Two qualified staff members familiar with all aspects of stewardship and restoration, i.e., GIS, equipment, harvesting and planting technique, plant knowledge and planting history.
- 750-1000 acres of diverse native habitat per year.
- Passing on restoration experiences so people can improve their knowhow and skills, and add needed labor to the restoration program.
- See page 9.
- Strive for financial resiliency by increasing diversity of revenue sources and developing new relationships in the process. based on other revenue sources.

# Developing the Griffith Campus



## THE NEXT PHASE - 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

### WE ARE HERE

The Charles L. Whitney Education Center building is approximately 1/3 completed and awaits completion!

#### Fruit Crate Ad Art:

*Come to Learn;  
go teach*

### WE WANT TO BE HERE

**Complete the Charles L. Whitney Education Center.** Raise additional funds to endow its ongoing maintenance and to initiate and provide ongoing support for Center programs.

Create a long-term architectural plan, secure funds and develop the Griffith farmstead, including the eventual purchase of the farmhouse and its acreage, as the **Prairie Plains educational campus**; include lodging and SOAR equipment storage structures, parking, existing restoration buildings, greenhouse, horticultural areas, garden, orchard, picnic and seating areas.

**Proactively develop a full slate of Center educational and event programming**, utilizing the Center and campus throughout the year. Develop revenue streams from all activities, e.g., use facility rental income to offset Center maintenance and utilities.

### OUTCOMES/BENEFITS

The Center will add a new dimension of visibility to PPRI and promote all of its projects, becoming a marketing and facilitation tool for increasing educational opportunities and public involvement.

Solve housing issues for interns/visitors/volunteers, e.g., seasonal housing (yurt design based on the octagonal granary in the farmyard) and permanent housing in a new bunkhouse structure. VIPs can eventually be hosted in the farmhouse.

Become recognized for diverse, interesting and highly relevant content imparted in an enjoyable and nurturing environment. The prairie and Platte River setting is a wonderful backdrop for the Center and campus; along with comfortable places for people to study, relax alone or congregate around good food.

# Land Education



## THE NEXT PHASE – 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

### WE ARE HERE

- Hamilton SOAR – Aurora  
 - Big Bend SOAR – Gibbon  
 Olson Nature Preserve activities – Albion  
 Bader Park Natural Area hikes  
 Educational Field Trips as requested  
 Ranch Trek  
*Prairie Plains Link* and other publications  
**Fruit Crate Ad Art:**  
*We get our kids wet and muddy*

### WE WANT TO BE HERE

Develop a diverse array of education and use programs in the Charles L. Whitney Education Center, e.g., school groups, workshops, retreats, meetings, lectures, festivals.

Develop new SOAR programs in Nebraska, involving new communities and more teachers.

Conduct educator training classes and SOAR shadow opportunities.

Stress the connection of ecological restoration to sustainable agriculture in all programming.

Develop more activities on Prairie Plains properties. Help expose more people to the prairie through memorable experiences on these lands.

Conduct an ecological restoration and stewardship training program at the Center, with regular presentations and seminars on many aspects of prairie and wetland restoration and management for students, landowners, and the public.

Promote a vision for restoration of abused lands. Help people to identify strategies to put themselves and their land into this vision.

### OUTCOMES/BENEFITS

The Center will host thousands of people per year in educational programs and events at the Center, reaching them with our mission message.

SOAR programs will annually impact hundreds of youth and many new teachers.

Prepare an increasing number of educators to teach outdoor education and nature study.

The public will understand more about basic agricultural and resource subjects; nature in an agricultural context.

Create a larger community of people with knowledge and interest of local natural history.

Center restoration training program will serve hundreds of people annually, teaching basic restoration and management skills to a growing number of people interested in the land.

More landowners will be able to carry out effective restoration projects on their land.

# Intern & Volunteer Program



## THE NEXT PHASE - 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

### WE ARE HERE

A new program idea and our first intern!

Our first intern in 2010 will:

- 1) Assist with restoration and stewardship,
- 2) Create an architectural plan for the Griffith farmstead campus,
- 3) Help build a solar greenhouse on the Morton building,
- 4) Conduct all greenhouse growing and seedling planting activities in 2011.

**Fruit Crate Ad Art:**  
*Come to learn;  
 go teach*

### WE WANT TO BE HERE

Six or more year-long interns and additional semester or summer term interns - undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate or post-school - representing multiple arts and sciences backgrounds, who are interested in interdisciplinary study of people and the landscape of the Great Plains.

Intern program activities which include planning, policy and engineering concerns as a part of ecological restoration.

A curricular program for interns to develop naturalist skills, and learn about ecological stewardship and restoration; also produce a body of independent study research.

Visiting scholars, lecture series and discussion forums to stimulate thought and discourse among interns and the general public.

Interns and volunteer activities will be tied into SOAR, Ribbons of Prairie and the Prairie Plains Conservation Corps.

An exchange program with student interns from around the world.

### OUTCOMES/BENEFITS

The intern program will bring energetic people with new ideas who want to help in the work of Prairie Plains Resource Institute and learn what we have to share; bringing together people of different backgrounds and interests to stimulate innovative ideas and projects.

Interns will address broad areas of interest and strive for a deeper understanding of issues.

They will sharpen their skills in understanding nature and why this knowledge is important and relevant in today's world.

Visiting scholars and experts in their fields will expose students to new ideas and stimulate discussion.

Interns will help help Prairie Plains increase the scale and scope of the Prairie Plains mission.

Interns will connect Prairie Plains to institutions and people around the world as they share what they learn.

# Restoring Stream Corridors



## THE NEXT PHASE – 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

### WE ARE HERE

#### A Developing Idea!

Based on Prairie Plains's early work on Lincoln Creek:

A 50-100 year plan to transform watersheds by restoring prairie along Great Plains waterways.

Restoring the stream corridor will be followed by human interaction as people embrace all kinds of activities on these restored lands.

It is a vision to bring back pieces of the Great American Prairie, and to integrate nature with a more sustainable, diverse and more human-centered agriculture on the farmland situated between the streams.

Corridor restorations would include the "edible wild" providing another incentive for people to visit and use the prairies.

It is more than an esthetic romantic environmental vision; it is also pragmatic, healthy, entrepreneurial and forward-looking.

#### Fruit Crate Ad Art:

*Restoring Stream Corridors - Ribbons of Prairie Through the Great American Breadbasket*

### WE WANT TO BE HERE

Create the program: *Ribbons of Prairie Through the Great American Breadbasket*.

*Ribbons of Prairie* will:

... be an open-ended program adaptable to any stream corridor in Nebraska and the Great Plains.

... become the platform for the internship and *Prairie Plains Conservation Corps* programs, involving GIS, county and urban planning, prairie and wetland restoration, volunteer development and education.

... involve community based resource planning and working group development.

... add value to stream corridors, heightening public perception and interest in often-overlooked and abused systems.

... enlist motivated landowners and develop coalitions of conservation and civic groups.

... be the focus of future *Prairie Plains land trust* activities through title and easement acquisition of exceptional natural/historic/scenic lands for educational and recreational purposes.

### OUTCOMES/BENEFITS

Bring about a transformation of popular perceptions about the Great Plains landscape, an alternative vision for nature, agriculture and community development.

#### Environmental and social benefits:

- cleaner and more plentiful surface water and groundwater
- swim-able and fish-able waters
- healthy environment
- quality of life amenities
- accessible wild lands in every watershed
- river lands as multi-use private/public natural areas
- rural/urban wildness planning
- biking and hiking trails linking communities
- wildlife habitat for hunting and bird watching
- insect pollinator habitat
- biodiversity – native plant and animal communities at landscape scale
- grass-roots involvement
- diverse agriculture much less dependent on petrochemicals and groundwater
- sustainable native rangeland
- locally grown good food; also a source of nutritious wild food; the new outdoor recreation activity of foraging
- outdoor nature, science and agriculture education

# Planned Giving



## THE NEXT PHASE - 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

### Prairie Plains Foundation

#### WE ARE HERE

A new idea!  
A planned giving program to develop a strong financial footing for the future.

Fruit Crate Ad Art:  
?

#### WE WANT TO BE HERE

Create a foundation - either as a stand-alone, within Prairie Plains, or under the Nebraska Community Foundation - to build and disburse funds in support of Prairie Plains mission purposes.

With major emphasis, create specific funds for the *Ribbons of Prairie* and the *Prairie Plains Conservation Corps* programs.

Create other specific funds as needed as well as donor-directed funds.

Market the foundation and its Prairie Plains projects as a unique alternative to other educational, environmental and conservation programs in the Great Plains.

#### OUTCOMES/BENEFITS

Support projects of our choosing.

Provide matching funds to stimulate giving or to help raise grant funds.

Supply funds to endow staff positions to allow for ongoing activities.

Support projects that help people and communities build capacity - social capital - to restore a diverse environment which supports a high quality of life, and educate more people regarding critical resource issues.