

## PPRI's STRATEGIC PLAN

by Bill Whitney, PPRI Executive Director

PPRI's plans for the next five years build on our mission and what we have always done - community based conservation and education. We are experienced in developing working groups and partnerships with other organizations, but we also believe strongly that a fundamental one-on-one approach to working with people is critical. Satisfaction is derived from deliberate progress towards our goals and making friends along the way. That takes time. Norris Alfred, editor of the *Polk Progress* and an early PPRI board member, had on his newspaper's masthead a bespectacled snail (his caricatured self-portrait) with the words "Slower is Better." In our work there is much truth to this; after all, nobody ever gauges a friendship by the speed at which it was made. Besides, it takes a long time to mold a vision into reality.

The essence of our plan, then, is not to change PPRI's fundamental philosophical framework, its mission, or the methods by which we have been successful. It embraces our history and points the way to increasing human participation in all aspects of our work.

The plan's purpose is to articulate how we want to grow. PPRI needs to mature organizationally. This refers mainly to structural issues of board and staff development. For example, improving committee structure and actions, recruiting new board members, leadership development, accountability, focusing attention toward staff succession (some of us are not getting any younger), defining division of labor among the many projects, professional development, and general management. Some of these needs can be addressed with added staff. We must hire specialists for things that have grown (or soon will grow) in complexity, such as business management, or for jobs with which we have little experience, such as fund development.

PPRI must plan for growth as there is a

growing demand for our information and services. There is also a greater understanding of how PPRI's work is relevant to the quality of life and economic well-being in this region. We are passionate about the Great Plains - and the feeling is contagious.

Finally, we need to grow in both projects and members to reach a level of sustainability - always striving to balance our activity growth with baseline funding support. There must be a diversity of funding sources to create a broad and stable base. Such growth involves deliberate and balanced addition of preserves and programs concurrent with involvement by new people.

The presentation of PPRI's strategic plan on the following pages is structured by project area (i.e., PPRI preserves and land stewardship, restoration, education, and the Platte Corridor Initiative) along with coinciding staff positions as noted in the headings. In addition to the four major project areas the plan begins with two critical areas of immediate need that serve all projects: administrative management and fund development aspects. These are essential before PPRI can embark on any new projects, and they must continue to develop in step with program growth.

The final page in this plan is devoted to the Platte Bluffs Center (temporary name) building on the Griffith land along the Platte River northwest of Aurora. The Center will facilitate all PPRI projects in education and resource management. Each of the following project pages contains reference to various Center activities. The center will be project-based, it will improve PPRI's visibility in the region and facilitate more community involvement in conservation. PPRI's administrative offices will continue to be housed in Aurora.

Finally, this strategic plan is a working draft stating PPRI's intent for the next few years.

As such it is a vital communication tool for gaining financial support and new members. It is not cast in stone, however, and everyone is free to comment. It will be reviewed and modified periodically.

The PPRI Board of Directors has prioritized three elements of the plan: administrative management, fund development, and the Platte

Bluffs Center project. Stewardship and education staff needs are not far behind. From this point forward PPRI efforts will focus on defining the specific funding needs for each of these components, building the fundamental organizational structure for raising the necessary funds, and getting the work underway.

**PPRI ADMINISTRATION - ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER**

**WE ARE HERE**

**WE WANT TO BE HERE**

**OUTCOMES/BENEFITS**

Administrative management is presently a part of the Director position.

Employ a full-time administrative manager to oversee all business aspects of PPRI, to assist with Board administration and to manage organizational growth.

PPRI will plan and manage growth efficiently and effectively, maintaining a high level of professional accountability.

**PPRI FUNDRAISING - FUND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER**

**WE ARE HERE**

**WE WANT TO BE HERE**

**OUTCOMES/BENEFITS**

PPRI presently has no staff specialized and dedicated to raising funds.

Employ a full-time fund development person to create an organizational system to raise funds for all PPRI programs.

Funds from diverse sources will fuel sustainable PPRI growth, providing program benefits to more people.

**PRAIRIE PRESERVES NETWORK - ADDITIONAL PRESERVES**

**WE ARE HERE**

**WE WANT TO BE HERE**

**OUTCOMES/BENEFITS**

7 properties, most are located in central NE (5300 acres)

12 properties – an addition of five new preserves in five additional Nebraska counties.

Add land to two existing preserves: the Griffith Prairie and Farm and Guadalcanal Memorial Prairie Ranch

Approximately 400 new acres of prairie land will be added to the PPRI preserve network.

Griffith Prairie will be expanded by nearly 400 acres; Guadalcanal Memorial Prairie Ranch by 600 acres.



**PRAIRIE PRESERVES NETWORK - LAND STEWARDSHIP STAFF**

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**OUTCOMES/BENEFITS**

Present land stewardship needs include:

- 1) Grassland tree and shrub removal, infrastructure maintenance, land improvements and signage.
- 2) Documentation for each site: mapping, scientific monitoring, narrative of activities, and photographs.



**Employ a full-time Land Steward position** to manage all PPRI properties, oversee use, develop ties to local communities, create and facilitate stewardship committees to help manage preserves and to develop local educational uses.

**Extend assistance in prairie management to neighboring agricultural landowners;** promote improved management of native grasslands used for agricultural purposes.

**Offer a land stewardship training program at the Platte Bluffs Center,** with regular presentations and seminars on all aspects of grassland management for landowners, conservationists and the interested public.

**Train two or three 6- to 12-month land stewardship interns.**

**Construct shelters and signage** for each preserve.

**Ecological management of 12 natural areas will protect** natural diversity, and enhance scenic and recreational enjoyment and education. Annual documentation will improve management and record the history of each preserve.

**Assistance to private landowners will improve hundreds of acres of privately owned native prairie in areas near PPRI preserves.**

**Platte Bluffs Center land stewardship training program will serve more than 100 people annually.** People will become more knowledgeable about grassland management.

**Internships will create new young leaders in land management.**

**Shelters will serve information and educational uses.**

**PRAIRIE RESTORATION - PRAIRIE RESTORATION STAFF**

**WE ARE HERE**

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**OUTCOMES/BENEFITS**



- 1) 250-500 acres per year high diversity plantings on private and public lands
- 2) One full-time staff position sharing duties for restoration, stewardship and GIS



Continue one full-time Restoration Ecologist position in order to sow 250-500 acres per year of high diversity prairie and wetland habitat, and train interns and temporary employees in restoration. Also, continue sharing some stewardship and GIS duties.

Promote restoration of native prairie for agricultural use, a major component of prairie's multiple use value.

Conduct an ecological restoration training program at the Platte Bluffs Center, with regular presentations and seminars on all aspects of prairie and wetland restoration for students, landowners, and public; also, to promote a vision for restoration of abused landscapes.

Train two or three 6- to 12-month restoration interns.

250-500 acres of land will be conserved and restored per year; more people – landowners, youth, service club members and conservation volunteers - will be integrated into all of the restoration processes through new projects.

Restored prairie will contribute significantly to the agricultural value of many lands, in addition to habitat and water quality benefits.

Platte Bluffs Center restoration training program will serve more than 100 people annually, teaching basic restoration and management skills to a growing number of people interested in the land.

Internships will develop new leaders in restoration.





**PRESERVE-BASED OUTREACH, PLATTE BLUFFS CENTER - EDUCATION STAFF**

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**WE WANT TO BE HERE**

**OUTCOMES/BENEFITS**

\*Present preserve outreach and education needs include:

- 1) Education and outreach to neighboring landowners, the general public and schools near each preserve.
- 2) Development of new programs to realize the educational potential of each preserve.

\* Prairie and wetland restorations that PPRI has helped create - but does not own - are included here with PPRI preserves because many may be available for outreach and educational purposes.

**Employ an education staff position to further develop education activities on all preserves.**

**Produce an information packet for each preserve**, including a visitor's guide to the area, a brief site narrative, and a menu listing recreation, volunteer and education opportunities. Also, compile and publish an annual synopsis of stewardship, educational and recreational activities for each preserve.

**PPRI's Prairie Preserve Network will be marketed regionally and nationally for people to "tour the PPRI prairies" of Nebraska.**

**Publish an annual synopsis of PPRI restoration activities:** plantings, harvest, volunteer activities, meetings, educational field trips, etc.

**Create and implement an action plan getting people to visit existing restorations sites.**

**Preserve-based outreach will impact thousands of K-12 students with outdoor education experiences.**

**Engage communities near each preserve** (a system-wide total of 24-36 communities). Through outreach activities, more than 60 local citizens will become actively involved with management and education on the 12 preserves.

**PPRI will expose thousands of people to native prairies and draw hundreds of people from other states.**

**PPRI will deliver practical how-to restoration information for hundreds of people**, informing scores of people through publishing, presentations, and activities at the Platte Bluffs Center.

**Hundreds of people will gain first hand knowledge about prairie restoration.**

**EDUCATION & PLATTE BLUFFS CENTER COORDINATION- EDUCATION STAFF**

**WE ARE HERE**

**WE WANT TO BE HERE**

**OUTCOMES/BENEFITS**

Hamilton SOAR – Aurora  
Big Bend SOAR – Gibbon  
Olson Nature Preserve activities – Albion  
Bader Park Natural Area outings  
Educational outings as requested  
Publications – *Prairie Plains Quarterly* and other publications

Develop the specific operational framework for the education and use program of the Platte Bluffs Center, i.e., scheduling of school groups, workshops, retreats, meetings of Platte Corridor working groups, etc.

Develop two new SOAR programs - one in northeast and one in central Nebraska, involving new communities for financial support and volunteers.

Educate the public about the connection of prairie and prairie restoration to agriculture.

Expand circulation of publications, e.g., *Prairie Plains Quarterly*.

Train two or three 6- to 12-month education interns.

Platte Bluffs Center will host thousands of people per year in educational, community development and cultural interest activities, e.g., issues of stewardship, outdoor education, natural resources, sustainable development, etc.

SOAR programs will impact 500 youth (combined total of four PPRI SOAR programs per year). Four new teachers will be involved with each new program.

The public will understand more about agriculture, the importance of grasslands and stewardship concepts.

PPRI will hold one or two public activities at each preserve per year (12-24 activities total).

Internships will develop new leaders in education.



PLATTE RIVER CORRIDOR INITIATIVE - SPECIAL PROJECT TEAM

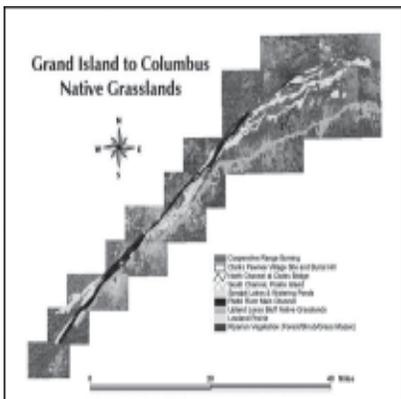
WE ARE HERE

WE WANT TO BE HERE

OUTCOMES/BENEFITS



The Platte River Corridor Initiative is a series of projects within a guiding concept for long-term resource management of the central Platte River's bluff-to-bluff corridor. Central to this concept are locally directed, grassroots initiatives rewarding individual initiative, bringing together diverse interests and developing leaders able to integrate economic, social and environmental concerns into a practical, problem-solving process.



Expand the Platte Corridor Initiative - Employ the following positions dedicated to the Platte River Corridor Initiative: 1) Coordinator, 2) Information manager, 3) Geographic Information System (GIS) manager (these positions are not core PPRI staff positions and will be contingent upon specific project grant funding).

Facilitate 20-30 established working groups involved with local sustainable development projects with economic, social and environmental benefits.

**Example:** "Platte Bluffers" focusing on cedar removal and rangeland improvement.

**Example:** "PACE - Planning, Aggregates, Community & Environment", focusing on aggregate mining & reclamation.

Conduct an annual summit at the Platte Bluffs Center for all the Platte Corridor Initiative working groups to exchange information.

Conduct annual leadership training seminars at the Platte Bluffs Center to aid participatory development in working groups.

Train two or three 6- to 12-month social science interns.

The Platte Corridor process will create mutually positive solutions to resource issues in the Platte River Corridor from Gothenburg to Columbus. Initiative staff will conduct a public participation process, and integrate environmental, social and economic concerns into the community development process.

Issue-oriented resource working groups will form innovative action plans to meet participants' specified objectives.

- 10,000 acres of rangeland will be improved by cedar removal and range restoration.

- Multi-use planning and reclamation guidelines will impact 5,000 acres of gravel mining in the Central Platte.

New ideas and public benefits will be generated from interactions between working groups.

PPRI will increase public participation in projects and the emergence of new leaders in project working groups.

New leaders in sustainable development.

**PLATTE BLUFFS CENTER**

**WE ARE HERE**

**WE WANT TO BE HERE**

**OUTCOMES/BENEFITS**

PPRI has envisioned a building on PPRI's Griffith property along the Platte River northwest of Aurora, NE. It will be the location for youth education, educator training, stewardship and restoration workshops, retreats, planning sessions and meetings related to sustainable watershed and community development.

Architectural plans for the building have been created incorporating a recycled local barn.

Complete the Platte Bluffs Center (a temporary name) building using mostly volunteer builders, similar to Habitat for Humanity's approach; raise funds to endow the ongoing maintenance of the Center, and implement the Center activity program - i.e., coordination of internships, meetings, etc.

The Platte Bluffs Center will add a new dimension of visibility to PPRI and serve all of its projects, becoming a facilitation tool for increasing educational opportunities and public involvement. [Note references to the Center activities stated under the projects of this plan.]



*East*



*South*

