

## PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK



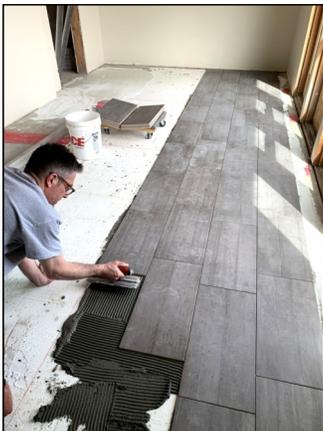
**First day of spring:** The quick and simple burn on the five-acre native area of Lincoln Creek Prairie on the east edge of Aurora marked the opening of our prescribed burn season. We also torched the one-acre south restoration site (to the right of this photo, across the oxbow of the creek). Drone photo by Mike Bullerman.



**NEWSLETTER**  
**February-March, 2019**



**Recycled barn siding is being used for all wainscoting.**



**Scott Drickey setting tile in the main entrance to the Education Center.**

**Education Center Update:** There's been considerable progress on the Charles L. Whitney Education Center over this long, cold winter. Finish work completed includes all lower level wainscoting using recycled barn siding and dimensional lumber, and woodwork trimming and painting of all lower level windows and doors. Contractors installed LED lights, outlets and the last of the fire alarm system.

We also had the good fortune to connect with a tile setter, Scott Drickey, from Omaha, a craftsman willing and able to contribute some labor and material costs toward tiling the upstairs restrooms and building the entry floor. Scott and his assistant, Sean Jurish, completed most of the tiling in March. Other recent developments upstairs include progress on painting, with two rooms completed, and the purchase of hickory flooring, soon to be installed.

By July we should have the entry patio, upper floor and additional woodwork finished. We are finally approaching the end of this journey - pending raising remaining funds necessary for kitchen and restroom fixtures, furniture, elevator, and entry road work.



We were pleasantly surprised to receive \$3000 from N Street Drive In in Lincoln, as a "1% for the Planet" contribution. This (1%) organization had its origins with Patagonia, which has been donating 1% of its annual sales to the preservation and restoration of the natural environment since 1985. Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard and others started the nonprofit 1% for the Planet in 2002 to encourage other businesses to do the same. Learn more:

[onepercentfortheplanet.org/](http://onepercentfortheplanet.org/)

**Nebraska** is presently reeling from what may have been the worst, most widespread flooding disaster in our state's history. The devastating losses of crops, livestock, roads, bridges, levees and other infrastructure is mind-boggling. There is much information online for those who would like to assist with the state's long road to recovery. One site is Bold Nebraska, which has compiled a list; please check it out here: <http://boldnebraska.org/nebraska-floods-how-to-help-tribes-farmers-ranchers-recover/>.

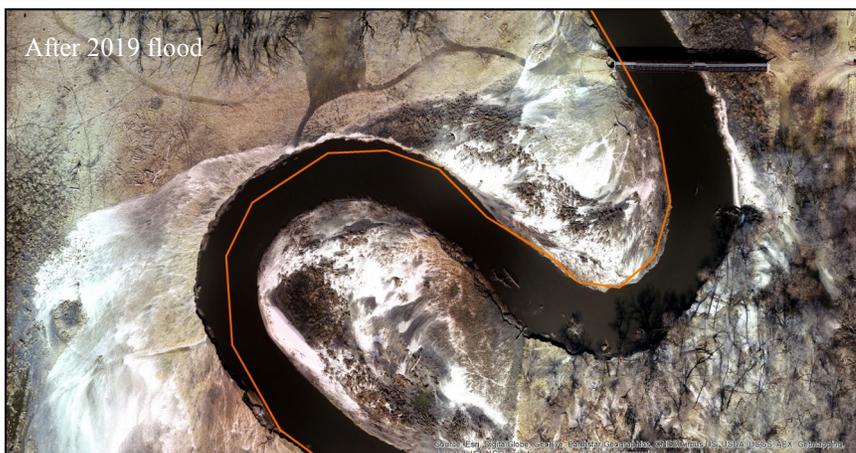


Prairie Plains was relatively unaffected by the storms and flooding, other than delaying plantings at various locations and having to cancel a couple of events. One exception was damage to the bridge over Beaver Creek at Olson Nature Preserve in Boone County. We now have both a challenge and an opportunity at ONP.

One of the greatest natural assets of the preserve is over a half mile (as the crow flies) length of Beaver Creek. Originating from spring flow south and west of Bassett, NE, it flows out of the Sandhills just a few miles upstream and enters the silty loess hills of farm country, receiving agricultural runoff from Rae Creek about a mile upstream. The Beaver carries high flow in heavy rain and snowmelt events, along with considerable sediment - fine sand, silt and clay. It is a meandering stream, which for centuries has eroded and deposited sediment in the valley.

**A challenge:** In mid-March the sequence of weather events across the state created a large flood at ONP - not as great as what happened downstream at St. Edward, but still significant. The flooding resulted in serious erosion around the west bridge abutment, which included a large hole and drop-off. This will require fill and rip rap on the upstream side of the abutment when the stream flow is low enough to get equipment to the west side. The good news is that the bridge is secure; the abutment appears to withstand high flow conditions. But if the stream moves west there could someday be a channel forming on the west end to cross. There is also new trail to mark as the channel took out some existing mowed trail.

**An opportunity:** Prairie Plains Greenhouse Manager Sarah Bailey has been working with Boone Central High School Science Teacher Katie Wilson on a project including prairie restoration and greenhouse seedlings. The emerging plan includes lowland prairie seeding and transplanting to diversify the plant community with more forbs, such as pollinator attracting species. The sand areas will suppress brome grass and should give new transplants a good place to establish.



These before and after photos are textbook examples of a meandering river. The orange line shows the pre-March 2019 bank of Beaver Creek as it was drawn on the 2016 image. The lower photo, a post-flood high-resolution image made by Mike Bullerman with his drone camera, shows how the stream changed its channel in one flood event, and also shows how the high ground received a deposit of sediment. The light areas are not snow or cloud cover; they are sandy deposits left by receding flood waters.



Winter Explore Days took place on February 2 at Bader Park and March 16 at Sherman Ranch. Pictured are the Bader Park Winter Explorers who accepted the challenge to get outside and have some fun! The program, led by Sarah Bailey (Prairie Plains) and new Platte PEER Group Director Tiffany Hartford, gets kids out with their families and friends to learn about nature in winter - as well as some outdoor skills - and just have fun. Thanks to Alex Briner for teaching the group how to make winter shelters.

### Spring is well underway in the greenhouse!



Greenhouse Manager Sarah Bailey's work has been rewarded this spring with excellent germination and thousands of healthy grass, sedge and forb seedlings. Seeds are first planted in the rectangular flats, then carefully separated and planted into cone-tainers, where the roots can fully develop. (Above, right - prairie turnip seedlings ready to transplant.)

This year will be a record for prairie violet production in the greenhouse. We are working with a Nebraska Game & Parks Commission project to restore habitat in existing prairie landscapes, specifically to increase availability of prairie violets (pictured) for populations of regal fritillary butterflies.



Many other seedlings are being grown for numerous pollinator habitat and prairie restoration projects, as well as pollinator gardens. The cold frame (pictured) was a very necessary addition to the greenhouse, housing over 2,000 one-year-old plugs.

Anyone interested in purchasing native prairie plant seedlings should contact Sarah Bailey, 402-694-5535 or sarahp@hamilton.net.



**Youth Naturalist Program**  
**June 17-21**  
 For students presently in grades 6-10. The time to register is NOW! Go to:  
<http://www.prairieplains.org/education/youth-naturalist-program.html>



 **SOAR 2019: FLIGHT 28**  
**Week One: July 8-11**  
**Week Two: July 15-18**  
 For students presently (school year 2018-19) in grades 3-6.  
**Registration underway!**  
**Download/print form, available online at:**  
<http://www.prairieplains.org/>



**25th North American Prairie Conference  
University of Houston, Clear Lake, Texas  
June 2-5, 2019**

Registration is now open for the  
**25<sup>th</sup> North American Prairie Conference:  
*Healthy Prairies, Healthy Watersheds.***

The conference is bringing together prairie experts and enthusiasts from across the nation to learn about the conservation and restoration of North America's legacy landscape, and will include field trips to the diverse Texas Coastal Prairie region. Early registration rate deadline is April 22.

The call for abstracts for oral presentations and posters is open, and may be submitted online until April 1. Sponsors are the Katy Prairie Conservancy, the Coastal Prairie Partnership, The Native Prairies Association of Texas, the Nature Conservancy, and the Environmental Institute of Houston at the University of Houston Clear Lake. For more information, visit [northamericanprairie.org](http://northamericanprairie.org).



**Scott Jones's Aurora High School Construction Technology students Caleb Collingham, Cam Jones, Kaleb Kindt and Coleton Sorgenfrei built the new shed. No new purchase was necessary for the roofing, as there was plenty of corrugated steel roofing left over from the Education Center. THANKS, Mr. Jones and students!**



**NEW SOAR SHED:** After years of settling for an old, too-small farm outbuilding complete with mice and wasps, we are pleased to announce the construction of a new SOAR storage shed! We're also pleased to have Scott Jones's Aurora High School Construction Technology class of four students build it. Each student was involved in every process and problem solving aspect of construction. For the cost of materials they built the sturdy 12' x 16' structure to house our SOAR equipment (insect and aquatic nets, various collection containers, plant presses, tarps, etc.). It has a four-foot overhead loading door and walk-in shop door; all interior surfaces are covered with sheathing. The new building was constructed in the school shop and will soon be moved to the Gjerloff Prairie farmstead.



**PLEASE HELP KEEP SOAR IN FLIGHT!  
A remittance envelope is enclosed for  
your contribution. Thank you!**

**THANKS to Kendra Clark for help in  
the greenhouse!**

March 7: Administrative Director Amy Jones was actually quite happy about the completion of the annual audit (document in hand) - but she'd had quite enough of cold and snow. We all appreciate her many skills, including but not limited to accounting/audit prep, event organizing, membership management, keeping the executive director on task, prescribed burning, mowing, carpentry work at the Center and snow scooping. About those last tasks: ALL small non-profit staffers' job descriptions include "and whatever else needs to be done!"

**PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK**  
is a publication of



**Preserving, restoring and maintaining  
Nebraska native prairies -  
Creating opportunities for education,  
research, stewardship and place-  
based community development.**

Prairie Plains Resource Institute is an educational land trust incorporated in 1980 as a non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt membership organization based in Aurora, Nebraska.

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**EVENTS**  
**Bader Park Earlybird Hikes  
April 27 & May 4, 7:00 a.m.**  
**Gjerloff Prairie Hike  
Saturday, May 18. 9:00 a.m.**