

PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK



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The early weeks of October find our combine crews pulling in native grass and forb (wildflower) seed as fast as our vintage Gleaner combines will allow. Pictured above, Mike Bullerman harvests just south of the Education Center at Gjerloff Prairie. Meanwhile, staff members not operating the big equipment continue to hand collect seed to add to the mix. Collection season ends at the end of October and then grass and forb seed will be processed and mixed in preparation for our high-diversity, local ecotype prairie restoration plantings. (Around 250 species will be collected in total). Planting work begins in November and continues through May when collection season starts all over again.



NEWSLETTER
September/October 2021

New Leadership at Prairie Plains

Amy Jones named Executive Director

The Prairie Plains board of directors recently named Amy Jones as executive director of the organization effective at the beginning of October. Jones has been with Prairie Plains for 17 years and replaces Mitchell Lyon, who left the position to dedicate more time to building his family business, which offers online resources to occupational therapists. (Mitchell's wife, Sarah, is an occupational therapist.)

"The board is very excited to have Amy take on the executive director role for Prairie Plains," said board president Brad Bangs. "Her extensive knowledge of the organization and passion for the mission were two areas the board were very impressed with during the interview process. We're excited for the future of PPRI with Amy as the director."

Jones has a long history with Prairie Plains, joining the staff in 2004 as office manager/development coordinator and moving into the role of administrative director as her responsibilities grew. "I've had a wonderful opportunity to be a part of all the great work that supports the Prairie Plains mission. Helping with SOAR, collecting seed, fixing fence, building the Center, provided a thorough understanding of the work we do and why we do it. Some of our best strategic planning conversations happen with the team in the work truck, and I've been very fortunate to be a part of many of those brain-storming sessions," Jones said. "With our amazing staff and the Education Center ready to welcome people to the prairie, we're poised for a great future. I am honored and excited to lead the effort forward." CONGRATULATIONS AMY!



Prairie Plains staff pictured left to right: Executive Director Amy Jones, Restoration and Stewardship Assistant Jared Sullivan, Land Steward Jeff Gustafson, Restoration Ecologist and GIS Specialist Mike Bullerman and Greenhouse Manager and Naturalist Educator Sarah Bailey.

Enhancing Prairie Restoration with Seedlings

When a prairie restoration is establishing, there are certain species that may need a little boost to become part of the plant community. It may be difficult to collect enough seed to allow these species to be represented in the larger seed mix, or the plants may provide services so important to wildlife that we want to ensure their success in the area. The prairie violet (*Viola pedatifida*) meets both of these criteria, and we recently completed large seedling installations in two prairie restoration sites to encourage the success of prairie violets (which provide a critical food source for regal fritillary butterfly larvae), along with some other key species.

One thousand prairie plant seedlings (over 500 of them violets) grown in the Prairie Plains greenhouse using local-ecotype seed collected by our staff were planted at Two Creeks Prairie near Denton, Nebraska. The site was seeded by our restoration crew in 2017, and is a part of The Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch project led by the City of Lincoln.

We also installed over 1,000 seedlings in a restoration site west of Arbor Day Farm's Lied Lodge in Nebraska City. Both projects are intended for public use, and we encourage everyone to visit the sites and watch the prairie develop.

Special thanks to Nebraska Master Naturalist volunteers, City of Lincoln Parks and Rec staff and Josie Ivy and Noah Niemeyer for help at the Two Creeks site. (Photo right.) And to Britt and Barb Bailey, Brianna Nevitt, Gerry Steinauer of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and Chance Brueggemann and Krista Lang of Northern Prairies Land Trust for help at Lied Lodge.



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We Can't Say it Enough - THANK YOU!!!!

A wonderful crowd joined us at Gjerloff Prairie on October 2nd for a membership appreciation party. Food, music and beautiful fall

colors provided the perfect backdrop to say, "WE COULDN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU!"

Pictured above, a group of Prairie Plains members enjoyed a prairie hike led by Sarah Bailey.



Long-time members Mike & Diane Stewart just keep on giving! They recently surprised us with a donation of 10 new microscopes for use at the Education Center. A SOAR founder and retired science teacher, Mike carefully chose scopes that would be useful and durable for all our education programs. Now everyone will have access to a close-up look at things found on the prairie (and in the river). The microscopes will be stored and used in the east upstairs lab classroom, the construction of which is already dedicated to the Stewart's generosity. INCREDIBLE!

