

Prairie plains Link

March, 2007



Talk to us!

Have you visited our web site yet? Please do! It's www.prairieplains.org just in case you missed that. And while you're there, be sure to read our blogs. We're trying to get some conversations going about all things relevant to the Prairie Plains mission. Thanks very much to those who have posted their comments already.



Soar '07

Please contribute to the cause! Last year our members' special contributions to SOAR were extremely helpful toward meeting program costs, which are substantial. Registration fees cover roughly half the expenses, so we must rely on area businesses, organizations - and you, our members to make SOAR fly. A return envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

monthly newsletter of



March had us all ablaze gearing up for spring burns and plantings as well as some exciting event planning, including **SOAR '07:**

The sixteenth flight of our nature day camp program based in Aurora is rapidly taking shape, and registration is already underway. SOAR is for students who are presently in grades 3-6. Registration flyers are available (janppri@hamilton.net) - or they can be downloaded from our web site (prairieplains.org). Week One is July 9-13; Week Two is July 16-20.

Likewise, Big Bend SOAR camp cosponsored by Rowe Sanctuary near Gibbon is quickly coming together. It is offered to students in grades 2-5; the weeks are June 18-21 and June 25-28. For details about the Big Bend program and registration, call 308-468-5282.

This summer Hamilton County area campers will SOAR to the theme of "stories." There will be a few storytellers on board, and we're also looking forward to a new presenter, David Nieves ([see reptilesupclose.com](http://reptilesupclose.com)). We'll be exploring a new field site near Palmer and the Loup River on Heritage Day, offered by new Prairie Plains member Don Reeves. It includes a prairie dog town and Pawnee lodge rings.

We are as pumped as ever about this summer's programs, and look forward to this opportunity to share Nebraska's natural and cultural heritage with area youth again.

April Events

Thursday, April 12:

Lecture on Grasslands Conservation and Sustainable Communities

Prairie Plains is a cosponsor of the Grassland Foundation's second annual lecture on "Grassland Conservation and Communities." The pre-lecture reception begins at 3:00 p.m. with the lecture starting at 3:30 p.m. at the Great Plains Art Museum, 1155 Q Street in Lincoln.

This year's speaker is Larry Swanson, Ph.D., Director of the O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West at the University of Montana. Dr. Swanson will discuss rural depopulation, demographic trends and an uncertain farming and ranching economy and whether anything can be done to counter these trends. The lecture will include discussion of a more stable economic foundation and the role environmental rehabilitation and restoration plays in the situation.

Saturday, April 14 - Cleanup Day at Olson Nature Preserve

A great opportunity is at hand for all Olson Nature Preserve enthusiasts - and who could help from being enthused about this most amazing Nebraska natural wonder?! The work of ice storms and beavers beckons us to visit ONP and get some exercise moving limbs and branches off the trail. There will also be a cedar attack,





Barn Progress

The weeks following the joyful event of the barn move Feb. 8-9 were spent on work that was not nearly as fun, but just as necessary - preparing grant proposals and other funding requests. Presently we are in the process of submitting requests totaling more than \$700,000 to a number of foundations and corporations. If we are successful in raising \$150,000 in the next few months, and if we can call upon our force of volunteer builders, there is a good possibility that the lower level of the Center will be ready for use by the fall of this year. Given the size of the structure this will be a challenge, but picturing the end result is extremely motivating.

Plans for April and May include work on the south entry road, installation of a new well and septic system and sewer rough-in. This will be followed by pouring the rest of the concrete floor in the south part of the building. After these projects we will plan volunteer building on a project-by-project basis: Framing the south upper level extension to the barn roof which will become the main entrance; building the floor above the lower level; framing the remaining lower level internal features (walls, stairwell, etc.); sheathing the exterior walls and installing lower level windows and doors, including the screened porch. As lower level plumbing and electrical work is completed by subcontractors, we will proceed with insulation, drywall and finish projects. Upper level work will progress as funds become available, and will include raising up parts of the roof for the rooms, replacement of the roof covering, elevator installation, plumbing, wiring and finishing. Completion target is mid-late 2008.

so those experienced with chain saw work are encouraged to attend, fully armed with saws. The rest of us will need smaller saws and loppers - and don't forget the work gloves. We'll be starting at about 8:30 a.m. Rain date is April 21. Thanks to Mitzi Fox and Ted Thieman for organizing this event.

Saturday, April 21 - Volunteer Prairie Planting

Watch the web site for details of time and location of this activity.

Friday, April 27 - Prairie Plains Open House

Stop by the office at 13th & L in Aurora some time between 2:00 and 5:00 for coffee and cookies and catch up on what's going on at Prairie Plains. We are also tentatively planning a trek by SOAR bus to visit the Barn at Griffith Prairie. Again, watch the web site for details or give us a call at 402-694-5535.

Saturday, April 28 - Mid-Nebraska Trail Seekers Volkswalk at Griffith Prairie . . . and another Trail Ride!

This 5K & 10K walk is an AV sanctioned event and is open to the public. Award and AVA/IVV credit stamps are \$3. Fun walkers fee is \$2. Start time is 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m., and off the trail by 3:00. For more information call Barbara Fletcher at 308-382-5962 or visit:

www.ava.org/clubs/mnts/regular1.htm

Also see my blog at prairieplains.org to learn more about the history of the Volkswalk.

There will also be another open trail ride going on in the Platte Corridor; riders will be entering Griffith Prairie about the time that Volkswalkers are leaving. Please let us know if you are interested in the ride, and we'll provide you with details. 402-694-5535 or ppri@hamilton.net.

And keep in mind...
the annual
Prairie Festival at
Griffith Prairie
May 25



Thank you

to Colleen Babcock and Mitzi Fox for setting up the Prairie Plains booth and being our representatives at the recent Rivers & Wildlife Conference in Kearney.