

Situation

Kansas is a prairie state noted for its native grasslands, streams and wetlands, abundant blue skies and green grassland vistas. The native grasslands that exist throughout Kansas are one of the state's most important renewable natural resources. These grasslands help maintain the landscape and its watersheds and aid in maintaining the water quality in our streams and lakes. Grassland habitats are home to many of the state's rich diversity of native plants and wildlife species. These landscapes also provide scenic beauty, recreation, tourism, and contribute to cultural values.

Kansas grasslands are of prime economic importance to not only the state, but the entire nation. The state nationally ranks 12th in acres of pasture and rangeland. Of North America's 140 million presettlement tallgrass prairie acres, only 4% survives to this day and 80% is located in Kansas. Kansas presently has about 15.8 million total acres of native grasslands or rangelands, 2.5 million acres of pastureland, and at any given time, 3 to 6 million acres of annual forages. These grasslands are vital in supporting the state's largest agricultural commodity, beef cattle production. In 2009 cattle generated \$5.55 billion in cash receipts for the state.

For now and the future, Kansas grasslands encompass a host of rich natural resource opportunities and provide an equal number of resource management challenges. Numerous natural resource issues face our grassland managers which warrant the development and dissemination of sound research-based information. To meet the evolving needs of these managers, it is essential to provide access to a vast, rapidly expanding knowledge base to address topics such as invasive species, water quality, ecology and biodiversity, climate, and other emerging issues.

Drought is a recurring issue in various parts of the state, with serious impacts on grassland health and grazing profitability. Managers must consider the effects of drought on both the grassland and livestock when implementing or adjusting plans for stocking rates and duration of grazing.

Owner/operators are in need of best management recommendations to sustain and/or enhance the production of forages and livestock from this important resource. The goals of this program are to provide an up-to-date, research based, education program in rangeland and pasture management to meet information demands throughout Kansas. Key areas of emphasis include prescribed burning, brush and weed control, and grazing management.

Public Value

Outcomes

Short-Term (Knowledge)

Target audiences will become aware of and increase their knowledge of both existing and emerging issues related to grassland management. Participants will gain an understanding of:

- brush and weed control options
- prescribed burning and smoke management
- basic principles of grazing management
- identification of invasive plants

Indicators

Medium-Term (Behavior)

Stakeholders and participants will develop long-range strategic plans and implement best management practices as they relate to the sustainable management of grasslands. Partnerships will be made among stakeholders to work collaboratively to alleviate and prevent environmental concerns throughout Kansas.

Indicators

Long-Term (Change in Condition)

Target audiences will benefit from measurable improvements in existing natural resource concerns and mitigation of emerging threats. Participants and their associated interests will become economically viable and environmentally sustainable.

Outputs

Activities Phone calls, e-mails, Twitter, range youth camp, adult range management schools, noxious weed short course, pesticide recertification training, agent updates

Participants: youth and adults, noxious weed personnel, pesticide applicators, extension agents, agency personnel, farmers/ranchers

Products: Radio/TV interviews, e-Updates, Tweets, extension publications