



Restoring Fire TO NATIVE GRASSLANDS

Fire can help restore native grasslands and provide benefits to people and nature.

Fire is a natural part of the grassland ecosystem

- helps maintain its health, vigor, and diversity
- reduces residual duff build-up, allowing sunlight to penetrate
- warms up the soil and increases microbial activity
- releases and recycles nutrients from decaying plant material
- stimulates new grasses and flowers need to grow
- reduces brush and suppresses invasive species

The Nature Conservancy supports the safe and ecologically appropriate use of fire to maintain grasslands and their plant and animal diversity in North Dakota.

Here are a few of the many benefits that fire provides to people and nature:

CONTROLLING BRUSH AND INVASIVE SPECIES

Fire, sometimes in combination with cattle or bison grazing, is used to control trees, woody shrubs and invasive species and keep grasslands healthy. After a fire, grazing animals are attracted to the lush re-growth of grass and concentrate their grazing in that burned area. As new areas are burned, grazers shift to the most recent burned area, allowing previously burned areas to recover.

PROMOTING HEALTHY PRAIRIES

Periodic fire enhances native plant communities by removing dead plant material and improving access for new plant growth. Properly timed fire suppresses exotic grasses like Kentucky bluegrass and smooth brome, increasing species diversity. Fire in grasslands also increases grass nutritive quality, palatability, availability and yield.

PROVIDING GRASSLANDS FOR WILDLIFE

As Native Americans did before settlers arrived, land managers today use fire to maintain grasslands for wildlife including ducks, deer and other game species. Healthy grasslands provide food and cover for wildlife all year long. They can also provide nutritious forage for cattle.



BENEFITTING THE FOODCHAIN

Fire can also be used to increase wildflower diversity in grasslands, which benefits butterflies, moths and other pollinators, providing a variety of food sources throughout the growing season. Diverse grasslands also provide the different types of vegetation and structure that pollinators need during different times in their life-cycles.

SUSTAINING CRITICAL HABITATS FOR ENDANGERED BIRDS

Fire is critical to maintaining the habitat of grassland-dependent birds, including meadowlarks, dickcissels and chestnut-collared longspurs, whose populations are declining dramatically across North America and other parts of the world.

IT'S SAFE!

A team of highly skilled and experienced professionals and volunteers applies fire to Nature Conservancy preserves and project areas. A burn boss organizes and supervises the event around a written plan and schedule.

Strict safety procedures ensure the safety of the team members, nearby residents and private property. Conditions such as weather, wind and drought factors must be right before a fire is started.

GOOD FIRE TAKES TEAMWORK

With many government agencies and non-profits like the Conservancy working to conserve the grasslands in North Dakota with limited resources, it is important that we work together.

The Conservancy works with agency partners including the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, N.D Game and Fish Department, and with other partners and private landowners to share information, provide training opportunities and implement burns collaboratively.

Program Contact

Chris Gordon, ND Fire Manager
Cross Ranch, 1401 River Rd Center, ND 58530
chris_gordon@tnc.org
Office: 701-794-8741