

Protecting Wachiska’s Prairies ... Forever!

Horacek Prairie, Butler County, NE

Wachiska Audubon Society owns nine prairies—ownership meaning we are solely responsible for their care and preservation. We also have agreed to hold and serve as the monitor for 23 prairies protected by conservation easements where we provide annual inspections, reports, and guidance to the property owners as they work to uphold the terms of conservation easements.

This month, we are again asking for your support—particularly for donations to Wachiska’s Prairie Management Fund. We have the goal to reach \$1 million, so the earnings from these donations can be used to care for and preserve Wachiska protected prairies in perpetuity and, by doing so, protect and enhance the critical habitat these tallgrass prairies provide.

“Perpetuity is a long time.”
Please help Wachiska meet our prairie management obligations, now and long into the future.

In both cases—for prairies we own and those we monitor—Wachiska has pledged to care for these properties in perpetuity. As long-time Wachiska member Arnold Mendenhall says in his typically understated tone, “Perpetuity is a long time.”

That is why we’re asking, urging, appealing to you to take immediate action by making a donation. By giving a year-end contribution before December 31st, you can make a difference at a time when Southeast Nebraska’s birds and prairies have never needed you more.

DECEMBER GOAL: RAISE \$58,000

Help increase our Prairie Management Fund to \$400,000 – One step closer to our \$1 million goal!

What does it cost to care for Wachiska’s prairies?

This year, the Wachiska Conservation Committee developed a new Prairie Management Plan and three-year budget.

Average annual expenses 2021-2023

Biological inventories	\$ 1,200
Prairie restoration	\$ 7,000
Invasive species control (weeds and trees)	\$14,000
Fencing	\$ 3,500
Land surveys	\$ 2,000
Signage	\$ 750
Rural water	\$ 1,200
Taxes	\$17,000
Equipment rental	\$ 3,500
Mileage paid to volunteers	\$ 5,000
Prairie Habitat Manager 1600 hours/year contract	\$38,000
Mileage	\$ 8,000
Tools	\$ 1,000

Prairie Mgt. Estimated Annual Expenses \$102,150

Also, work by Wachiska volunteers results in in-kind contributions of \$20,000 to \$30,000 per year. Details on back cover.



Blazing Star Liatris on Knott Prairie, Saunders County, NE

Wachiska – Strengthening our Future!

During 2020, Wachiska undertook a months-long strategic planning process, which you have likely read about in this newsletter before or on our website.

Members and supporters confirmed our four focus areas:

1. **Caring for Tallgrass Prairies**
2. **Advocating for the Environment**
3. **Building Relationships**
4. **Strengthening the Organization**

When you donate to Wachiska’s Prairie Management Fund, you are supporting *all four* of our chapter’s strategic goals. Your gift helps Wachiska continue our prairie preservation efforts which are part of our environmental advocacy efforts. You are also demonstrating commitment to your relationship with Wachiska—you are part of a network of dedicated citizens who care deeply for the land and plants, birds, and animals that are so critical to our Great Plains environment.

Investing for the Future

In 2015, firmly grappling with our *in-perpetuity* responsibilities, Wachiska’s Board and Finance Committee established three investment accounts to hold and grow donations directed specifically to support our Prairie Preservation efforts. These accounts are held at the Lincoln Community Foundation (LCF)—invested primarily in LCF’s Sustainable Core Portfolio balanced with additional investments in bond funds. Each account has a dedicated purpose.

1. Land Purchase Fund—This fund is reserved for the protection by purchase of valuable examples of native or reclaimed habitat. Most recently, Wachiska donated \$7,500 to help purchase land to be restored to prairie in the Haines Branch Prairie Corridor. This fund currently totals just over \$220,000, mostly from donations from the estates of Wachiska members.

2. Prairie Management Fund—This fund is to provide money for the maintenance of Wachiska-owned prairies and for conserved land which we have agreed to serve as monitor. This is the fund we are currently raising money for, LCF account #710146.

3. Prairie Defense Fund—Boundary disputes, maintenance neglect, use violations...as easement monitor Wachiska is obliged to defend easements, ideally cooperatively, but in court if necessary. This fund is intended to pay for defense litigation expenses should they arise. Its current value is nearly \$85,000.

\$1,000,000
Prairie Management Fund Goal



The Prairie Management Fund is held at the Lincoln Community Foundation. This is the fund we are currently raising money for. In the five years since we started this fundraising effort, ***we have been able to invest (not spend) ALL the funds donated to this account!*** Our intent is to grow this fund to \$1 million, then use only the interest income to support our prairie preservation efforts.



Wachiska
Audubon Society

Wachiska Audubon Society's vision: To share the experience
and love of nature—that life may flourish in all its natural diversity

The Babbling Brook

Our 47th Year of Protecting Nature 1973 - 2020

DECEMBER 2020

Volume 29 - Issue 12

Wachiska Program — Thursday, December 10, 7:00 p.m., via Zoom web conference (registration required)
Link to register: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUode6tqjlsGtToUbks2mAmw3wfKOI6vtx->

The Birds, the Science, and the Education: Common Birds of the CBC: Lincoln Edition!

with Jason St. Sauver, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

Winter and the holiday season mean many things to bird lovers. Snowbirds like juncos are arriving, Christmas bird counting is near, and frozen feeders for sparrows and woodpeckers will be filling up. Join Jason “the Birdnerd” St. Sauver, senior education manager at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, for a fun and informal look at common birds found in and around Lincoln in the winter and during the Christmas Bird Count. Learn about identification tips and which birds to expect in the area at this time of year. Bring your bird questions as Jason loves a good Q&A!



Jason St. Sauver

there will be no auction or potluck this year, we can still count on a fun-loving program where everyone is bound to learn something new, too!

Jason became Spring Creek Prairie’s education director in April 2015. Before that, he was the education manager and interim center director at the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center in San Antonio, Texas.



Harris's Sparrow



American Tree Sparrow

Since the December general meeting traditionally has begun with a silent auction and potluck supper, it has been followed by a special light-hearted program. Jason is one of our members’ favorite presenters. Even though



American Robin

Join Wachiska Audubon for our annual holiday Zoom gathering on **Thursday, December 10, at 7:00 p.m.** This free, public program is available to those who register at the link above. You can copy and paste the link into your browser or go to Wachiska’s website and click on this link directly to

register. You will then receive a confirmation with the meeting number and password. Keep that email and a few minutes before the program is to begin, click on this confirmation and you’ll be invited into the meeting at that time.



Red-breasted Nuthatch

Common CBC bird photos above by Paul Johnsgard

Calendar

December

- 3 Legislation Committee via Zoom, 7:00 p.m. (change due to holidays)
- 10 General Meeting via Zoom, 7:00 p.m., “Winter Birds,” (**NOTE required registration**)
- 14 Conservation Committee via Zoom, 5:30 p.m.
- 15 Newsletter deadline, Wachiska office, 5:00 p.m.
- 15 Board Meeting via Zoom, 7:00 p.m.

The Christmas Bird Count will be held on January 2, 2021 (see page 4)

Audubon's Advice to LES

Policy decisions of Lincoln's publicly owned electric company, Lincoln Electric System, are made by a board of nine Lincoln citizens appointed by the mayor for three-year terms.

An ambitious goal for moving to renewable energy and away from fossil fuels was accepted by the LES board at their November meeting. Both Wachiska Audubon and Audubon Nebraska went on record urging them to do so.

One of the many advantages of membership in Audubon is that it gives us bird lovers the benefit of a national network of experts, some of whom were consulted in the comments to LES in the letter below.

November 9, 2020

Dear LES Board of Directors,

On behalf of the 12,324 members in Audubon Nebraska, a state office of the National Audubon Society, we support your goal to achieve net carbon reduction and request you seek the 100 percent level. This target is congruent with current findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Audubon Nebraska applauds LES's advances in renewable energy and commitment to reduce carbon emissions. As you consider options and strategies, we encourage you to keep three equal components in mind: economy, environment, and equity. We encourage you to take advantage of innovative new technologies with the ability to reduce climate change impacts. We also encourage the use of new scenario models that are developed for noncarbon resource planning and distributed energy. Audubon has consultants available to provide WIS:dom modeling should LES be interested in pursuing this approach or learning more. Also, as you approach possibilities, consider both large and small investments to facilitate greater use of distributed energy resources (DER) as they have the potential to pay long-term benefits in the future as DER costs fall.

Energy and environmental justice are indivisible from good energy planning in the public interest. Equitable access is a critical component of sustainable energy sector change, and as you consider a variety of potential strategies, seek opportunities to reduce energy burdens for low-income customers which benefits the whole community.

In your recent public input meeting, you indicated that multiple scenarios including carbon capture through actions like reforestation. Research certainly supports trees as a way to naturally capture carbon, but grasslands also sequester carbon. Nebraska has significant potential to restore grasslands using native species as a carbon sequestration strategy.

The National Audubon Society is a conservation organization with a focus on birds and their conservation, so we must also bring awareness to the condition of our environment and how changes impact birds, natural resources, our economy, and communities. In a recent scientific analysis, Audubon found that 389 species of birds are at risk of extinction in a warming world. Supporting renewable energy development is an important strategy to significantly reduce carbon emissions and this risk.

LES's work and leadership to seek alternative energy opportunities have not gone unnoticed. Thank you for your leadership in Nebraska. If there is any way Audubon can support your efforts, please reach out.

Sincerely,



Kristal Stoner
Vice President - National Audubon Society
Executive Director Audubon Nebraska

Common Birds of the Christmas Bird Count

by Kevin Poague

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

Audubon's long-running Christmas Bird Count will be different across the country this year due to COVID-19. We hope to have our Lincoln circle counted safely on Saturday, January 2, 2021. In preparation, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center's Birdnerd, Jason St. Sauver, will present a fun and informative online presentation of some of the common birds around Lincoln at this time of year. The presentation will be on Zoom on Monday, December 21, at 6:30 p.m. Please register to receive the Zoom link to view. Everyone is welcome—no need to be a Christmas bird counter to sign up. For information, see SCPAC's Events page at <https://springcreek.audubon.org/events>. **This talk will also be part of Wachiska's December 10th program.**

2020 Christmas Bird Count January 2

Saturday, January 2, is being tentatively held for the CBC in Lincoln this year as we watch COVID-19 numbers. There will be no social event and no carpooling or team counting. If you'd like to participate this year, the best way is watching your feeders and yards or, if you are able, to count an area on your own. If interested, contact Jason at scp@audubon.org for more info.



Song Sparrow

Do You Have QuickBooks and Accounting Experience?

Wachiska's finance committee was established in 2013 to assist the treasurer and the Wachiska Board in managing our increasingly complex finances, especially as Wachiska was assuming ownership of more prairies and establishing investment accounts to provide funds for the care of our prairies. The finance committee meets quarterly, is chaired by Treasurer Mary Rogge, supported by our paid bookkeeper Nancy Hamer, with about six members who have been involved for five years or more, plus others who attend occasionally.

Committee member Mascha Miedaner has been working with our QuickBooks accounts and offering her accounting expertise for the past couple of years; however, she is now moving away and resigning from the committee. We extend our considerable thanks to Mascha and will miss her financial wisdom and advice. Mascha's move prompts us to ask for your help.

The committee would like to add one or more individuals who have experience with QuickBooks and business accounting procedures who would be willing to volunteer about 8-10 hours per quarter to prepare our quarterly financial statements and attend the finance committee meetings (currently held via Zoom). If you have these skills and are willing to join the committee or know someone who might like to support Wachiska in this way, please contact Wachiska's 2021 President Theresa Pella at pella_t@yahoo.com. Thank you!

Senator Fischer Cosponsors Growing Climate Solutions Act of 2020

We have some good news to report! Check out the list shown below for the November 19th press release from Nebraska's Sen. Deb Fischer's office. She is co-sponsoring the Growing Climate Solutions Act, a bipartisan bill in the U.S. Senate that provides incentives for farmers and foresters to engage in climate-friendly, sustainable farming practices which eliminate significant amounts of carbon dioxide emissions and also potentially sequester massive amounts of existing carbon. It would give farmers technical assistance to develop practices eligible for carbon credits, measure the value of those credits, and certify them for trading on the market.

Reach out to Sen. Fischer's office and thank her for working on a climate solution. You can reach her office via email at <http://www.fischer.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contact>.

Wachiska's Climate Task Force members are Linda Brown, Marilyn McNabb, and Kristal Stoner.

Join now! Become a Friend of Wachiska Audubon Society!

This local chapter membership provides you with voting privileges and access to all our events, programs, and committees, **plus 100 percent of your membership donation goes directly to the Wachiska chapter. In addition, Friend members receive our monthly newsletter, *The Babbling Brook*, in their choice of print or electronic form.**

Friends of Wachiska (local membership)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ County _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

- ___ \$25 Individual/Friend
- ___ \$35 Family Friend
- ___ \$50 Black-capped Chickadee Friend
- ___ \$100 Northern Cardinal Friend
- ___ \$250 Western Meadowlark Friend
- ___ \$500 Bald Eagle Friend
- ___ \$1000 Peregrine Falcon Friend

Select the level of support that is right for you and make your check payable to **Wachiska Audubon Society**. All funds will remain with our local chapter and are tax deductible. Mail to:

Wachiska Audubon Society
Attention: Membership Committee
4547 Calvert St Ste 10
Lincoln NE 68506-5643



American Goldfinches

___ **I prefer to receive my newsletter by email.**

Please note: If you are already a member of National Audubon Society (NAS) you automatically become a member of Wachiska, but not a Wachiska Friend member. Only Wachiska Friends receive the printed newsletter each month. If you wish to join NAS or receive *Audubon* magazine, please contact the National Audubon Society directly.

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Send address changes to *The Babbling Brook*
Wachiska Audubon Society, 4547 Calvert St Ste 10
Lincoln NE 68506-5643



The Babbling Brook is printed on recycled and recyclable paper.

NOTE THIS POLICY UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

During COVID-19, Wachiska Audubon will continue to provide our monthly general meeting programs at **7:00 p.m. on the second Thursday each month;** however, these presentations will be by Zoom teleconferencing until such time as we can resume meeting in person. This practice began in May and all have been well-attended. The programs have been excellent and comments extremely favorable.

Please give this format consideration. There's no night driving and you don't have to even put your shoes on. The only thing is you will need to provide your own cookie!

Check out the link on the front page for registering or go to the website. It really is very easy!!



**Bird "Facts" Found on the Internet
One Cold November Afternoon**

- * Birds Shiver. That helps get added heat from circulation and muscle movement.
- * Birds feet are covered with scales and have very cold-damageable tissue in them. They are mostly bone and sinew.
- * Birds have Antifreeze (grin). Some birds have a special adaptation in the circulatory system of their feet whereby blood is circulated between colder outer areas and warmer inner areas more efficiently than might otherwise be the case, to avoid frostbite.
- *Birds have oil producing glands that allow them to preen a coating of waterproof onto their feathers to avoid the down coats getting wet.
- * Some small birds such as kinglets and chickadees can drop their body temperature and go into controlled hypothermia to save energy.

WACHISKA AUDUBON LEADERS - 2020

OFFICERS

President.....	*Stu Luttich (Geneva).....	402-759-3597
Vice President.....	*Theresa Pella.....	512-585-1511
Recording Secretary.....	*Marilyn McNabb.....	402-476-7463
Treasurer.....	*Mary Rogge.....	402-488-1342

STANDING COMMITTEES/POSITIONS

Director at Large	*Linda R. Brown.....	402-489-2381
Director at Large	*Terry Stentz	402-202-8819
Director at Large	*Dave Titterington.....	402-432-6988
Conservation	*Ross Scott (Roca)	402-202-1523
Education	*Tim Knott	402-217-8505
Field Trips.....	John Carlini	402-475-7275
	*Lana Novak.....	402-475-8693
Hospitality	Cheryl Moncure	402-488-0036
Legislation	*Bruce Kennedy (Malcolm)	402-796-2114
Membership.....	*vacant	
Monthly Programs/General Meetings.....	Arlys Reitan.....	WAS office 402-486-4846
Newsletter Editor	Arlys Reitan.....	WAS office 402-486-4846
Population/Environment	Mary King	402-570-3295
	*Patty Spitzer	402-525-9726
Publicity/Public Relations	Arlys Reitan.....	WAS office 402-486-4846
Donor Development	Elizabeth Nelson	402-770-3485

*Denotes Board member

OTHER ASSOCIATES

Bird Questions.....	Kevin Poague.....	402-797-2301
Facebook Coordinator	Benjamin Vogt	402-499-5851
Raptor Recovery.....	Betsy Finch (Elmwood)	402-994-2009
Executive Director Audubon Nebraska.....	*Kristal Stoner	402-797-2301
Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center Director.....	Meghan Sittler	402-797-2301
Webmaster	Roxanne Smith.....	402-477-1319
Wachiska Computer Issues/Questions	Linda Sullivan.....	402-580-8515
Bookkeeper	Nancy Hamer	402-499-1306

**Remember Wachiska
Audubon When
Shopping Online**

Every time you order from Amazon, please consider logging into smile.amazon.com. Make Wachiska Audubon Society your permanent designee for a 0.5 percent discount on whatever you purchase at no extra cost to you.

Wachiska Audubon Society's financial records are available for examination in the office.

A Gift to the Future

A bequest to Wachiska Audubon Society is a gift to future generations enabling our natural heritage to continue. For wills, trusts, and gifts, our legal name is **Wachiska Audubon Society**. Our Federal Tax ID number is **51-0229888**.

There are many ways to give, choose what's right for you!

What is the easiest way for you to give? Write a check. Or go to our website and donate using PayPal. Maybe you would like to give a little every month or leave a bequest in your will.



Anne Vidaver

A gold coin! One couple who are long-time members gave Wachiska a gold coin this fall! → What a unique gift! The coin was sold and the proceeds invested in the Prairie Management Fund. So generous!

← **IRA rollover.** Anne Vidaver, a Wachiska past president, chose to make a gift from her retirement account. She directed her financial adviser to work with the Lincoln Community Foundation and Anne directed a gift of appreciated stock to Wachiska, tax-free. When talking with Anne recently, she said to tell you "So many of us have money we can spare. Wachiska needs it *now* to preserve our prairies. Please make a gift!"

Automatic monthly donation. Another donor gives Wachiska \$25 a month, making a credit card donation directly into the Prairie Management Fund held at the Lincoln Community Foundation. This is easy to set up. See the yellow box for instructions. →

Beneficiary designation. Member Linda Brown asks us all to remember one of the easiest ways to give to Wachiska. "Simply designate Wachiska Audubon Society as a full or partial beneficiary on any bank or investment account," she advises. "It's super easy, can be changed at any time, and doesn't involve making any changes to your will."

Questions? Elizabeth Nelson, chair of Wachiska's Donor Development Committee, can advise you about the different ways to give or connect you with the professionals that support Wachiska at the Lincoln Community Foundation or the Nebraska Community Foundation. Email Elizabeth with any questions or to set up a phone meeting. eNelson555@gmail.com

Other ways to give: Current donations

- Memorials in the name of a loved one
- IRA Required Minimum Distributions
- Charitable IRA rollovers
- Stocks, bonds, or mutual funds

Donations from your estate

- Bequest – name Wachiska Audubon Society in your will or trust
- IRA or Life Insurance – name Wachiska Audubon Society as your beneficiary
- Life Estate with Remainder Interest
- Name Wachiska Audubon Society as beneficiary on any bank or investment account



"Many heartfelt thanks for your generous donations!"

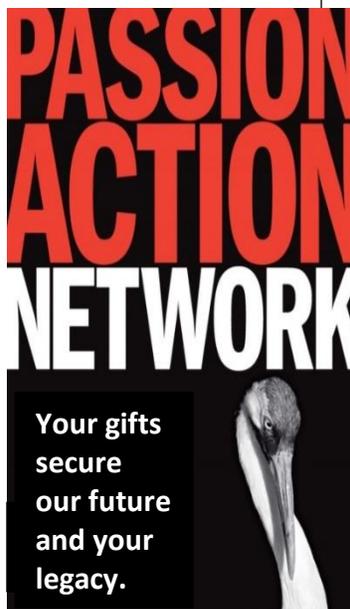
From the Wachiska Board of Directors, Conservation Committee, and all those who work so hard to make sure our precious prairies are preserved forever.

Donate monthly, quarterly, or one time using the Lincoln Community Foundation online donor portal

Go to LCF.ORG and click on DONATE. Go to 'Designation,' choose "Other LCF Fund," and enter **710146**, that is the account number for the Wachiska Audubon Prairie Management Fund.

Your donations are fully tax deductible as allowed by law

Wachiska was chartered in 1973 as an independent chapter of the National Audubon Society and is a qualified 501(c)(3) Charitable Organization, Federal TIN 51-0229888.



Your gifts secure our future and your legacy.

Our goal this month is to raise \$58,000

Use the enclosed reply envelope to mail your year-end donation or use PayPal or credit card online at

www.WachiskaAudubon.org

Please note *Prairie Preservation* on your donation.

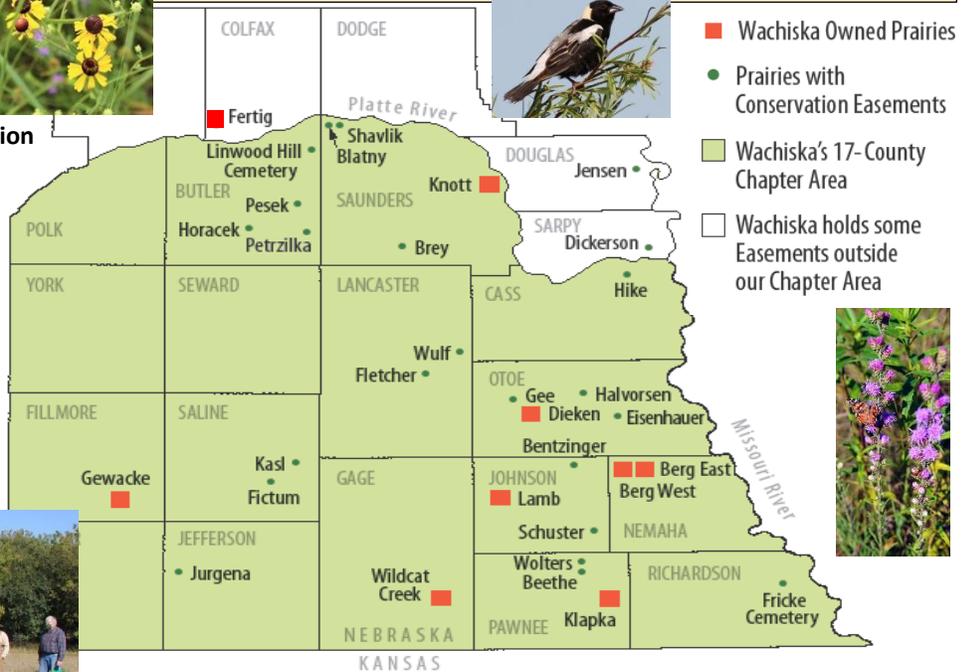
Three steps closer to hiring a Prairie Habitat Manager

In 2019 we outlined three steps we needed to complete in 2020, and we have accomplished them all! Huge congrats to the Wachiska Conservation Committee for 1) developing a three-year comprehensive Prairie Management Plan and budget, 2) creating a detailed Prairie Habitat Manager job description, and 3) identifying and applying for grants.

Four matching grants support our NET application

In September 2020, Wachiska applied for a \$183,000 three-year grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust. We will not know the results until April 2021, but in the process, we secured pledges for four additional matching grants – three from southeast Nebraska NRDs and one from Nebraska Game & Parks. This show of support from our local environmental organizations is much appreciated!

Wachiska Audubon Society
 4547 Calvert St. Suite 10
 Lincoln NE 68506-5643
 office@WachiskaAudubon.org
 www.WachiskaAudubon.org
 402-486-4846



← Volunteers at the October 2020 gayfeather seed harvesting fundraiser



Following is an excerpt from Wachiska's grant application to the Nebraska Environmental Trust

For Wachiska to continue to effectively maintain our prairies, a professional manager is needed to supplement volunteer efforts



For 30 years, Wachiska Audubon Society has worked to sustain endangered tallgrass prairies in 20 Nebraska counties, preserving crucial habitat for rare plant species, threatened birds, butterflies, bees, and insects, and provide important nesting and migration habitat. However, with increasing pressures on the prairies, we realize it is vital that we enhance our management process. Over the past year, Wachiska has developed a plan to professionalize our prairie management. This plan addresses how to fight the increasing impacts of invasive species, improve the quality and habitat of our prairies, and build stronger partnerships with prairie tenants, neighbors, and landowners.

Historically, Wachiska prairies have been managed solely by volunteers. However, several of our most knowledgeable, long-time volunteers are retiring and can no longer provide the hands-on expertise needed. To successfully implement our prairie management plan, Wachiska has determined we must hire a professional Prairie Habitat Manager while continuing our long history of extensive volunteer work and support.