National Museum of Forest Service History
Newsletter
Volume 22, Number 4 November 2010

The Origin of the National Grasslands

"Anybody can love the mountains, but it takes soul to love the prairie."
An Old Nebraska Sodbuster Saying

By Dave Pieper
Grassland Supervisor of the Dakota Prairie Grasslands, USDA Forest Service, Bismarck, ND.

Introduction

During a blizzard or prairie thunderstorm in Dakota Territory, or any other locale in America's Great Plains, it often takes more than a little "soul" to love the prairie. It takes perseverance and a certain resiliency coupled with an affinity of place understandable to few, unless you're part and parcel of the prairie culture. You seem to either love or hate it. There seems to be no in between.

The National Forest System's national grasslands came to the agency via a circuitous route. As the nation moved westward, the once public domain lands were opened to settlers and privatized, beginning with the first Homestead Act of 1862. The idea of free land and quick riches opened the human flood gate. In the 1920s and 30s, drought and crop failures quickly turned dreams to nightmares. The Great Depression exacerbated the intensifying natural disaster, adding to severe hardship, especially on the Plains. During the suffocating Dust Bowl days of the 1930s, more than 11 million acres of "submarginal land" were reacquired by the Federal government to stabilize both the economy and restore devastated lands. Eventually, more than five million acres were transferred to the Forest Service.

The national grasslands occupy a unique niche in our nation's history and development. Their value to the public is just beginning to be recognized. While livestock grazing continues to be an important use of the lands to maintain rangeland health and local economies, emphasis on recreational opportunities, habitat, cultural and paleontological resources, and minerals activities continue to grow. Grasslands provide habitat for a multitude of plant and animal species such as the endangered black-footed ferret, the threatened western prairie-fringed orchid, and numerous sensitive grasslands birds. Revenues from national grasslands minerals leases and development exceed every other source of revenue in the National Forest System.

Tallgrass Prairie
Sheyenne National Grassland, North Dakota
Forest Service Photograph by Bernadette Braun

Grassroots

The first formal American foray into the Plains region and beyond was commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson in 1804. The scientific expedition was lead by Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. The Corps of Discovery's goal was to get an accurate sense of the land and resources of the recently acquired Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and to learn more about the Pacific Northwest's natural resources. Although few maps existed at the time, a major accomplishment of the expedition was the production of the first accurate maps of lands traversed. The Corps would often rely on local anecdotal accounts and Indian guides, most notably a Shoshone Indian named Sacagawea. She served as an expedition guide and interpreter.

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National Museum of Forest Service History

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The *Newsletter* is published quarterly for the members and supporters of the National Museum of Forest Service History, a non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving the history of the U.S. Forest Service and conservation.

Membership Dues

Student	$15
Individual	$30
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Historian Panel Established

By Gray Reynolds

The Board of Directors of the National Museum of Forest Service History (NMFSH) during its October 2010 meeting approved the formation of a Panel of Historians.

The Directors believe it is important make every effort to strengthen our capability to meet our mission with unquestionable integrity, passion, and professionalism. Our objective is to tell the entire history of conservation and the U.S. Forest Service, not just one side of history.

The role of this panel would be to: 1) Review the historical themes and messages presented exhibits to ensure they present an accurate and balanced historical view; 2) Serve as a forum to discuss and review the history of the U.S. Forest Service from a professional perspective; 3) Identify potential projects or studies that might be appropriate for the NMFSH to undertake or support based on need to improve understanding of history of the U.S. Forest Service; and 4) Communicate with history professions and history organizations the work being done by the NMFSH at the National Conservation Legacy and Education Center.

Capital Campaign Update

The National Museum of Forest Service History is conducting a $12.7 million capital campaign to build the *National Conservation Legacy and Education Center*, support the Museum's traveling exhibit program and provide access via the internet to its collection of objects, papers and photographs that includes more than 40,000 artifacts and documents. This year, the Museum's leadership launched a major gifts drive to meet the benchmark goal of $9.6 million by the first quarter of 2011. This near-term goal is our trigger for breaking ground in 2011 in Missoula with plans to open the Center in the fall of 2012.

What has been donated?

To date the Museum's capital campaign has attracted the support of more than 730 individuals, corporations, foundations, nonprofit organizations and associations and the U.S. Forest Service. Thus far the Museum has attracted more than $3.8 million or 30 percent of the campaign goal. Recent leadership contributions and multi-year pledges from Intrawest Ski Area, Snowbird Ski and Summer Resort, Sierra Pacific Air Lines, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, National Ski Area Association, Forest Stewardship Concepts, Special Operations, Safe Fire, Waterous and an estate gift from Morton J. Lauridsen estate illustrate the broad array of interest in the development of the Center.

What donations are pending?

Senator Max Baucus currently lists the Museum's $4.5 million federal appropriations request as a FY11 priority on his web site. This appropriation's request will be considered by the Congress as they complete the funding bills associated with the current fiscal year. This summer, the Museum's federal appropriation request garnered the support of 23 sporting and conservation groups who are members of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners, including the National Association of Forest Service Retirees. The Museum has received more than 50 letters of support from nonprofit organizations and professional associations in support of the capital campaign.

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The Corps would ply the Missouri River system to its headwaters and then press on overland to the Pacific Ocean to learn more of the human activities and resources of the Northwest. A few hunters and trappers, along with indigenous Native American Indian tribes occupied the prairie and mountainous region. Spanish missionaries promoted small settlements along Pacific coastal regions. The expedition endured significant logistical and medical challenges along the way. Without the hospitality of Native American occupants and their offers of food and shelter, the expedition might have perished or most certainly stalled. Of the three dozen tribes the expedition encountered, most relations were friendly and productive. Gifts were exchanged and trade and friendships developed. Wildlife was abundant on the Plains and provided ample meat for the travelers. Sacagawea collected edible roots that balanced diets and the Mandan Tribe provided corn, strains of which are still in production today.

The Louisiana Purchase encouraged westward expansion across the Mississippi by the belief in Manifest Destiny, by which the Nation would expand east to west, reaching the Pacific after the conquest of Mexico in 1848.

Homesteading

The "yeoman farmer" was a powerful ideal in American political history, and plans for expanding the freeman's small landed estate through a homestead act were rooted in the 1850s. The first Homestead Act was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on May 20, 1862. It gave an applicant title to up to 160 acres of undeveloped Federal land outside the original thirteen colonies. The law required three steps: file an application, improve the land, and file for deed of title.

Between 1862 and 1934, 1.6 million homesteads were granted and 270 million acres of Federal land were privatized. Much of the more productive low-lying alluvial land along rivers had been patented (conveyed to an individual or private company) by the turn of the twentieth century. To further accommodate the disposition of land thought to be suitable for dryland farming, an Enlarged Homestead Act was passed in 1909, increasing the number of acres to 320. In 1916, the Stock-Raising Homestead Act targeted sellers seeking 640 acres of public land for ranching purposes. Except for Alaska, homesteading ended in 1976 with the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. Federal policy then became that the best use of public lands was for them to remain in government control.

The railroad industry was an enabled and willing partner in the development of the West. Federal land grants stimulated entrepreneurship and development. The railroads needed people and commerce to support the push into the Great American Desert. Free land had to be made real and palpable for settlers to come. Writers and illustrators embellished the barren landscape with flowery details and visions of free, rich farmland, causing readers to cash in their life savings for a slice of agrarian heaven and the promise of great riches.

However, poorly formulated Federal land disposal policy resulted in much human hardship and significant land degradation throughout the Plains. Thousands of farm families had been encouraged to move onto the vast prairieland after 1900 through liberalized homestead laws. Much of the land was considered marginal and never should have been brought under the plow. Native Americans were displaced from treaty lands; fraud and abuse was prevalent. The land rush got a second wind.

Although today's 20 national grasslands, comprising 3.8 million acres, were not officially designated as the National Grasslands until 1960, the events leading to their origin can

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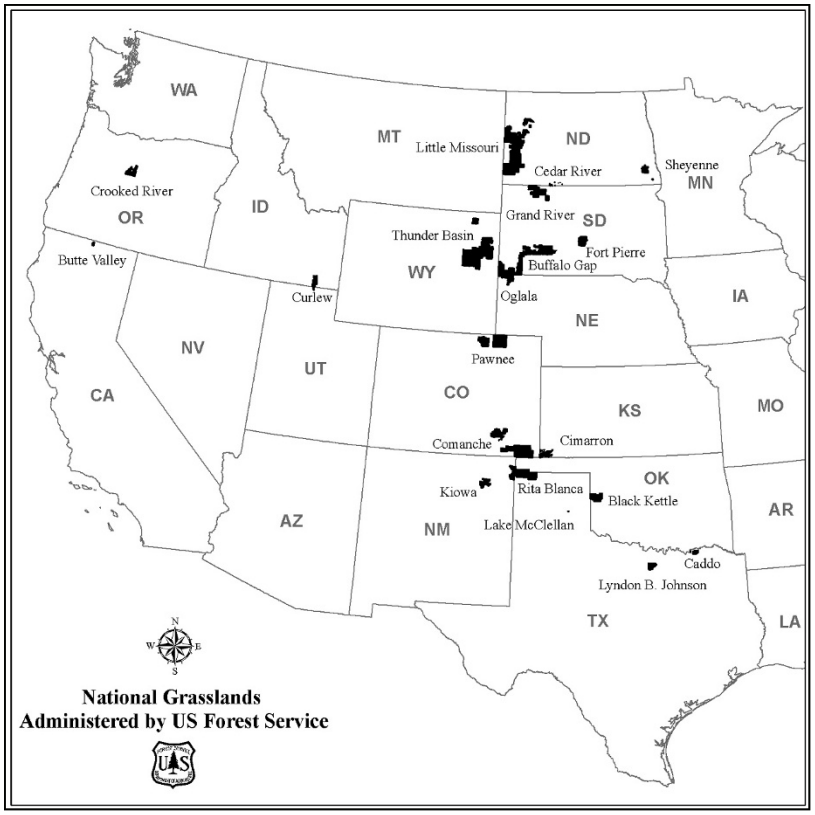

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Prairie Smoke
Sheyenne National Grassland, North Dakota
Forest Service Photograph by Dr. David Lambeth

Woody Draw
Grand River National Grassland, South Dakota
Forest Service Photograph

generally be traced back to the early 1860s. A growing country, rooted in an agrarian culture and tradition, sought expansion and wealth by moving west to the much ballyhooed plain. In his book titled "The Great Valleys and Prairies of Nebraska and the Northwest (1881)", Charles Dana Wilber, an amateur scientist, claimed that as farmers migrated westward, "rain will follow the plow." The land would become more bountiful and productive. History has shown otherwise. The Great Plains dust storms of the thirties became stark testimony of the federal government's ill-conceived and poorly implemented land policies. The "Dirty Thirties" coupled with severe economic hardship, wrought untold havoc and human suffering.

Reacquisition

Beginning in the 1930s, the Federal government launched a large scale "land utilization program" – the LUP – to respond to many agricultural problems confronting the country. The LUP began as a submarginal land purchase and development program but eventually expanded into a program designed to transfer land to its most suitable use. Numerous events, beginning in the 1920s, culminated with the enactment of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act (BJFTA) of 1937.

The Act has been amended several times by Congress since 1937. Section 31 of Title III reads today as follows:

> *The Secretary (of Agriculture) is authorized and directed to develop a program of land conservation and land utilization, in order thereby to correct maladjustments in land use, and thus assist in controlling soil erosion, reforestation, preserving natural resources, protecting fish and wildlife, developing and protecting recreational facilities, mitigating floods, preventing impairment of dams and reservoirs, developing energy resources, conserving surface and subsurface moisture, protecting the watersheds of navigable streams, and protecting the public lands, health, safety, and welfare, but not to build industrial parks or establish private industrial or commercial enterprises.*

The total cost of the 11.3 million acres of land acquired for the LUP under the BJFTA and other authorities amounted to $47,500,000, or roughly $4.40 per acre. Until it found a home in the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in 1938, the LUP bounced around five different agencies in its first four years of existence.

Much of the LUP land was transferred or sold, principally to other Federal agencies. Of the 11.3 million acres in the LUP, approximately 5.8 million acres were gradually transferred to the Department of Interior to be administered by the National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fish and Wildlife Service, or Bureau of land Management. Approximately 5.5 million acres were retained within the Department of Agriculture.

Forest Service Administration

In 1954, the Secretary transferred the responsibility for administering the LUP from the SCS to the Forest Service. Approximately 1.5 million acres of the LUP land in the South and East wound up being incorporated into new or existing National Forests. The remaining 3.8 million acres of LUP, located primarily in the Great Plains, became today's National Grasslands. California, Oregon and Idaho all have relatively small National Grassland units.

In 1974, Congress enacted the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA). Of particular

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In addition to the pending federal funding request, the Museum's leadership has pending grant applications with the State of Montana, foundations, corporations, nonprofits and individuals totaling more than $1.4 million. The Museum's outreach has also lead to invitations to submit grant applications to family foundations and corporations this fall that total more than $300,000.

The Museum's leadership now has $6.2 million in pending and invited funding requests that will be acted upon this fall and early in the 2011. These new partnership have the potential to bring the capital campaign total to more than $10 million or nearly 80 percent of our campaign goal. Importantly, the majority of these requests require matching funds and the demonstration of individual support for the Center.

General areas in which Board is working

Our leadership is currently reaching out to members of the Energy, Minerals, Ski Areas, Fire and Aviation, Forest and Railroad industries. We are also requesting support from sportsmen conservation groups and family foundations. And we are exploring grant opportunities with the National Endowment for the Humanities and state funding related to economic development.

New activities

We have also worked to develop strong partnerships at the state and community level. We currently have an invited proposal pending with the Montana Department of Tourism and have maintained strong relationships with the City of Missoula, Missoula County, Missoula International Airport and Missoula Convention and Visitors Bureau. This year, we joined the Missoula Downtown Association and made a well-received presentation regarding the Center and campaign at their August meeting. Likewise, we have been invited to make a presentation to the Montana Economic Development Corporation this fall and are working with the Missoula Area Economic Development Corporation on a proposal to be presented to the Big Sky Trust Fund.

Dedication of the Campaign Committee Members

The Campaign Committee is devoting tremendous energy into the campaign. Contacts are being made. The committee is optimistic. We are working with the 2012 Forest Service Retirees Reunion Committee to plan a special event in Colorado.

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significance for National Grasslands was the definition of "National Forest System." In Section 11(a) of the RPA Congress declared:

> *"The National Forest System shall include all National Forest lands reserved or withdrawn from the public domain of the United States, all National Forest lands acquired through purchase, exchange, donation, or other means, the National Grasslands and land utilization projects administered under Title III of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act, and other lands, waters, or interests therein which are administered by the Forest Service or are designated for administration through the Forest Service as part of system…"*

Furthermore, Federal regulations require that *"The National Grasslands shall be administered under sound and progressive principles of land conservation and multiple use… "*

It is important to understand that the National Grasslands are an integral part of the System and administered and managed under the agency's multiple use mission. Although Title III of the BJFTA does not explicitly state multiple use per se, it is implied. Congress' RPA declaration and other applicable laws and regulations further emphasize the multiple uses of National Grassland management.

The story of the National Grasslands is just beginning to unfold. The grasslands are often islands of grass juxtaposed within seas of intensely managed landscapes. As ecosystem services of native prairie become increasingly important, greater emphasis will be given to habitat needs of dependent species. The largest remnant of tall grass prairie, arguably the most endangered ecosystem in North America, is located on the National Grasslands in eastern North Dakota and has significant and challenging restoration needs. Noxious weeds and non-native cool season grasses dominate the landscape, choking out desirable species such as big and little blue stem and western wheatgrass.

Grasslands located near larger urban centers are experiencing more and varied recreational use. Hiking, wildlife viewing, dinosaur digs, archeological investigations, and trail biking are becoming increasingly popular. World class Indian rock art and remnants of early settlements can be found on many of these public lands. The national grasslands beckon. They are waiting to be discovered...by you.

Capital Campaign Donations

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New Life Members

Air Tractor, Leland Snow
Aspen Skiing Company, Matt Hamilton
National Ski Areas Assoc., Michael Berry
The Pack Shack, Karen Beddow
Waterous Company, Kelly Holmes

Happy 100th Birthday

Harry W. Camp

Retired Pacific Southwest Experiment Station

John Deere 'Model A' Up and Running!

Volunteers Ed Kuehne, retired R1 Equipment Specialist, and Tom Stockdale, retired R1 Equipment Manager, recently worked together to cleaned-up the Museum collection's John Deere tractor, perform the necessary service and repairs and get the vehicle into fine running condition.

The tractor is a 1943, 2 cylinder gas engine, 29 horse-power. The original home for the 'Model A' was the Nine Mile Remount Station, Lolo National Forest. The tractor was used to put up hay for the horses and mules. The John Deere Company started producing the 'Model A' in 1934.

Volunteers Ed Kuehne and Tom Stockdale
October 2010

Some interesting facts about this tractor:

- Built during World War II; rubber was hard to obtain and the tractor was made with steel wheels. High gear was left out. Rubber tires were added later after the war.
- The tractor has two fuel tanks. The small one was for gasoline and for starting the engine. The large tank was for distillate, a much cheaper form of fuel.
- Fenders were an option and most people purchasing these could not afford or justify the extra expense. This tractor does have fenders and Ed spent quality time making them just like new.
- An electric starter motor and working lights were options on the John Deere tractor during these production times. This tractor has both of these features.

See a short video clip of the tractor: http://www.nmfs-history.net/collection/featured.html

Volunteers Carving Ranger Statue

Imagine a 8-foot tall Ranger dressed in 1920s field clothes scanning the horizon for fires. This larger-than-life Ranger is wearing a Smokey Bear hat and carrying binoculars and a map case. The Ranger will stand in the lobby by the theater entrance of the new National Conservation and Education Center in Missoula, Montana. Jerry Covault, a Forest Service retiree, carved a miniature model, approximately one foot tall, for the Missoula Support Committee to approve.

A group of volunteer carvers are hard at work to bring the statue to life. Jerry Covault, Chuck Ka-parich, Alex McDonald, Steve Weiler and Phil Bain meet every Thursday in Kaparich's garage. Basswood is the wood of choice for this work. This group has im-pressive credentials – they also carved the famous carousel horses at Caras Park in Missoula.

Jerry Covault Carving the Ranger's Boot
November 2010

Ranger Model

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Contributing	**$150 or more**		

Reunion 2012

Reserve the dates, September 17—21, 2012 now for the Rendezvous in the Rockies. The 2012 Reunion will be at the Vail Mountain Marriott Resort and Spa, Vail, Colorado.

Address Labels

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