

THE NATIONAL GRASSLANDS VISITOR CENTER

798 Main St., P.O. Box 425
Wall, South Dakota 57790
(605) 279-2125



www.fs.fed.us/grasslands

Open seven days a week
Memorial Day to Labor Day 7:00 am - 8:00 pm
Off season 8:00 am - 4:30 pm



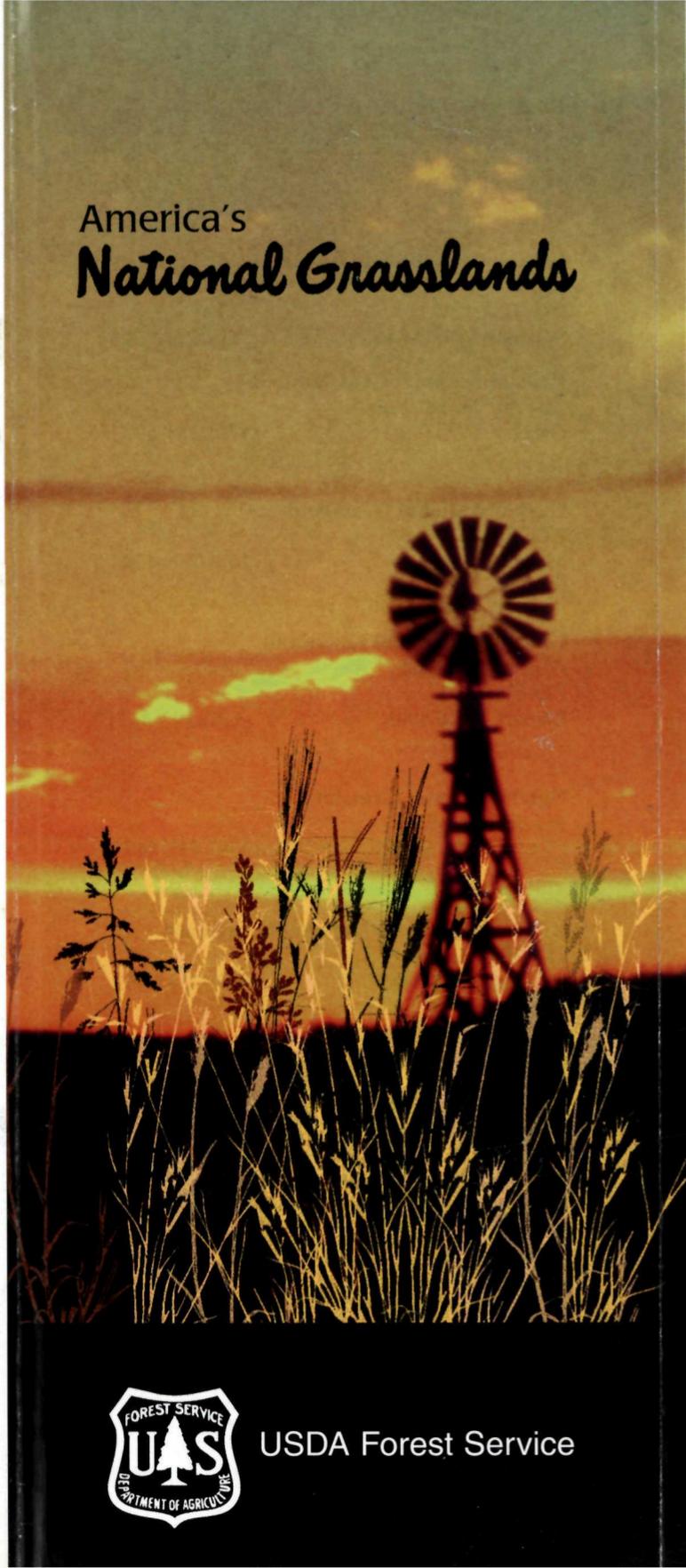
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September 1999



America's National Grasslands



USDA Forest Service

Flowing east of the Rocky Mountains, from the badlands of North Dakota to north-central Texas, spilling into the Great Plains, are 17 National Grasslands. West of the Rockies, in the Great Basin states of Oregon, California and Idaho, are three more National Grassland expanses. These wind swept seas of grass and wildflowers have witnessed the pageant of the frontier, the Dust Bowl and reclamation of 20 publicly owned National Grasslands totaling almost four million acres administered by the USDA Forest Service.



The grass seemed eternal, teeming with abundant buffalo herds, elk and other wildlife. It was also home to many tribes including: Sitting Bull's Hunkpapa Sioux, Apache, Arapaho,

Arikara, Assiniboine, Atsina, Bannock, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Chippewa, Ojibwa, Bungi, Comanche, Cree, Crow, Hidsata, Kiowa, Klamath, Kootnei, Mandan, Metis, Modoc, Pawnee, Santee, Shasta, Shoshone, Teton, Wichita, Yankton and Yanktonia. The United States acquired most of the Great Plains and Great Basin from France with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Until the late 1860s, the Great Plains region was perhaps America's last frontier.

The Homestead Act of 1862 brought almost six million settlers by 1890 who tried to replace grass with crops more beneficial to economic aspirations. The settlers soon discovered, however, that while these vast grasslands were productive in wet years, they were also subject to serious drought and bitter winters. Land that should never have been plowed yielded its topsoil to incessant dry winds. Above parts of Oklahoma, Texas,

Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado and the Dakotas, dust clouds rose to over 20,000 feet. Ten-foot drifts of fine soil particles piled up like snow in a blizzard, burying fences and closing roads.

During the same time, bison were largely eliminated by westward expansion. Ranchers filled the large open ranges of the plains and the Great Basin with cattle and sheep. Soldiers, prospectors, railroad builders and a host of others seeking the west helped push back the last frontier as they crossed and settled these lands.

By the early 1930s, the broad midsection of America was in trouble. Not only because of the Dust Bowls, but the Great Depression was reaching its economic depths. Emergency measures were taken to save the farmers and settlers. The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 and the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act of 1935 allowed the federal government to purchase and restore damaged lands and to resettle destitute families.

From these disastrous days, a hundred years after the Homestead Act on June 23, 1960, the National Grasslands were born. Grass is the key to maintaining the productivity of these areas. Remove it, and the soil blows away. When rain falls, the barren ground can't absorb water and it runs off quickly carrying silt into streams and ponds. These grasslands must be used wisely for the benefit of the land and its inhabitants.

Our nation's 20 National Grasslands are an outstanding conservation success story. They are examples of progressive agriculture in arid grass country. Revegetated to provide for soil and water conservation, these intermingled public and private lands are managed to complement each other and to conserve the natural resources of grass, water and wildlife habitat.

Clean water flows off restored watersheds to be used miles downstream. Wildlife, including many declining, threatened or endangered species, thrives in reborn habitats. And, under a nurturing shield of vegetation, once wounded soil rebuilds its fertility. Water developments have provided additional wetland resources to benefit livestock operations, wildlife and recreation.

Private farmlands within the National Grassland boundaries add diversity to the prairie habitat. The presence of prairie dog colonies creates habitat favorable for such wildlife as burrowing owls, which use the abandoned burrows. The rare black-footed ferret preys on the prairie dogs and use their burrows, as well. Rattlesnakes are the only poisonous snakes found in the grassland; they are seldom seen during the heat of the day.

National Grasslands are rich in mineral, oil and gas resources. They also provide diverse recreational uses, such as mountain biking, hiking, hunting, fishing, photography, birding and sightseeing. Fossils, prehistoric and historic resources, as well as many cultural sites are being discovered. The National Grasslands are being managed to protect these important legacy resources.

The National Grasslands are important lands managed for sustainable multiple uses as part of the National Forest System. They have made important contributions to conserving grassland ecosystems while producing a variety of goods and services which, in turn, have helped to maintain rural economies and lifestyles.



"As I looked about me I felt that the grass was the country, as the water is the sea. ... And, there was so much motion in it; the whole country seemed, somehow to be running."

Willa Cather, *My Antonia*

Intriguing Facts about the National Grasslands

- The **Little Missouri National Grassland** in North Dakota is the biggest, with 1,028,051 acres and home to the 100-mile Maah Daah Hey multiple-use trail.
- Offering the same activities, just below in South Dakota, is the **Grand River National Grassland**. During the autumn hunting season, deer, antelope, grouse and water fowl are favorite game.
- The **Sheyenne National Grassland** is one of the few remnants of tall grass prairie remaining in public ownership.
- Located in southwest South Dakota, the **Buffalo Gap National Grassland** was inhabited millions of years ago by a collection of both marine and terrestrial wildlife which are evidenced today only by their fossilized remains.
- The **Ft. Pierre National Grassland** in South Dakota gets the most rainfall of all the grasslands—18 inches per year on average.
- The largest coal producing mine in the world is on the **Thunder Basin National Grassland** in Wyoming.
- The **Oglala National Grassland**, encompassing 94,400 acres of land in the Nebraska panhandle, has a diverse landscape including badlands and toadstool formations.
- The **Comanche National Grassland** has approximately 275 different species of birds and one of the longest dinosaur track-ways in the world.
- Part of the route of the Santa Fe Historic Trail runs through the **Cimarron National Grassland** and is the only land administered by the USDA Forest Service in the state of Kansas.
- The smallest National Grassland is **McClellan Creek** in Texas with 1,449 acres.
- The **Black Kettle National Grassland** is just across the border in Oklahoma, offering five lakes and 670 acres of warm water fishing.
- The **Caddo National Grassland** in Texas, as well as the **LBJ National Grassland**, provide forage for cattle on 3,050 acres of improved pasture and 19,600 acres of native pasture.
- The Caddo and southwestern portion of **LBJ National Grasslands** in Texas are within a four-hour drive of four million people.
- Wildlife on the **Rita Blanca National Grassland**, which

includes 77,463 acres in Texas and 15,860 acres in Oklahoma, varies as much as does the climate over the wide expanse of country.

- The **Curlew National Grassland** near Malad, Idaho, is known for its upland game birds.
- The **Kiowa National Grassland** includes part of the Canadian River canyon west of Mills, New Mexico, a rugged 900-foot-deep canyon forms a wildlife habitat island in the prairie for mule deer, bear, Barbary sheep, ducks and geese, and provides warm water fishing.
- The **Crooked River National Grassland** near Madras, Oregon, is characterized by bunchgrass, sagebrush and western juniper plant associations. The Crooked River National Grassland is the home of the National Champion (largest) Big Sagebrush.

The National Grasslands



- The 18,756-acre **Butte Valley National Grassland** in northern California near the Oregon border, is a part of a study about the declining Swainson's Hawks in California.
- The Pawnee Buttes in the **Pawnee National Grassland** in Colorado is a unique landmark made up of sedimentary rock formations, one-half mile apart rising 350 feet above the plains to an elevation of 5,375 feet.

California

Butte Valley National Grassland
Goosenest Ranger District
37805 Hwy 97
Madoel, CA 96058 (530) 398-4391

Colorado

Comanche National Grassland
27204 Hwy 287
P.O. Box 127
Springfield, CO 81073 (719) 523-6591

Pawnee National Grassland
660 "O" Street
Greeley, CO 80631 (970) 353-5004

Idaho

Curlew National Grassland
P.O. Box 146
Malad, ID 83252 (208) 766-4743

Kansas

Cimarron National Grassland
242 Hwy 56 East
P.O. Box 300
Elkhart, KS 67950 (316) 697-4621

Nebraska

Oglala National Grassland
16524 Hwy 385
Chadron, NE 69337 (308) 432-4475

New Mexico

Kiowa/Rita Blanca National Grasslands
714 Main Street
Clayton, NM 88415 (505) 374-9652

North Dakota

Cedar River National Grassland
1005 5th Avenue West
P.O. Box 390
Lemmon, SD 57638 (605) 374-3592

Little Missouri National Grassland
Medora Ranger District
161 21st St. West
Dickinson, ND 58601 (701) 225-5151

Little Missouri National Grassland
McKenzie Ranger District
HC02 Box 8
Watford City, ND 58854 (701) 842-2393

Sheyenne National Grassland
P.O. Box 946
Lisbon, ND 58054 (701) 683-4342

Oklahoma

Black Kettle National Grassland
Route 1 Box 55B
Cheyenne, OK 73628 (580) 497-2143

McClellan Creek National Grassland
Route 1 Box 55B
Cheyenne, OK 73628 (580) 497-2143

Rita Blanca National Grassland
714 Main Street
Clayton, NM 88415 (505) 374-9652

Oregon

Crooked River National Grassland
813 SW Hwy 97
Madras, OR 97741 (541) 416-6640

South Dakota

Buffalo Gap National Grassland
Fall River Ranger District
209 N. River
Hot Springs, SD 57747 (605) 745-4107

Buffalo Gap National Grassland
Wall Ranger District
708 Main Street
P.O. Box 425
Wall, SD 57790 (605) 279-2125

Fort Pierre National Grassland
124 South Euclid Avenue
P.O. Box 417
Pierre, SD 57501 (605) 224-5517

Grand River National Grassland
1005 5th Avenue West
P.O. Box 390
Lemmon, SD 57638 (605) 374-3592

Texas

Caddo National Grassland
1400 N. U.S. 81/287 Hwy.
P.O. Box 507
Decatur, TX 76234 (940) 627-5475

Lyndon B. Johnson National Grassland
1400 N. U.S. 81/287 Hwy.
P.O. Box 507
Decatur, TX 76234 (940) 627-5475

McClellan Creek National Grassland
Route 1 Box 55B
Cheyenne, OK 73628 (580) 497-2143

Wyoming

Thunder Basin National Grassland
2250 East Richards
Douglas, WY 82633 (307) 358-4690