

THE PROPOSED PRAIRIE NATIONAL PARK: A CASE STUDY
OF THE CONTROVERSIAL NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

by 6791

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INTRODUCTION

On June 9, 1960 Kansas Senators Andrew Schoeppel and Frank Carlson and Kansas Representative William Avery simultaneously introduced into their respective chambers identical bills to establish a Prairie National Park in Pottawatomie County, Kansas. This legislative action marked the beginning of the end of the long-standing dream to preserve a segment of America's grasslands as a national park. In the three years following 1961, surveys were made, legal battles were waged, money was appropriated, and hearings were held but on September 10, 1963 in what Kansas Senator James Pearson called a "severe blow," the Public Lands Committee of the United States Senate tabled the Prairie National Park bill and the House of Representatives, following the Senate lead, let the measure die without granting the bill a committee hearing. Since that day only token attempts, spurred on by the recent interest in ecology and pollution, have been made to reopen this controversy and push through the creation of a Prairie National Park.

Although a grasslands park may never become a reality the essential ingredients of this land policy conflict are still very much alive, as they also were many years prior to the first proposals for a Prairie National Park. This is evidenced by the fact that at every other location where a national park has been proposed, a bitter battle has been waged regarding the best use

to which land can be put. Such was pointed out in 1945 when an editorial in the Capital Journal of Salem, Oregon, stated:

The creation of every national park and monument has met with violent opposition unless the area was without other than tourist, recreational, and scenic value.

Consequently the problems surrounding the creation of a grassland park go deeper than the personal antagonisms of the Pottawatomie County, Flint Hills region and must be seen as another example of the conflicts, some successful, others not, that have been waged by the controversial National Park Service. With this in mind, one can view the controversial Prairie National Park proposal as not only an individual struggle but also in terms of a patterned confrontation between the land use philosophy of the National Park Service and the many other Federal agencies that are concerned about land use.

From the time of its inception as a branch of the Department of the Interior in 1916, and even before, when national parks existed in name only, the National Park Service has been a controversial segment of America's land use policy. Its very purpose hints at the kind of problems that might be encountered. The National Park Service mandate as written in 1916, states that the primary goal shall be:

to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.¹

Economically it can be seen that such a land use philosophy grates at the ideals of American society and democracy as they have been formulated through the years. Cherished dreams of many Americans concern the opportunity presented in the United States for private ownership and free enterprise. After all, the Jeffersonian dream of land use was to establish a policy of free holders, private ownership, and no contracts of obligation to any institutions.² With a historical land policy, based on the idea of the natural and moral right to acquire and hold all the property one's ability can earn, has come the equally American ideal of economically using one's resources to materially develop his holdings to their fullest capacity.

Various authors are quick to point this out. W. Brooke Graves in American Intergovernmental Relations notes that "the financial nerve is the most sensitive one in the whole human organism," while the Resources for the Future Report of 1953 says

¹Conrad Wirth, "Threats to Our National Parks," Audubon Magazine, Vol. 56 (July, 1954), p. 174.

²John M. Brewster, "The Relevance of the Jeffersonian Dream Today," in Land Use Policy and Problems in the United States, ed. by Howard W. Ottoson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), p. 86.

that the "most important use of land is in the producing of food and fiber we need to sustain us."³ Uniting these themes, John Brewster in "The Relevance of the Jeffersonian Dream" states that the underlying theme of American land use policy is the emphasis on economic and material rewards in the directive of land policy at the expense of larger humanitarian or idealistic implications.⁴

Looking at the history of American land use policy, one can easily point these contentions out. The land laws of the West (including Pre-emption, Homestead, Timber Culture, Desert Land, and others) were to distribute the public domain to individual persons bent on economically bettering their subsistence. During the Theodore Roosevelt era the Reclamation Act, the Petroleum, and the Bureau of Mines programs served to distribute more land to be used for economic exploitation. One could go on. During the New Deal the emphasis on land planning was to economically put it to its best use through such programs as the Tennessee Valley Authority, Civilian Conservation Corps, Agricultural Adjustment Act, and Soil Conservation Service. Even at the present, land management institutions such as the Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of

³W. Brooke Graves, American Intergovernmental Relations (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 104; Report of the Mid-Century Conference on Resources for the Future, The Nation Looks at its Resources (Washington: Resources for the Future, 1954), p. 61.

⁴Brewster, p. 91.

Engineers, Federal Power Commission, Forestry Service, and Bureau of Land Management suggest by their very titles the fact that a major concern in the United States is how and by what means lands can be put to their greatest economic use.

In a similar vein the ideas concerning conservation also fit this theory. In the latter part of the nineteenth century a dualism of conservation developed which has continued to the present. On the one hand grew the ecological school of conservation which included mostly naturalists, whose major concern was preservation for beauty's sake, while on the other developed the conservation school of "maximum efficiency," a group headed by Gifford Pinchot that were often referred to as the economic or technological conservationists.⁵ As land use programs in America would indicate, conservation for maximum efficiency has for the most part won out over the conservation for preservation contingent. Perhaps this can be in part explained by the application Frederick Jackson Turner gave to conservation when he discussed it in terms of its relation to an environmentally created man with strong individualistic traits who resented senseless controls.⁶

⁵Harold M. Rose, "Conservation in the United States," in Conservation of Natural Resources, ed. by Guy Harold Smith (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1950), p. 4.

⁶Ibid., p. 5.

With such thoughts in mind it is easy to see the incongruity of the National Park Service's ideals to the land use policy of the United States. It offers not free enterprise or private development but government dictation and government control. It is not materialistically or economically oriented to the desires of individuals, but instead talks in terms of aesthetic values for the public and its posterity. Finally, it offers not conservation for use and development but instead conservation for unimpairment and preservation.

Consequently, the controversy surrounding the Prairie National Park proposal was not simply a local bitter struggle between those that advocated a grasslands park in Kansas and those that opposed. Also involved was an entire philosophy of land use and management that has as a result of its incongruity, been very controversial. Therefore, to study the proposal and defeat of the Prairie National Park idea, a study needs to be made not only of the particulars of this individual controversy, but of its relation to the all inclusive stormy history of the National Park Service and its incongruities as a part of the land use policy of the United States.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The Freedom of wild lands and their grandeur are interwoven in our history--and have strongly influenced the shaping of our national character. Wilderness is irreplaceable and must not all be lost.

--anonymous

The National Park Idea

Though the National Park Service was not created until 1916, the origin of its ideals goes back to 1832 when Hot Springs National Reservation was set aside by the Federal government to preserve what was thought to be a valuable water supply for the treatment of certain ailments.¹ In 1864 the national park idea was given a further boost when President Abraham Lincoln signed an act transferring Yosemite Valley to the state of California "for public use, resort and recreation."² Its fullest recognition, however, did not come until 1872 when President U. S. Grant signed a bill for the creation of Yellowstone National Park as a

¹John Ise, Our National Park Policy - A Critical History (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1961), p. 13.

²Stewart Udall, The National Parks of America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 9.

"public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people."³ By this act, Congress spelled out for the first time a new public land policy, one dedicated to the purpose of setting aside the scenic masterpieces of the public domain; not for material gain or desired riches but for the enjoyment and benefit of all Americans.

As America's first national park, it is perhaps ironic that Yellowstone should be beset by troubles from the beginning. Tourists proved no real problem as the nearest railroad was five hundred miles away, but with no Congressional appropriations the administrators were hard pressed to prevent poaching which was carried out by the resentful persons who felt that setting aside this tract of land was curbing their personal liberties.⁴ The poacher's depravation reached such a high point that in 1886 the Secretary of the Interior found it necessary to ask the Secretary of War for troops to guard the park.⁵ Finally in 1894 Congress passed a formal code of laws defining offenses and penalties in America's national parks.⁶

³A. C. McIntosh, "Who Owns Yellowstone Park," American Mercury, Vol. 37 (April, 1936), p. 493.

⁴Ise, p. 20.

⁵Robert Shankland, Steve Mather of the National Parks (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), p. 44.

⁶Ibid., pp. 44-45.

These laws served as a model for all subsequent national parks.

Other resource areas were soon to follow Yellowstone National Park as federal preserves; but as was often the case, they were thought more of as forest reserves set aside for eventual use than as national parks to be established and maintained for the enjoyment of future generations. In 1890, acts of Congress created the Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks, but in neither case was the term "park" explicitly used in the Congressional bill.⁷ As was the case in Yellowstone, finances and poaching were major problems faced by these parks' early administrations. In rapid succession other areas of the public domain were set aside including the following: Mount Rainier, 1899; Crater Lake, 1902; Wind Cave, 1903; Platt Park, 1904; Sullys Hill, 1904; and Mesa Verde, 1906.

The Hetch Hetchy Controversy

Drawing the lines for further battle the first major confrontation between a localized economic interest and those concerned with preservation was to take place in the scenic wilderness of the Yosemite National Park. This tract of land known as the Hetch Hetchy Valley had for some years been eyed desirously as the answer to San Francisco's city water supply.

⁷Jenks Cameron, The National Park Service (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1922), p. 29.

Following a United States Geological Survey, Congress in 1901 entered the picture proclaiming that revocable rights in public lands might be granted for water supply works as long as they were in the public interest.⁸ By this Right of Way Act, San Francisco rejected other possibilities and secured the rights to the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park. It was not that other locations were entirely impractical. Other areas surveyed exhibited high potential, but the major argument used by San Francisco was that the cost would be too high, especially if there were Federal lands close by and free for the taking.

The controversy kicked off in full force in 1901 when Mayor James Phelan of San Francisco hired an engineering firm to make surveys but found his claim files rebuffed by Secretary of the Interior E. A. Hitchcock who avowed that Yosemite had been created to preserve its curiosities and wonders in "their natural condition."⁹ Stunned but not stopped, Phelan and his city government appealed to President Roosevelt and his Chief Forester, Gifford Pinchot, to join the enterprise and pledge their assistance to securing the creation of Hetch Hetchy reservoir.¹⁰ Pinchot, no

⁸"Scenery as a National Asset, "The Outlook," Vol. 25 (May 28, 1910), p. 166.

⁹Ise, p. 86.

¹⁰Ibid.; Shankland, p. 48.

friend of the national parks because of his practical rather than aesthetic conservationist policies, entered the battle stating it was his "hope that in the regeneration of San Francisco its people may be able to make provision for a water supply from Yosemite National Park."¹¹

With Secretary of the Interior Hitchcock strongly against such a permit, Phelan and his associates could only wait for a new administration. This was obtained in 1907 when James R. Garfield, son of the former President and a man of questionable conservation convictions, accepted his appointment and proved he was Phelan's man.¹² Noting that a national park was only for the preservation of land until it could be put to good use, Garfield in 1908 issued a permit for the transfer of Hetch Hetchy to San Francisco to alleviate their "inadequate" and "unsatisfactory" water supply.¹³

With bills and resolutions pouring into Congress, Interior Department support, and a six to one referendum vote by the city of San Francisco for the acquisition of Hetch Hetchy, it appeared

¹¹Shankland, p. 48.

¹²Ise, p. 88.

¹³George Edwards, "Hetch Hetchy," The Nation, Vol. 89 (October 28, 1909), p. 404.

a futile measure to stop.¹⁴ Opposition, though, was not to give up without a fight. Headed by the famous conservationist, John Muir, and his Sierra Club, those opposing the "rape of Hetch Hetchy" solicited the aid of Century Magazine, the American Civic Association, and Frederick Law Olmsted, even going so far as to form an unlikely union with the private utility companies which hoped in their own way to develop the power of this area. In 1909 those opposing the San Francisco development plan received another boost with the appointment by President Taft of Richard Ballinger as Secretary of the Interior. Ballinger visited the area, had a study made by the Geological Survey, and issued a citation to the city and county of San Francisco asking them to prove why the Hetch Hetchy Valley should not be eliminated as a dam site in favor of its continuation as a national park.¹⁵

It was during the Ballinger administration, though, that the supporters of the dam began to make positive headway. Unfortunately for the park, Ballinger asked the Secretary of War to detail a board of engineers to study the problem; and although their report indicated other adequate areas for a San Francisco water supply, they estimated that Hetch Hetchy would be the most

¹⁴John Muir, "The Endangered Valley," The Century Magazine, Vol. 55 (January, 1909), p. 464.

¹⁵"Ignorant Vandalism," The Independent, Vol. 69 (July 28, 1910), p. 201.

feasible and would probably be twenty million dollars cheaper than any other available area.¹⁶

With Ballinger soon to be removed and the scene shifting from the local to the national level, the supporters for building a reservoir gained in power.¹⁷ Bills were introduced, debates intensified, and conservationists split over the issue of preservation or use but the dam faction was not to be stopped. After a bill authorizing the dam was approved by the House of Representatives, the Senate seemed to have little interest in the preservation of Hetch Hetchy and quickly passed the measure forty-three to twenty-five and sent it to President Woodrow Wilson for his signature which came December 19, 1913.¹⁸

Creation of National Park Service

As a result of this controversy fire was added to the arguments for the creation of a National Park Service but by the summer of 1916 there was still no national agency to administer the total of sixteen parks and eighteen historical monuments that

¹⁶"San Francisco Against the Nation, "The Independent, Vol. 75 (July 31, 1913), p. 238; New York Times, February 23, 1913.

¹⁷Ballinger was succeeded in 1911 by Walter Fisher who fought the Hetch Hetchy Dam construction but in 1913 he was succeeded by Franklin K. Lane, the city attorney of San Francisco, who favored Hetch Hetchy as the source of San Francisco's water supply.

¹⁸Udall, p. 10. Started in 1913, the dam construction was slowed by World War I and not completed until 1925.

had been set aside for preservation.

What was worse, all were loosely administered by several diverse agencies of the Federal government. National parks came under the jurisdiction of the Interior Department but were often patrolled by American soldiers under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of War.¹⁹ National monuments were likewise administered in various ways. Those of a military significance were administered by the Secretary of War, those within or adjacent to national forests were placed under the Department of Agriculture, with the rest coming under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior.²⁰ Such was the condition of national parks prior to 1916 that nowhere in Washington could one find an office solely devoted to their management; most functions were being carried out by the Patents and Miscellaneous Division of the Interior Department.²¹

Beginning in 1911 a series of national park conferences were held for the purpose of improving the departmental control of the various parks. Out of these conferences came the first general administration of parks when in 1913 Secretary of the

¹⁹Carroll Woody, The Growth of the Federal Government (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1934), p. 146.

²⁰Ibid., p. 147.

²¹Cameron, p. 9; E. Louis Peffer, The Closing of the Public Domain (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951), p. 176.

Interior Lane placed his top assistant in charge of park administration.²² This was followed in 1914 by the appointment of a General Superintendent and Landscape Engineer to have authority over all the park superintendents.²³

Even before Secretary Lane's innovations in park reform had been put into effect, friends of the national parks had been devoting energy to bring about a special bureau for park administration. Secretary of the Interior Ballinger in his annual report of 1910 had recommended the creation of a "bureau of national parks" and in 1912 President Taft sent to Congress a special message urging the establishment of a Bureau of National Parks.²⁴ During the next three years various bills were introduced into Congress for the creation of a park service but in each instance opposition was strong. Finally in the 64th Congress a new National Park bill was drawn up. After nearly a half century of uncoordinated direction, the bill for the creation of the National Park Service was passed by Congress and then signed by President Wilson on August 25, 1916.

As finally passed, the National Parks Act provided for the establishment of the National Park Service with a Director's salary

²²Cameron, p. 9.

²³Ise, pp. 188-189.

²⁴Ibid., p. 190.

of \$4,500, one Assistant Director at \$2,500, one Chief Clerk at \$2,000, one draftsman at \$1,800, one messenger at \$600 and as many others as could be hired and supported on a total budget not to exceed \$19,500 a year.²⁵ Named to head the first National Park Service was the inspiring Steven Mather, the Chicago industrialist who had made millions from his "Twenty-Mule-Team" Borax Company. Mather had joined the park service two years earlier when after complaining to Secretary Lane that the national parks were mismanaged and a disgrace to the Federal government, he had been told: "If you don't like the way the parks are being run, come on down to Washington and run them yourself." This he decided to do for one year but ended up staying fifteen. Mather's inspiration and direction laid the foundation for the National Park Service, and under his direction the fledgling institution defined and established the basic policies for which it stands today.

With an able director at the helm, the National Park Service was well on its way toward becoming a meaningful and effective land policy system of the United States. Certainly it had made strides since 1903 when the Speaker of the House, "Uncle Joe" Cannon, had exclaimed: "Not one cent for scenery!" and an irate Congressman had retorted to a plea for money, that the

²⁵Udall, p. 10.

nation should "get out of the show business," and "quit raising wild animals."²⁶

Formation of a National Park Policy

The years immediately following the creation of the National Park Service were a time of trial and error, uncertainty of goals, and of policy formation. No real pattern had as yet been established for the preservation of America's resources and in every direction conflicts appeared concerning the most appropriate use to which public lands should be put. In May of 1918, Secretary Lane wrote to Director Mather, a letter which was for the national parks a Magna Carta upon which to make their stand and wage their battles. It stated three broad principles:

First, that the national parks must be maintained in absolutely unimpaired form for the use of future generations as well as those of our own time; second, that they are set apart for the use, observation, health, and pleasure of the people; and third, that the national interest must dictate all decisions affecting public or private enterprise in the parks.²⁷

Conflicts were soon to arise. In certain areas economic motives dictated that land be used for such wide and varied purposes as lumbering, irrigation, hunting, grazing, and water power.

²⁶"Our National Park System," Current History (August, 1929), p. 892.

²⁷"Our National Parks Threatened," The Outlook, Vol. 126 (December 8, 1920), p. 634; Robert Yard, "The National Parks Peril," The Nation, Vol. 111 (August 21, 1920), pp. 208-209.

Even within such already preserved areas as Yellowstone, attempts were begun to encroach upon the park lands to develop water power and to provide for the diversion of streams to irrigation.²⁸

Another of the early threats that parks faced was the encroachment of herders upon their grasslands but by far the most serious conflict of the National Park Service's early years was the similar but yet opposing purpose of the United States Forest Service.

The preservation of forested areas had first received attention when in the 1870s Carl Schurz had spearheaded a drive to have forest reservations created.²⁹ Such lands as were set aside were maintained under the Department of Agriculture.³⁰ From that time on the park service and forestry service were at odds mainly due to the conflicting purpose for which each was created. Even so, each was adamant to include the other within its respective department. During the 59th Congress a bill was introduced to transfer the park service to the Department of Agriculture but this was reversed when in 1914 the 63rd Congress saw a bill introduced to transfer the forestry service to the Interior Department.³¹

²⁸Peffer, pp. 175, 178.

²⁹Sunset Books and Sunset Magazine, National Parks of the West (Menlo Park, California: Lane Magazine and Book Co., 1965) p. 307. Interested in conservation, Schurz was appointed Secretary of the Interior by President Hayes in 1877.

³⁰Peffer, pp. 175, 178.

³¹Sunset Books and Sunset Magazine, p. 307

Since each service desired to control the other, neither was willing to compromise, mainly due to the fact that they were at different ends of the spectrum of conservation. As established in 1905 the Forest Service had as its purpose the "preservation and development of the resources in our national forests and the maintenance of these regions to prevent extinction of our national reserves."³² This in effect was conservation not to preserve but to establish and maintain an order of plants and animals best suited to the needs of man.³³ National forests were argued to be "producers" not "playgrounds" and supporters pointed out that well managed forest conservation provided to the public: game, grazing, trees, and recreation.³⁴

Backers of national parks contended that conservation was not meant to mean development and use but argued that national parks were for the "conservation and preservation of lands and sites which owing to their natural beauty and historical significance are part of our natural heritage."³⁵ To them conservation

³²V. F. Shelford, "Conservation versus Preservation," Science, Vol. 77 (June 2, 1933), p. 535.

³³"Conservation and Use," Nature Magazine, Vol. 26 (September, 1935), p. 171.

³⁴Sunset Books and Sunset Magazine, p. 307.

³⁵Allen Chamberlain, "Scenery as a National Asset," The Outlook, Vol. 95 (May 28, 1910), p. 157.

meant letting nature take its own course, certainly an economic sin to the most popular thoughts on American land use policy. They felt justified though in the merits of the National Conservation Commission's report that: "public lands more valuable for conserving . . . natural beauties or wonders, than for agriculture should be held for the use of the people."³⁶

Even though their basic purposes were in conflict there was still agitation to unite the services under one department. As late as the 1930s attempts were made to create a Department of Conservation which would include both the national parks and the nation's forests.³⁷

Another major problem to arise during the National Park Service's formative years concerned how private lands that were desired for national parks should be acquired. As was the case with the earlier parks, most lands taken were a part of the public domain and required no private transfer of lands. By the 1920s, though, agitation was growing to create national parks in the eastern states on lands for the most part privately owned. The Appalachians were to serve as the first test area. A national park had been proposed as early as 1923 by Director Mather but nothing happened until John D. Rockefeller, Jr. addressed himself

³⁶"Conservation and Use," p. 171.

³⁷Shankland, pp. 282-283.

to the task of setting aside a Great Smoky Mountain National Park.³⁸ Studies and recommendations were made, but the cost estimated at ten million dollars presented a formidable barrier. Most of the magnificent lands were highly prized by their owners who asked high prices for their sale. Other problems to plague Congress concerned what to do with the inhabitants and where to move them in the event of a purchase.³⁹ Rockefeller's wealth came to the rescue and in 1928 his pledge of five million dollars to be equalled by the states involved, insured the achievement of a national park for the eastern states.⁴⁰

The Battle of Jackson Hole

During the 1930s and 1940s the National Park Service was put to one of its most severe tests in the Jackson Hole area of Wyoming. This region had long been of interest to the park system and from 1898 on, attempts were made to include it as part of the Yellowstone National Park. In 1924 the possibility of Jackson Hole being made a national park was given a boost when John D. Rockefeller, Jr., gave fifty-thousand dollars to appraise the land and begin purchases.⁴¹

³⁸William Gregg, "Hunting for a National Park," The Outlook, Vol. 138 (September 10, 1924), p. 54.

³⁹Shankland, p. 283.

⁴⁰Ise, pp. 492-493.

⁴¹Peffer, p. 243.

With the Jackson Hole idea coming closer and closer to reality, the opposition began to solidify and it was not long before an all out battle was raging. As the sides were forming, those in opposition welcomed the support of all interested parties including ranchers, farmers, lumbermen, and local business; each in his own way fearful of the encroachment of Federal power and the national parks conservation program of preservation rather than use. They took issue on several counts. The lumbering business argued that taking the land for the National Park Service would mean a loss to their reserves. Livestock ranchers and residents of the area claimed: (1) that there would be lost to grazing land one hundred and seventy thousand acres of range land meaning a loss of their livelihood; (2) that from use-fees assessed for grazing in national forests, a return is made from Forest Service revenue; and that (3) the Rockefeller lands of Teton County contributed more than half the counties' revenue in taxes.⁴²

In May, 1938 the Senate Committee on Public Lands and Surveys finally got around to holding a hearing at Jackson, Wyoming but by 1943 investigations were still being held and no solution was in sight.⁴³ After much insistence by Rockefeller,

⁴²Ise, p. 496.

⁴³Ibid., p. 498.

President Roosevelt took the initiative and on March 15, 1943, set aside Jackson Hole as a National Monument.⁴⁴

Resentment ran high. In May, 1943, ranchers with rifles and pistols drove six hundred cattle onto the Jackson Hole preserve defying anyone to stop them.⁴⁵

Within Congress fevers were also boiling. A week after the monument was proclaimed, stockman Representative Frank Barrett of Wyoming introduced a bill in the House to abolish it, and then with Senator Edward Robertson of Wyoming, offered bills to amend the Antiquities Act to prevent further Presidential proclamations of national monuments.⁴⁶

As the controversy raged, economic motives came to be more and more the focus of attention. Even in the West there were those who saw the real issues. Such was pointed out in 1945 when the Capital Journal of Salem, Oregon, editorialized that:

⁴⁴New York Times, May 3, 1943.

⁴⁵Ise, p. 499; Peffer, p. 285. The National Park Service had already granted ranchers the right to continue using grazing land that they had used in the past.

⁴⁶Ise, p. 500. The Antiquities Act of 1906 allowed for the President to set aside areas as National Monuments. It was originally meant to apply to archaeological ruins but has been used by several Presidents to set aside such areas as the Grand Canyon and Petrified Forest.

The creation of every national park and monument has met with violent opposition unless the area was without other than tourist, recreational, and scenic value. Lumberman, Stockman, hydro-electric and commercial interests lead the opposition as a rule, backed by local officials fearing loss of tax revenues in the future.⁴⁷

The Barrett bill never got far. Introduced into three sessions of Congress it met defeat three times. By the late 1940s Congressional sentiments were beginning to mellow. In 1950 Senators Joseph O'Mahoney and Lester Hunt of Wyoming tried to put forth a compromise bill for the creation of the "Wyoming-Jackson Hole National Park" later changed in the Senate to "A New Grand Teton National Park."⁴⁸ As the bill was worded, the Barrett faction was appeased by the fact that the President could take no more lands in Wyoming without Congressional approval and the size of the Jackson Hole area would be cut by nine thousand acres.⁴⁹ Also written into the compromise was a provision that twenty-five percent of the park's revenue for the first five years would be paid to Teton County and after that it would decrease five percent a year for twenty years.⁵⁰

⁴⁷New York Times, December 17, 1949.

⁴⁸"Wyoming Jackson Hole National Park," Nature Magazine, Vol. 43 (June, 1950), p. 313.

⁴⁹Ise, p. 506.

⁵⁰New York Times, July 4, 1950.

Realizing it was about the best compromise that could be hoped for, Congressmen spent little time debating and on September 14, 1950, President Truman signed the bill creating Grand Teton National Park.⁵¹

Mission 66 Goals and Problems

The Grand Teton controversy was not to be the last the National Park Service was to face. In nearly every instance of a park's creation, there was opposition from some quarter but this has become most acute in later years. Much opposition can be explained by the fact that the first areas set aside were part of the public domain at the time of their withdrawal. Most were in the West; but even more important, most of the early national parks were mountains, spectacular natural wonders with little real value to individuals other than lumbering firms which in the late 1800s and early 1900s were few in number in many Western areas.

With the 1950s, however, a re-evaluation was being made in the National Park Service; and it was becoming quite evident that additional lands to be set aside would have to be acquired from individual persons, who generally considered their property in terms of how it could best be exploited. Park officials were beginning to realize that in simple terms there were not enough areas or adequate recreational facilities to handle the number of

⁵¹Ibid., September 15, 1950.

persons visiting parks each year. The original park service had been designed for approximately twenty-five million persons a year, but in 1955 they were caring for twice that number.⁵² With this in mind, Conrad Wirth, National Park Service director, issued in 1955 a broad master plan with objectives to be completed by 1966, the Park Service's fiftieth anniversary.⁵³ Titled "Mission 66" its primary goals were not only to improve, finance, and develop the existing national parks but also to survey and begin legal action to acquire any additional areas that might be suitable for the park system. The ultimate goal in mind was to eventually complete the structure of the National Park Service.

Included in the list of possible park sites were a multitude of natural wonders located in all parts of the country. In each instance, though, a major controversy was to ensue because of the local interests that were already using these wonders.

Proposed in 1962 as an addition to the National Park Service was a fifty-two mile strip of sandy seacoast along the Atlantic coast called Fire Island. Only minutes from Long Island, this desolate strip of land was proposed as a national park by Representative John Lindsay of New York and endorsed by Secretary of the

⁵²Ise, p. 546.

⁵³Conrad Wirth, "Mission 66", American Forests, Vol. 61 (August, 1955), p. 16.

Interior, Stewart Udall.⁵⁴ Offering eight thousand acres of land, it was thought to be a partial solution for the eastern metropolitan need for areas of natural splendor.⁵⁵ Opposition to its creation sprang from several quarters; including those that wanted to construct a four lane highway down its middle, those local residents whose land would be infringed upon, and those real estate agents who feared a loss of land that people might wish to buy who sought to escape the big cities. In 1964 Congressional wheels began to turn and after on-the-spot tours, both the House of Representatives and the Senate passed a bill for the creation of Fire Island National Seashore. On September 11, 1964, President Johnson signed the bill and a national park for Fire Island had become a reality.⁵⁶

In the West, was a proposal to carve from the California north lands a Redwood National Park. In 1964 Secretary Udall and Governor Pat Brown of California went on record as supporting a national park for the redwoods and were backed by the efforts of the "Save the Redwoods League" and "Sierra Club."⁵⁷ Again there

⁵⁴New York Times, July 26, 1962; August 21, 1962.

⁵⁵The original area had been six thousand acres but in 1963 two thousand additional acres were added to the proposal, arousing local residents.

⁵⁶New York Times, September 12, 1964.

⁵⁷Ibid., April 23, 1964.

was well organized opposition. Seven large lumbering firms banded together to argue that the redwoods were an economic prize because of their high yield per tree, beauty as a construction material, and general boost to the tax revenue and unemployment problem of northern California. Also opposing was the California Highway Commission that argued for the construction of a super highway through the proposed area to better serve the tourist traffic in and out of California.⁵⁸ Dragging from one session of Congress to the next, hearings and inspections were conducted and a bill was introduced but there was still no park. Reintroduced as a bill calling for a fifty-eight thousand acre park in 1968, it finally passed Congress and President Johnson signed the bill on October 2, 1968.⁵⁹

Typical of the problems faced by all the newly proposed park areas were those of the Indiana Dunes, a sandy region along the shores of Lake Michigan that had long been recognized as a potential park area. During the early 1950s conservation minded citizens solicited the support of political leaders and began a fight to preserve the dunes area. The greatest opposition came from steel companies desiring construction of a deep water port through the dunes for the transit of large ships to the docks of

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Michael McCloskey, "The Last Battle of the Redwoods," The American West, Vol. VI, No. 5 (September, 1969), p. 64.

their companies. Introduced as a bill and debated on the floor of three Congresses, the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore gained the approval of Congress in October, 1966 and was signed by President Johnson on November 5, 1966.⁶⁰

Each of these examples illustrates the incongruity of the National Park Service ideals. As supporters of the proposed locations were those persons primarily interested in preserving the natural wonders for their beauty, research value, and gift to posterity. Even though research services often pointed out the benefits to be gained from the tourist trade, local businesses were if anything usually lukewarm to the idea of a national park and often completely opposed, viewing it as an infringement upon the economic rights of private enterprise. Opponents on the other hand, saw the conflict as not only a needless burden on private property but as generally socialistic and contrary to the economic theory found in American democracy. They often felt it might mean their own economic ruin and would lead to the financial ruin of the region due to a property tax loss. Certainly for them and for millions of others around the country, conservation was defined as a policy to use land in its most economical way. They strongly opposed any scheme to withdraw lands and place them on a reserved pedestal to be enjoyed and marveled at for generations to come.

It was against such a background of divergent views that the

⁶⁰New York Times, June 30, 1966.

Prairie National Park proposal was made. Its supporters dug up the same basic conservationist arguments that proponents of the other natural beauty areas had used. Its opponents confronted its creation by the same time tested economic theories used in attempts to block other national park recommendations. The battle for its creation raged on governmental levels from county and city to Federal and over a time span that in its entirety has passed the century mark. As yet, though, there is no apparent reason to believe that in Kansas a Prairie National Park will ever become a reality. The history of this particular controversy is also a history of the National Park Service and its attempt to set aside for all time areas of America's disappearing natural wonders.

CHAPTER II

A PRAIRIE NATIONAL PARK IS PROPOSED

We must protect--that they shall not purloin
Our splendid heritage of sky and soil:
For that which God so lovingly did join
Let not man send asunder and despoil.

--Charles B. Shaw

Early Support for a Grassland Park

The origin of the idea that a grassland park need be created dates back several decades. As early as 1857, George Catlin made a farsighted plea for the preservation of an adequate sample of the North American prairie. In his book, Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indian, Catlin stated:

And what a splendid contemplation too, when one imagines them as they might in future be seen, preserved in their pristine beauty and wilderness, in a magnificent park, where the world could see for ages to come, the native Indian in his classic attire, galloping his wild horse with sinewy bow, and shield and lance, amid the fleeting herds of elks and buffaloes. What a beautiful and thrilling specimen for America to preserve and hold up to the view of her refined citizens and the world, in future ages! A nation's Park, containing man and beast, in all the wildness and freshness of their nature's beauty!¹

¹George F. Emery, "George Catlin's Early Plea for a Prairie Park," National Parks Magazine (April, 1962), p. 19.

John J. Ingalls, early day United States Senator from Kansas, likewise showed an interest. As one of the most erudite writers in Kansas history his often quoted essay on bluegrass offered Nineteenth Century support to the then vague idea that grasses should be preserved when he stated, "Next in importance to the divine profusion of water, light and air, . . . may be reckoned the beneficence of grass."²

A host of other men have also dreamed and written of the importance of grass to mankind and what it has to offer to the future. Without knowing it their ideas were often quoted by those who later provided specific plans for the creation of a grassland park.

Of special importance was the late J. C. (Jake) Mohler. As secretary of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture for thirty-five years, Mohler advocated that Kansas lead the way by being the first to build a monument to the grasses. Suggesting that a park be established somewhere in the bluestem country of the state, he was in full disagreement with a Kansas State Chamber of Commerce recommendation which merely proposed building a highway through the Flint Hills to show them off. "To properly see and fully appreciate the hills and marvelous views," Mohler angrily replied, "we ought to have a park so that people may easily reach vantage

²Manhattan Mercury, January 12, 1962.

points and freely enjoy what must be one of God's masterpieces."³

Rolla Clymer, poet laureate of the Flint Hills, wrote of the majesty and beauty of the grasslands and for years urged people to get into the hills and fully appreciate the wonders they had to offer. "The captivating spirits of the Hills are those of the sky, the winds, the grass, the lime saturated soil. They rule with the rhythm of the seasons," Clymer eloquently stated in Glory of the Hills.⁴

Author Charles C. Howes, in his book This Place Called Kansas, remarked that "These hills are lovely monuments to our grasses at anytime of the year tourists might choose for traveling."⁵

Potential Park Sites Recommended

Specific plans calling for the preservation of a sizable grasslands area began during the early 1930s. While the broken areas of the high plains were blowing away during dust bowl days, the Ecological Society of America was prompted to bring to the attention of the National Park Service the need for the preservation

³Ibid.

⁴Rolla A. Clymer, Glory of the Hills (El Dorado, Kansas, 1960). (Pamphlet.)

⁵Charles C. Howes, This Place Called Kansas (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), p. 137.

of a representative area of the Great Plains.⁶ Through financial contributions, the National Research Council made it possible for its Grassland Committee of prominent ecologists to make field surveys, and by 1935 information had been accumulated which suggested the possibility of setting aside as a national monument, a portion of Great Plains grassland.⁷

In 1937 the idea was given a further boost when Dr. V. E. Shelford, an ecologist of renown from the University of Illinois and chairman of the central committee of the National Research Council, called attention to the idea of a grassland preserve, and asked the National Park Service to help in obtaining information on several grassland areas.⁸ This was begun largely through the efforts of Victor Coholane, an official of the National Park Service, who started pointing out particular areas that might be saved.⁹

⁶U. S. Congress, "Joint Statement of Senator Andrew Schoeppel, Senator Frank Carlson and Representative William Avery Concerning a Bill to Authorize the Establishment of a Prairie National Park in the State of Kansas," June 9, 1960. (Mimeographed)

⁷Ibid.

⁸U. S. Department of the Interior. National Park Service, Region Two. Report on Proposed True Prairie National Park - Kansas (Omaha, Nebraska, December 10, 1958), p. 3.

⁹E. Raymond Hall, "The Prairie National Park," National Parks Magazine, Vol. 36:173 (February, 1962), p. 4.

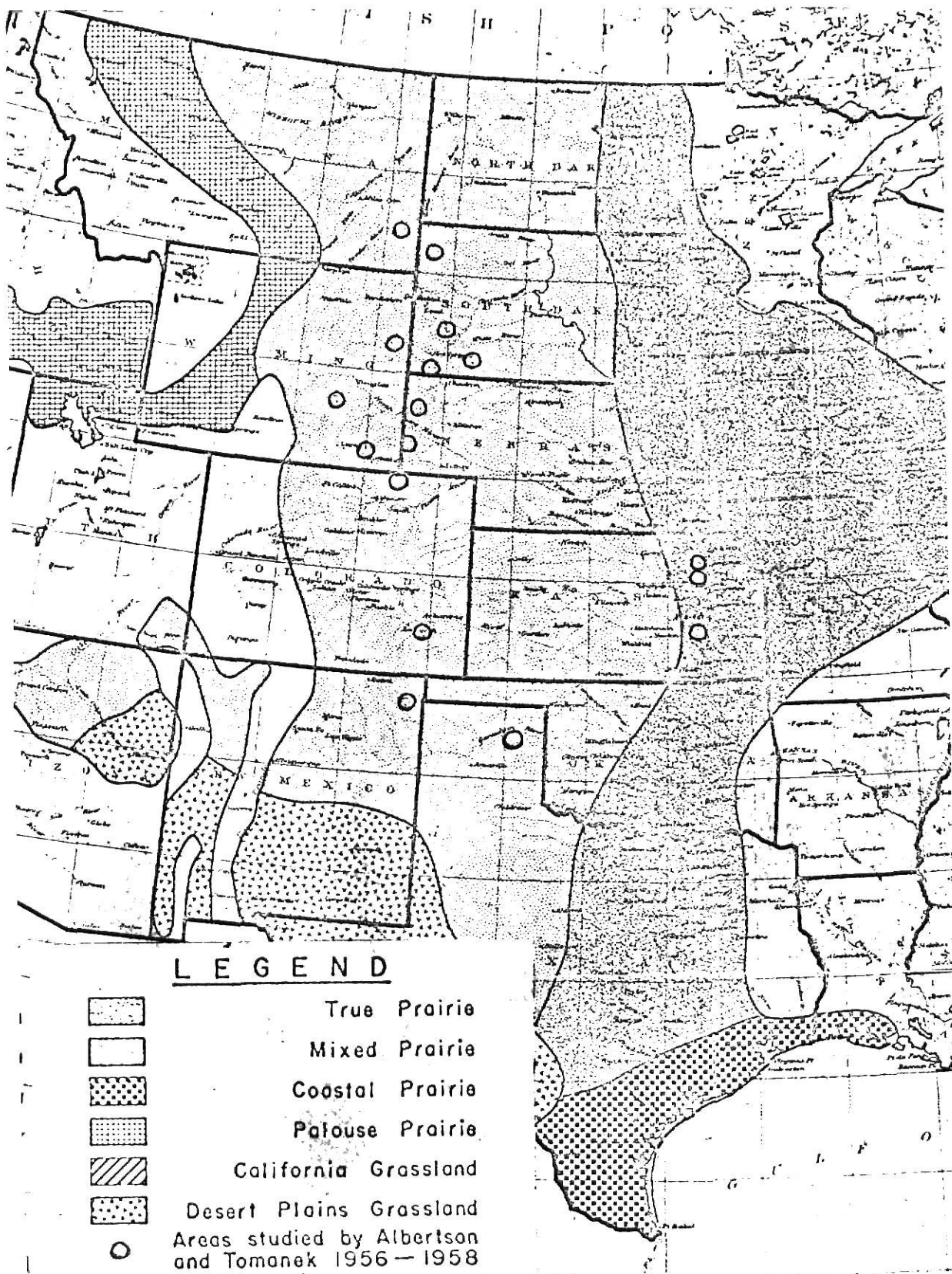
From 1937 to 1953 various reports were prepared by the National Park Service proposing that several areas be considered as potential grassland preserves. In one instance the park service was aided by Dr. J. E. Weaver of the University of Nebraska, who studied areas in Wyoming, Colorado, the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Montana.¹⁰

In 1950 the Department of Agriculture made a survey on grasses and determined that there were six major grassland types. These included the True Prairie, Mixed Prairie, Desert Prairie Grassland, Polouse Prairie, California Grassland, and Coastal Prairie.¹¹ Further study determined that the six types could be arranged according to height: those three to six feet as tall; those one to three feet as middle length; and those less than one foot as the short length grasses. In speaking of the Kansas region the report indicated that it had an excellent representation of a mixture of middle and tall grasses, with bluestem being the most conspicuous in the very desirable Flint Hills region.¹² The Department of Agriculture further recommended in their report to the National Resources Council that an area of all six major

¹⁰U. S. Congress, Senate, "Joint Statement of Senator Andrew Schoeppel, Senator Frank Carlson, and Representative William Avery;" 86th Cong., 2d sess., 1960, Congressional Record 12178.

¹¹U. S. Department of the Interior. Report on Proposed True Prairie National Park - Kansas, 1958, p. 3.

¹²Ibid.



Source: U. S. Department of the Interior, Report on Proposed True Prairie National Park - Kansas, 1958.

grassland types be preserved.¹³

In 1954 the National Park Service entered into a contract with Drs. F. W. Albertson and G. W. Tomanek of Fort Hays Kansas State College to make a study of the grasslands of western Colorado.¹⁴ In 1956 Tomanek and Albertson were again contracted by the National Park Service to investigate additional grasslands in Colorado, New Mexico, Montana, Texas, and Kansas.¹⁵

As these investigations progressed, the Advisory Board of the National Park Service recommended the following resolution in March, 1956:

The Advisory Board . . . recognizing the absence of examples of the native grasslands of the Great Plains, recommends that studies be continued in an effort to find and to acquire superlative areas of such types to be included in the National Park Service as National Monuments.¹⁶

In making plans for the continued study of potential sites for a Grassland National Park, the Advisory Board prepared a list of criteria that they felt must be met before an area could be given approval. Concerning the flora, it was determined that

¹³U. S. Congress, "Joint Statement Concerning a Bill to Authorize a Prairie National Park," 1960.

¹⁴U. S. Department of the Interior. National Park Service, Region Two, 1960, p. 4.

¹⁵U. S. Congress, Senate, Congressional Record, 12178.

¹⁶Ibid.

primary consideration be given to the grasses of an area and that they should dominate all areas of the park. The necessity was also seen for a sufficient number of trees and shrubs that would add variety to the grasses and also serve the purpose of providing minimum cover requirements for all animal species native to the area. As a minimum, it was decided that at least five to ten thousand acres would be required to maintain all original animal species without retrogression. This area was very conservative, compared to the earlier Tomanek and Albertson study that had recommended thirty-thousand acres for a True Prairie park and fifty-thousand for a Mixed Prairie park, the difference being that within a True Prairie area the forage production is roughly one and one-half to three times that of a good Mixed Prairie area. It was also recommended that any site selected should be large enough to include sufficient samples of all the physiographic forms characteristic of a grasslands area, and that it should have an air of vastness, multi-colored flowers, and marked seasonal changes.¹⁷

The Advisory Board also felt it important that a site be selected that could provide for the needs of the visiting public. It advised that there should be facilities for a museum to protect and interpret specimens of the grasslands environment, that

¹⁷U. S. Department of the Interior. Report on Prairie National Park, 1958, p. 7-8.

camping and recreational facilities be taken into consideration, that a plentiful water supply be of utmost importance for wildlife and the public alike, and that most definitely the park should be a field laboratory for ecologists, mammalogists, and botanists.¹⁸

Three Areas Given a Thorough Study

To narrow down the field of possible sites, the Advisory Board of the National Park Service again contacted Dr. Tomanek of Fort Hays Kansas State College, and in 1958 he began a study of three True Prairie grasslands in the Flint Hills region of Kansas. These three areas had been suggested by interested parties as possible sites for a grasslands park. Area One, a location north and east of Manhattan, Kansas, and Area Two, south of Manhattan, were selected as possible sites by William Colvin, editor of the Manhattan Mercury. Area Three, located near Matfield Green, Kansas was suggested for further study by Dr. E. Raymond Hall of the University of Kansas.¹⁹

In his detailed analysis of the three potential areas, Dr. Tomanek early eliminated Area Two from further consideration. He concluded that it had an unsatisfactory grassland condition,

¹⁸Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 9. Dr. H. T. Gier says that William (Bill) Colvin and Fred Seaton dreamed up this idea while contemplating ways to develop the Tuttle Creek Reservoir area.

insufficient woody vegetation, and a lack of sufficient locations giving impressions of vastness.²⁰

Areas One and Three were both fine from the standpoint of the grass. All important species were represented and all physical features deemed necessary were to be found. In area One, Dr. Tomanek stated that forty-four percent of its grass was in good to excellent condition, with only three percent in poor to fair condition, while Area Three had forty-eight percent good to excellent and also three percent poor to fair. The wooded vegetation in both was good, with Area One having a greater abundance and more diversified number as to species, while the prairie wild flowers in both were excellent.²¹

As roughly plotted in the Tomanek study, both areas would constitute approximately twenty-three thousand acres, with the potential for enlargement in the future if necessary.²² This would allow for an adequate impression of vastness.

As for prior encroachments, Area Three had fewer existing secondary public roads than did Area One, but it did have a mark against it since the Kansas Turnpike formed its eastern boundary.

²⁰Ibid., p. 10.

²¹Ibid., pp. 10-11.

²²Ibid. In the report written up and submitted by the National Park Service the size of the area was changed from twenty-three thousand acres to thirty-four thousand acres and then later to fifty-seven thousand acres.

Within Area One, the Tuttle Creek Reservoir was thought to offer only minimal encroachment, and at the same time it might influence favorable visitation to the area in general.²³

The wildlife potential of both areas received a favorable report. Area One showed more species of birds native to the region; especially the Upland Plover, Bobwhite Quail, and Prairie Chicken. For big game, Area One appeared to be better because it offered more wooded cover.²⁴

The problem of a sufficient water supply also received Tomanek's attention. Both of the areas were found to contain spring fed streams, with Area One having a greater and better distribution. This was thought to be quite an advantage from not only the standpoint of scenery but also in providing for a more even wildlife distribution and grazing pattern.²⁵

In appeal potential for both recreation and research, Area One received the most favorable report. It was thought that Area One, because of its wooded drainages, would be more interesting to the public and would hold their attention for a longer time span. Also Area One was thought to be better as a research

²³Ibid. At this time though, plans were being made by the Corps of Engineers to construct an access road along the western edge of the Area One site for rancher use.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., p. 12.

area because Kansas State University was located only six miles from the edge of the proposed site.²⁶

The cost factor gave neither area the upper hand. In both areas the property was in private hands and Tomanek estimated that the cost in each case would be from sixty to sixty-five dollars an acre.²⁷

Area One Selected for Grassland Park

On December 10, 1953, after careful study of the two proposed areas by an eleven man advisory board, the Region Two office of the National Park Service, located at Omaha, Nebraska issued the following recommendation:

On the basis of the analysis, it is recommended that the establishment of a True Prairie National Park be authorized by the Congress, such national park to include Area 1, enlarged to approximately the shape and size (34,000 acres) shown on the attached drawing, but with the specific boundary to be decided by the Secretary of the Interior at some future date following detailed study of land requirements.²⁸

This recommendation was followed in April of 1959 by the Advisory Board of the National Park Service giving support to the

²⁶Ibid. It was thought that Area One would be especially beneficial as a research area for studies on grass, ecology, and range management.

²⁷Ibid., p. 13.

²⁸Ibid.

Region Two report and calling for the creation of a Grassland National Park in Kansas to be comprised of thirty-four thousand acres and located northeast of Manhattan, Kansas.²⁹

On April 28, 1959 readers of the Manhattan Mercury were greeted by the headline; "Sec. Seaton Recommends 34,000 Acre Nat'l Park Within 10 Miles of City." In a prepared statement Fred Seaton, the Secretary of the Interior, made the idea for a Grassland National Park for Kansas an active project of the National Park Service. His report called for a park consisting of approximately thirty-four thousand acres of tall grass in southwestern Pottawatomie County, immediately east of Tuttle Creek Reservoir.³⁰

The long awaited final step toward the creation of a Prairie National Park as a lasting monument to America's disappearing grasslands came on June 9, 1960. In a joint statement prepared for the press, Kansas Senators Andrew F. Schoeppel and Frank Carlson, and Kansas Congressman William H. Avery stated:

²⁹Ise, p. 527. At this time no official name had been given to the proposed park, some government sources calling it the Prairie National Park and others the Grassland National Park.

³⁰Manhattan Mercury, April 28, 1959.

Today we have introduced in the Senate and House of the Congress identical bills to authorize the establishment of a Prairie National Park in Pottawatomie County, Kansas.³¹

To those who supported this action on the part of Congress, to set aside a portion of America's native beauty as a grassland park, the battle seemed won, while for those that opposed, the battle was about to begin.

³¹U. S. Congress, "Joint Statement Concerning a Bill to Authorize a Prairie National Park," 1960.

CHAPTER III

THE PROPOSED PRAIRIE PARK - ITS DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The prairie grasslands! Since the beginning of recorded American history they have been an integral part of the romance, the adventure, the discovery, the settling and the building of our nation.

--anonymous

Geography of the Kansas Flint Hills

The thirty-four thousand acre tract of land proposed by the Schoeppel, Carlson, and Avery bill, a tract later increased to fifty-seven thousand acres is but a small segment of an area known as the Kansas Flint Hills. They cross Kansas between the ninety-sixth and ninety-seventh meridians and constitute one of the last large segments of true prairie in the United States. The Flint Hills extend from Marshall County south to Oklahoma, where the Flint Hills become known as the Osage Hills. They range from fifty to four hundred feet in height above the surrounding plains. A relatively narrow band, with a maximum width of about sixty miles, the Flint Hills include part or all of Marshall, Geary, Pottawatomie, Wabaunsee, Lyon, Morris, Chase, Marion, Butler, Greenwood, Elk, Cowley, Riley, and Chautauqua counties.

Made up of cherty, limestone beds that have been strongly dissected by erosion, the Flint Hills have resisted man's alterations because of their incompatibility with the plow. The ridges of the hills tend to be narrow, the side slopes steep, and the

soils shallow in terms of cultivation, but the broken nature of the limestone allows for good penetration of moisture to plant roots.¹ The ridge tops are covered with shallow soils over dense clay, the soils generally being filled with cherty materials. Such physical features make cultivation of the Flint Hills possible only in the small valleys between ridges and on some gently sloping uplands.

Geologic History of Proposed Park Site

The geologic history of the proposed Prairie National Park dates back approximately five-hundred million years to the Croixan, upper Cambrian age, at which time sedimentary rocks were being laid down for the first time over a pre-Cambrian complex of igneous and metamorphic rocks. Continuing through the Mississippian era of about two-hundred and sixty million years ago, sedimentary rocks were being deposited with only minor interruptions in a large basin extending from the Ozark region of Missouri to the high plains of central Kansas.² Following the Mississippian era, a tectonic disturbance occurred which pushed

¹Kling L. Anderson, "Utilization of Grasslands in the Flint Hills of Kansas," Journal of Range Management, Vol. 6, No. 2 (March, 1953), p. 86.

²J. R. Chelikowsky, "Geologic Report on the Tuttle Creek Reservoir Area." (Mimeographed.) This report was prepared about 1961 as part of the research that was being conducted concerning the history and physical features of the proposed Prairie National Park.

up the Nemaha and Abilene anticlines. They soon began to show wear from the erosion that laid bare pre-Cambrian rocks.

Approximately two-hundred million years ago this tectonic upheaval ceased and what followed was the laying down of the Pennsylvanian and Permian rocks, to be followed by the formation of the Rocky Mountains during the later stages of the Mesozoic era and early years of the Tertiary era. This upheaval, it is thought, possibly caused joints to open up in the Flint Hills area which allowed for the emplacement of the serpenitized peridotite intrusives. In middle Tertiary times the Rockies were eroded to a plain, but shortly thereafter, during Pliocene times, they were re-elevated and extremely large alluvial fans spread eastward over Kansas as far as the Flint Hills region. At approximately this time, drainage from the Randolph, Kansas region was northward into the ancestral Missouri River basin, while south of Randolph the drainage pattern flowed south into the pre-Pleistocene, Kansas River basin.³

At the beginning of the Pleistocene age, approximately one million years ago, the ice advancements began their second stage which cut through the northern Flint Hills region, reversing the north flowing pre-Pleistocene Blue River by damming the northward outlet. By the time the Kansas Glacier was in its furthest

³Ibid. These large alluvial fans are now the high plains of western Kansas.

advancement, about seven-hundred thousand years ago, its action had cut deep valleys through much of the northern Flint Hills region, and as it retreated it deposited in the low areas loessal and glacial fluvial sediments.⁴

As a consequence, the area proposed as a Prairie National Park is physiographically a strongly dissected plain, with hilly but relatively smooth, narrow divides bordered by rocky outcrops with steep slopes. Through many years of geologic change, the residual soils have developed dark, as either well granulated silt loam or silty clay loam permeated from the limestone and shale layers of the lower Permian formations.⁵ The degree of stoniness varies widely, depending on the character of the parent material and the degree of slope. Within the area, the surface soils tend to be slightly acid in reaction and the fertility is moderate to high, but cultivation is only possible in the valley regions, where sediments provide a soil thickness that is deep enough for the plow.⁶

⁴Ibid. This was the second advancement of the ice sheets, the first extending only as far south as Nebraska and having little effect on the northern Flint Hills.

⁵Carlton Homer Herbel, "Response of True Prairie Vegetation on Major Flint Hills Range Sites to Grazing Treatment," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, 1956), p. 3.

⁶Ibid., p. 4.

The Flint Hills Climate

The climate of the area proposed as a Prairie National Park is typical of a mid-continent region with relatively hot summers and cold winters. The highest recorded temperature on record is 116° F, the lowest a -32° F with the average January temperature being 29.1° F and that for July, 80.0° F. The region is also unpredictable as an agricultural area because of its long drought periods. The average annual precipitation is 31.92 inches with most rainfall occurring during the warmer months of the year. May, June, July, August, and September each average about four inches a year, with December and January averaging the least, less than one inch for each month. The growing season for the northern Flint Hills region averages one hundred and seventy-one days, during which time about seventy-five percent of the moisture falls.⁷

Vegetation of the Proposed Prairie Park

The vegetation of the proposed park area is largely determined by soil differences. A study done by Dr. Kling Anderson and Dr. C. L. Fly in 1955 revealed six distinct vegetation-soil units to be found in a typical Flint Hills grassland area. Unit One, called the Ordinary Upland Range Site, consists of lands having sufficient depth of soil and moisture content to support the type

⁷Chelikowsky. This is from April 24 to October 12.

of vegetation that is climax in the mid-continent climate. Unit Two, the Limestone Breaks Range Site, is land with a slope of thirty-five percent or more, therefore subject to moisture runoff. The vegetation however, is still climax, only somewhat less developed than the Ordinary Upland Range Site. Unit Three is the Clay Upland Range Site which has sufficient depth of soil but slower permeability, which hence causes a pre-climax vegetation. Unit Four, the Claypan Range Site, also has sufficient depth of soil but is very resistive to water infiltration and thus supports a pre-climax vegetation. Unit Five, the Very Shallow Range Site, has insufficient depth of soil for normal water storage and supports a very distinct pre-climax vegetation, while Unit Six, the Lowland Range Site (gullied), receives more water than normal and where soil depth is sufficient supports a post-climax vegetation.⁸

The upland climax vegetation of the Flint Hills is that of true prairie, with the two bluestems being the most abundant species on nearly all six soil-vegetation units. In a study done on the vegetation of the proposed Prairie National Park by Dr. L. C. Hulbert in May, 1961, it was found that big bluestem (Andropogon gerardi) predominated over little bluestem (Andropogon scoparius) on both undisturbed and grazed pastures by at least two to one.

⁸ Carlton Homer Herbel and Kling L. Anderson, "Response of True Prairie Vegetation on Major Flint Hills Range Sites to Grazing Treatment," Ecological Monographs, Vol. 29, No. 2 (April, 1959), p. 172.

Other grasses of major importance to be found on the proposed park uplands include in order of occurrence, indian grass (Sorghastrum nutans), side-oats grama (Boutelous curtipendula), blue grama (Boutelous gracilis), scribner's panicum (Panicum scribnerianum), common witchgrass (Panicum capillare), switchgrass (Panicum virgatum), japanese brome (Bromus japonicus), and kentucky bluegrass (Poa pratensis). Also to be found as a part of the climax vegetation of the uplands area of the true prairie are several forbs and woody plants. Among these are pitcher's sage (Salvia azurea), New Jersey tea (Ceanothus ovatus), leadplant (Amorpha canescens), western ragweed (Ambrosia philostachya), heath aster (Aster ericoides), ironweed (Veronia baldwini), and smooth sumac (Rhus glabra).⁹

The climax vegetation of the valley regions of the proposed park site is deciduous forest and includes the following species: bur oak (Quercus macrocarpa); chinquapin oak (Quercus muhlenbergii); american elm (Ulmus americana); hackberry (Celtis occidentalis); kentucky coffeetree (Gymnocladus dioica); honey locust (Gleditsia triacanthos); cottonwood (Populus deltoidea); green ash (Fraxinus pennsylvanica); and pignut hickory (Carya cordiformis).¹⁰

⁹L. C. Hulbert, "Notes on the Vegetation of the Proposed Prairie National Park," (May, 1961). (Mimeographed.)

¹⁰Ibid.

Of all the species of vegetation to be found; perennial grasses make up about eighty-four percent of the vegetation of these upland pastures. Sedges and rushes constitute about six percent, with annual grasses less than two percent, perennial forbs about five percent, annual forbs two percent, and shrubs less than one percent. The forest vegetation is only to be found in the drainage areas of the prairie region and only constitutes a small percentage of the total vegetation cover. The climax vegetation of the Flint Hills region contains very little nonpalatable plant growth. During an average growing season, approximately one thousand pounds of dry matter are produced per acre and yields of two thousand to three thousand pounds are not uncommon.¹¹ This kind of forage production has allowed the Flint Hills to be able to support a large grazing population of animals year after year.

Animal Life Within Proposed Prairie Park

The animal life of the Flint Hills region is wholly dependent on the vegetation cover of a particular area, which in turn is dependent on the physical features of the region. In a paper prepared for the Kansas Academy of Science, Dr. H. T. Gier has identified four rather distinct habitats that sustain specific, although overlapping, animal communities within the typical Flint

¹¹Anderson, p. 88.

Hills region. These habitats include: (1) the stream in the lowest part of the valley; (2) the flat "flood plain," frequently wooded, along the stream; (3) the "breaks" or steep slopes above the flood plain; and (4) the flat or gently rolling uplands that constitute the true prairie and make up about eighty percent of the area.¹²

Within the first area, the streams provide a suitable habitat for several interesting fishes. Black bullheads (Ictalurus melas) are common in smaller streams, and within the larger streams and pools are found large mouth black bass (Micropterus salmoides) and channel cats (Ictalurus punctatus). Also common are several species of sunfish, as well as suckers (Lepidogaster bimaculatus) and various minnows.¹³

Several amphibians are notable in area one, the most common being the cricket frog (Acris crepitans), chorus frog (Pseudacris nigrita), bull frog (Rana catesbeiana), leopard frog (Rana pipens), garden toad (Bufo woodhousii), and the plains toad (Bufo cognatus).¹⁴ One salamander is to be found, the

¹²H. T. Gier, "Vertebrates of the Flint Hills," Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science, Vol. 70, No. 1 (August 18, 1967), p. 54.

¹³Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁴H. T. Gier, "Some Interesting Animals Around the Junction of the Blue and Kaw Rivers." (Mimeographed.) This paper was prepared in 1961 as part of the research done by those that were working for the creation of the Prairie National Park.

western tiger salamander (Ambystoma tigrinum mavortium), which in adult stage is seven to eight inches long with bright yellow spots on a black body.¹⁵ Altogether, twelve different species of amphibians have been identified in the Flint Hills area; seven common; two fairly common; and three rare.¹⁶

Area one also harbors a sizable reptile population. Most common are the snapping turtle (Chelydra serpentina), the ornate box turtle (Terrapene ornata), and the common water snake (Natrix sipedon).¹⁷

Within area two, the flood plain, animals of many types are supported. Among the mammals that are most common are the gopher (Geomys bursarius), moles (Scalopus aquaticus), cotton rats (Sigmodon hispidus) in the heavy grass, deer mouse (Peromyscus leucopus) under the trees, and the fox squirrel (Sciurus niger) in the trees. Muskrats (Ondatra zibethicus) are found in the stream banks, and beavers (Castor canadensis) are sometimes found in the larger streams. Many common birds also find a place to nest and feed in area two. Some of these are the red-tailed hawk (Buteo jamaicensis), crow (Corvus brachyrhynchos), great horned owl (Bubo virginianus), yellow warbler (Dendrocia petechia), oven bird (Seiurus aurocapillus), and a number of species of

¹⁵Gier, "Vertebrates of the Flint Hills," p. 56.

¹⁶Gier, "Some Interesting Animals."

¹⁷Gier, "Vertebrates of the Flint Hills."

woodpeckers.¹⁸

The breaks area provides a home for a variety of animals that live on steep slopes and in bushy vegetation. Here are found a variety of lizards, particularly the mountain boomer (Crotaphytus collaris), the Sonaran skink (Eumecurus obsoletus), and the horned lizard (Phrynosoma cornutum). This is also the denning area of the blacksnake (Elaphe obsoleta) and copperhead (Agkistrodon contortrix). Among the mammals most common are the wood rat (Neotoma floridana osagensis), coyote (Canis latrans), and striped skunk (Mephitis mephitis avia). The brush on the breaks area provides a good nesting place for loggerhead shrikes (Lanius ludovicianus), catbirds (Dumetella carolinensis), field sparrows (Spizella pusilla), and in some locations painted buntings (Passerina cyanea) and towhees (Pipilo erythrophthalmus).¹⁹

The upland areas of the Flint Hills take up by far the largest percentage of the true prairie area and have in the past maintained enormous native animal populations. Among the smaller mammals, this has been the peculiar habitat of the prairie vole (Microtus ochrogastes), harvest mouse (Reithrodontomys megalotis)

¹⁸Ibid. The beaver has made a favorable comeback in the past fifteen years.

¹⁹Ibid. p. 57. As a result of overgrazing and repeated burning, the brush on the breaks area has increased in the last few years to a dense thicket in many spots, expanding the habitat of thicket species.

dychi), prairie deer mouse (Peromyscus maniculatus bairdii), and the pocket mouse (Perognathus hispidus).²⁰ Several types of rabbits are common to the upland vegetation. Among these are the black-tailed Jackrabbit (Lepus californicus melanotis) and cottontail (Sylvilagus floridanus mearnsi).²¹ Of the large mammals that once inhabited the upland prairie only two remain that are fairly common. These are the deer (Odocoileus virginianus) and the coyote (Canis latrans).²² At the present time the coyote is as plentiful as he has ever been, averaging an overall population of nearly two breeding pairs per square mile.²³ Other mammals still found in the Flint Hills region but in lesser numbers include the red fox (Vulpes fulva), gray fox (Urocyon cinereoargenteus), and bobcat (Lynx rufus baileyi).²⁴

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Gier, "Some Interesting Animals."

²²Ibid.

²³Gier, "Vertebrates of the Flint Hills." Under normal conditions, there may be as many as twelve thousand mice, one hundred and sixty rabbits, and five coyotes in a typical square mile of the Flint Hills upland. If the number of mice drops below two thousand per square mile, or rabbits below twenty per square mile, coyote numbers will be reduced by less reproduction as each coyote requires the equivalent of fifteen mice or one half rabbit per day for normal activity.

²⁴Gier, "Some Interesting Animals."

The upland prairies are rich in bird life. Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*), prairie horned larks (*Eremophila alpestris*), dickcissels (*Spiza americana*), lark sparrows (*Chondestes grammacus*), and grasshopper sparrows (*Ammodramus savannarum*) are common everywhere. Quail (*Colinus virginianus*) are plentiful, as is the prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus cupidi*), a fowl that has found the Flint Hills to be one of the last remaining areas suitable to its needs. Another bird peculiar to the Flint Hills region is the upland plover (*Bartramia longicauda*), which uses the grasslands as a breeding ground for its young.

Among the mammal population, the effect of man's moving into the Flint Hills has been most telling. All totaled there are seven species of mammals that have become extinct in the past century. The first to disappear was probably the prong horned antelope (*Antilocapra americana*), which had extended to its furthest point east by the time American pioneers began to enter the region.²⁵ By 1860 the wapita (*Cervus canadensis*) and the black bear (*Ursus americanus*) were extinct in the Flint Hills region.²⁶ In the following decade the timber wolf (*Canis lupis nubilus*) and mountain lion (*Felis concolor*) were also eliminated.²⁷

²⁵E. Raymond Hall, Handbook of Mammals of Kansas (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1955), p. 240.

²⁶Ibid., p. 229.

²⁷Gier, "Vertebrates of the Flint Hills," p. 58.

From the streams of the Flint Hills the river otter (Lutra canadensis) likewise had become extinct.²⁸ The mammal most affected by the coming of the white man was the buffalo (Bison bison). From 1820 to 1850 records indicate that great numbers of these mammals roamed the plains, but by 1860 they had been greatly reduced and by 1880 almost entirely eliminated.²⁹

Man Inhabits the Kansas Flint Hills

Before the entry of the white man into the area, the Flint Hills region was only sparsely inhabited. Indian tribes roamed over the area in search of the buffalo herds, but no permanent settlements were established. One such tribe to roam the area proposed as a Prairie National Park was the Wichita, a semi-sedentary people who practiced a maize-bean-squash horticulture and hunted the herds of buffalo.³⁰ Another was the Kansa who lived in a large village a few miles to the southwest of the proposed park.³¹

The first steps in white occupation of the bluestem region

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, A Proposed Prairie National Park (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, July, 1961), p. 17.

³¹Ibid.

began during the 1840s in the Council Grove and St. Marys area. It was here that stock raising and general farming were begun to support the two settlements and to teach the Pottawatomie Indians agriculture.³² With the opening of the territory of Kansas in 1854, most settlers failed to realize the potential of the Flint Hills as a cattle grazing region and were more interested in settling the fertile plains of central Kansas. During Kansas territorial days, crop farming, not grazing, was of primary importance to those that settled in Kansas. Following the Civil War, the settled area expanded rapidly, but as late as the early 1870s the consensus opinion was that there would always be free pasture land on the upland divides between the fertile valleys.

With the advent of the Texas cattle trade in the late 1860s and the growth of the Kansas cattle towns, livestock for awhile became the predominant interest of Kansans, but this was generally viewed as a transient stage, which would eventually give way to a crop farming society on all but the roughest uplands.³³

This opinion was given a boost because the tick carrying Texas cattle were infecting the domestic herds, prompting the Kansas legislature to act. The first of the general laws of Kansas that

³²James C. Malin, "An Introduction to the History of the Bluestem Pasture Region of Kansas," Kansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. XI, No. 1 (February, 1942), p. 8.

³³Ibid., p. 9.

dealt with stock had been passed on May 1, 1861, stating that no cattle could be driven into the state of Kansas from Texas, Arkansas, or the Indian territory of Oklahoma between the first of April and the first of November of each year.³⁴ Because very few cattle were being brought into Kansas at this time, there was actually very little opposition, and no subsequent laws were passed for several years. In 1865 the fifth session of the state legislature passed a law prohibiting the driving of cattle, whether singly or in droves, into any county of Kansas, unless the people were immigrants.³⁵ In 1867 another herd law was passed preventing a person from driving cattle into eastern Kansas from the Indian territory of Oklahoma or from Texas between the first day of March and the first day of December of each year.³⁶ This law was bypassed when Joseph McCoy established Abilene, which was only a short distance in the quarantine area, as a cattle shipping center. McCoy persuaded Kansas Governor Samuel J. Crawford to overlook the violation on the grounds that such a project would be of great value to the state.³⁷ In the

³⁴State of Kansas, The Laws of the State of Kansas, 1861 (Lawrence: Stram Power Press Print, 1861), pp. 279-281.

³⁵State of Kansas, The Laws of the State of Kansas, 1865 (Topeka: S. D. MacDonald and Co., 1865), pp. 157-158.

³⁶State of Kansas, The Laws of the State of Kansas, 1867 (Leavenworth: Bulletin Book and Job Office, 1867), pp. 263-267.

³⁷Wayne Gard, The Chisholm Trail (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), p. 66.

years 1872, 1873, 1876, 1877, 1879, 1881, 1883, 1884, and 1885 the Kansas legislature further enacted herd laws, but the driving of infected cattle into the eastern part of the state was not completely stopped.

Ranching and cattle grazing as a local business for the bluestem pastures of the Flint Hills made great gains during the late 1870s. Facing several years that proved to be unfavorable to crop farming, stock raising boomed, and people now claimed the bluestem pasture region to be a most opportune ranching area.

A Ranching Economy is Established

During the decade of the 1880s, far reaching changes were to come to the bluestem area. There was a further encroachment by the small farmer upon the outer fringes of the Flint Hills region, while more and more the upland pastures were turned into major grazing areas.³⁸ Between 1880 and 1883 many large southwestern cattlemen discovered that their ranges were overstocked and started looking for better grazing grounds.³⁹ This brought prosperity to the Kansas Flint Hills as these ranchmen either bought or leased grazing land, ranging in size from one thousand to ten thousand acres.⁴⁰ This in turn led to the barbed wire

³⁸Malin, p. 11.

³⁹H. R. Hilton, "The Bluestem Limestone Pastures of Kansas," Twenty-sixth Biennial Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1929), p. 189.

⁴⁰Ibid.

fencing of the bluestem pastures. In 1882 nearly all the pasture land of the Flint Hills was still unfenced, but by 1884 practically all of this grassland had been enclosed.⁴¹ This led to greater emphasis upon the production of blooded stock and the development of heavier and beefier breeds. The volume of production continued to increase and by 1883 heavy shipments of thoroughbred bulls were roaming the bluestem pastures. Short-horn cattle had been the early favorite, but in time the Galloway and Angus breeds had become popular, to be followed by the Hereford, the Flint Hills most dominant breed.⁴²

As the railroads began to crisscross the plains, they served the development of the Flint Hills area in several ways. When the railroads received their land grants for helping construction costs they sometimes overlapped with other lines, leaving large tracts of pasture land unavailable for homesteading, and too expensive for the independent farmer.⁴³ This allowed large cattle corporations to acquire large tracts of unoccupied land. Another way the railroads served the Flint Hills region was that

⁴¹Ibid. This included an area of over four million acres located in eight different counties.

⁴²Malin, p. 12.

⁴³Helen Kling Zuercher, "The Flint Hills of Kansas: Description and Early Development," (unpublished research paper for Seminar in American Economic History, Kansas State University, July 29, 1968), p. 16.

many of the lines crossing the plains had feeder lines into the southwest, which served as shipping routes. Most notable was the Santa Fe railroad, which hauled cattle from the stock regions of the greater southwest to the bluestem pastures of the Kansas River region.⁴⁴

Within the area of the proposed Prairie National Park the pattern that continued to develop into the twentieth century was roughly that of the rest of the Flint Hills. The pasturing of southwestern cattle was continued in greater numbers than ever before, but there was also an emphasis placed upon the development of thoroughbred livestock owned by local interests.

As grazing methods became more refined, five basic patterns began to develop in respect to the Flint Hills pastures. One was the owner of southwestern herds shipping his cattle to Kansas to be grazed on leased pastures. A second was for Kansas ranchers to buy southwestern stock and graze the cattle themselves, and a third was for a man to own land in the southwest for cattle production and land in the bluestem region for finishing the livestock. A fourth method was for a middleman to buy the cattle from the southwest and lease a pasture in the bluestem region to fatten them for market and a fifth was for a rancher of the southwest to

⁴⁴Malin, p. 17. Other railroads that served the Flint Hills included the Missouri Pacific, the Frisco, Rock Island, and Missouri, Kansas, and Texas which had a line running from Parsons to Emporia to Junction City.

send a carload of cattle to the Flint Hills to be exchanged for grass fattened cattle before sending them on to market.⁴⁵

By the 1930s the bluestem pasture grazing operations had become quite refined. In the northern Flint Hills, the "Kansas Bluestem Pasturemen's Association" had been formed. It established general rules concerning the leasing and pasturing of grazing land and established minimum acreage allowances that depended upon the age of the cattle.⁴⁶

In more recent years, the pasturing enterprises of the northern bluestem regions have become even more complex. Financing has become a major problem and, due to the fact that capital turnover in the cattle business is slow, larger and larger amounts of money have become necessary. Small ranchers have had to give way to large stock farms, and large pastures and capital requirements have induced many brothers or fathers and sons to pool their funds. It has also brought into the cattle grazing industry many businessmen of the outside world. Doctors, lawyers, and, in particular, bankers, have become either sole owners or majority partners of the pasture lands.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 20. In these instances the rental paid was either by head per season for each age class or by the acre.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 23.

By the 1960s the area of the proposed Prairie National Park was being pastured in different ways by different owners. On some of the land, cattle were being shipped in from the southwest for summer fattening on leased land. Some of the land was owned and operated by outside corporations and businesses. A majority of the land, though, was still locally owned by farmers and ranchers, although few actually lived on the park site itself. With most of these people, their pasture land had become a part of a very intricate and well balanced agricultural business that included both farming and ranching. To these people, their pastures were a necessity for the summer fattening of cattle that had been feed lot fed on their farms during the winter.

Living in the thirty-four thousand acre park proposal of 1959 were seventy-one land owners that would be affected if the park was established.⁴⁸ When the proposal was increased to fifty-seven thousand acres an additional seventy-nine proprietors were to have land taken for a total of one-hundred and fifty land owners involved.⁴⁹ This figure included one-hundred and one families that lived within the confines of the proposed park and forty-four ranchers that lived outside the immediate area but depended upon pasture land that they owned.⁵⁰ Only five ranchers

⁴⁸Pottawatomie County Courthouse, "Deed Records," 1960.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Interview with Dave Carlson, Manhattan, Kansas, August 21, 1968.

that would be affected by a loss of land were renters.⁵¹ To most of the people, the prospect of giving up their land for the creation of a Prairie National Park would mean not only losing that land that had been in the family for several generations, but also the upsetting of their agricultural system. This would, in many cases, mean economic ruin.

⁵¹Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

PRAIRIE NATIONAL PARK PROPOSAL GAINS SUPPORT

A Grassland National Park for Kansas will keep for all of us forever a small island of God's world, a haven for his creatures and handiwork.
--Topeka State Journal

Prairie Park Recommendation Receives Wide Support

On April 28, 1959, readers of the Manhattan Mercury were greeted by the front page headlines announcing that Fred A. Seaton, the Secretary of the Interior, was recommending the establishment of a Grassland National Park.¹ East of the Tuttle Creek Reservoir but not actually abutting the mammoth lake that was in the process of filling, the park was to comprise thirty-four thousand acres of true tall-grass prairie in southwestern Pottawatomie County. Being the first that they had heard of such a development, residents of the proposed area read with interest and dismay this shocking news story.

They learned with others of the Manhattan area that this park idea was now an active project of the National Park Service and, once established, would be on an equal status with America's

¹Seaton, a long time leader of the Republican party, served as Secretary of the Interior from 1956 to 1961. Hailing from Nebraska, he was also a corporate officer in the Seaton Group which owned and operated a series of newspapers, farm magazines, radio, and television stations. The Manhattan Mercury was owned by this corporation. Seaton had grown up in Manhattan.

twenty-nine other national parks. Once acquired and conveyed to the Federal government, the park would be developed, maintained, and administered by the National Park Service. Under its guidance, the proposed park would be for the purpose of preserving the tall grass prairie in its natural state. It would also be dedicated to recreation for tourists, the appreciation of native flora and fauna, and as a source of research for Kansas State University.

News of the recommendation received hearty approval within Manhattan. J. T. Ryan, president of the Chamber of Commerce, called it "A tremendous addition to Manhattan and the state of Kansas." James A. McCain, president of Kansas State University, said, "This is a happy development not only for Kansas State University but for the entire Mid West area," while H. T. Gier, president of the Manhattan Area Park Development Association, called it "a real victory for a young organization."²

Around the state there were similar reactions. The El Dorado Times called it "as satisfying to Kansas as any other possession which can be imagined," while the Parsons Sun said, "The importance of the announcement to Kansas cannot be minimized," and the Garden City Telegram announced that "The whole state should be behind this move." From the Topeka Daily Capital came the comment that this is "something that fires the imagination of all nature lovers," while the Topeka State Journal said such news

²Manhattan Mercury, April 29, 1959. Dr. Gier is professor of zoology at Kansas State University.

"could hardly be more welcome, or opportune." From Kansas's two largest cities, the Kansas City Star related how a national park "could preserve for future generations a slice of the past in its unspoiled beauty," and the Wichita Eagle editorialized that "It is excellent news that the first hurdle in getting approval of a national park for Kansas has been passed."³

However, there were some rattlings of dissent. In a biting satire, the editor of the Hutchinson News forecast the comments that travelers to the park might have - such as, "Empty ain't it?, Should make two tons of hay to the acre. We must be getting to the edge of the desert."⁴ The most sincere opposition to Secretary Seaton's recommendation came from the Westmoreland Recorder, a local Pottawatomie County newspaper owned and edited by "Doc" Maskil. Asking why the park had to be in Pottawatomie County after they had already lost so much land to the Tuttle Creek Reservoir, "Doc" bitterly commented that "everyone seems to think it's a fine idea or so the daily papers would have you believe."⁵

In the days immediately following the proposal, Kansas supporters of the park were shaken from cloud nine by the prospect

³As reported in the Manhattan Mercury, May 4, 1959.

⁴Hutchinson News, April 31, 1959.

⁵Westmoreland Recorder, May 7, 1959. This publication served as the principal voice of the people of Pottawatomie County during their fight against the park.

of financing this two and one-half to three million dollar project. As there was no precedence for a federal appropriation to make the initial purchases necessary, donations were recognized as the best prospect. These donations, it was pointed out, might come from historical societies, private foundations, public subscription drives, the state legislature, scientific and conservation groups, or a combination of two or more such possibilities. It was also pointed out that to see such a project through, someone of considerable caliber and ability must become the active head of this drive.⁶

From around the state, support continued to pour in and it appeared that a national park was well on its way to being created. On May 17, 1959, the Kansas Association for Wildlife passed a resolution unanimously approving a national park for Kansas.⁷ Even within Pottawatomie County support was considerable outside of the immediate park area. If voted upon during May, 1959, the resolution would probably have passed in a county wide vote.⁸

Within Manhattan, organized support was also gaining headway.

⁶Manhattan Mercury, May 1, 1959.

⁷Letter from the Kansas Association for Wildlife, Inc. to Bill Colvin, May 6, 1960. Much of the material supporting the creation of the Prairie National Park comes from the private files of Bill Colvin, editor of the Manhattan Mercury.

⁸Interview with O. F. "Doc" Maskil, Westmoreland, Kansas, August 8, 1968.

Founded in 1958, the Manhattan Area Park Development Association was devoted to the promotion of the Tuttle Creek Reservoir and the establishment of a Grasslands National Park. At their first meeting, Dr. H. T. Gier had been elected president, William (Bill) Colvin vice president, Ray Edwards secretary, and Ernest Reinking treasurer.⁹ Becoming more active after the parks recommendation, a general meeting was held May 28, 1959 and a steering committee of nine was appointed. Heading the committee was H. T. Gier, the association's president.¹⁰ This committee's purpose was to organize support for the park and, in particular, put pressure on the Kansas legislature to make an initial appropriation for the creation of the proposed Grasslands National Park.

Doubts and Problems Begin to Develop

As the initial glee of Seaton's recommendation began to wear off, problems and doubts were raised. On June 4, 1959, residents of Pottawatomie County learned that their county valuations would be cut by more than \$775,000. Breaking the figure down, a total of \$649,000 would be taken from real estate valuation and \$126,000 from personal property valuation figured at the base rate

⁹The Colvin Files, Manhattan Area Park Development Association, Minutes of meeting of May 28, 1959. (Mimeographed.)

¹⁰Interview with Dr. H. T. Gier, Manhattan, Kansas, June 24, 1968. Gier gave up his position as chairman of the steering committee for what he called "personal reasons" and was replaced by Bill Colvin.

of \$18.81 an acre for the 34,521 acres of the proposed park. The property would be comprised of parts of three townships. These would be Green, Blue, and Pottawatomie and they would respectively lose 15,962, 12,374, and 6,186 acres.¹¹

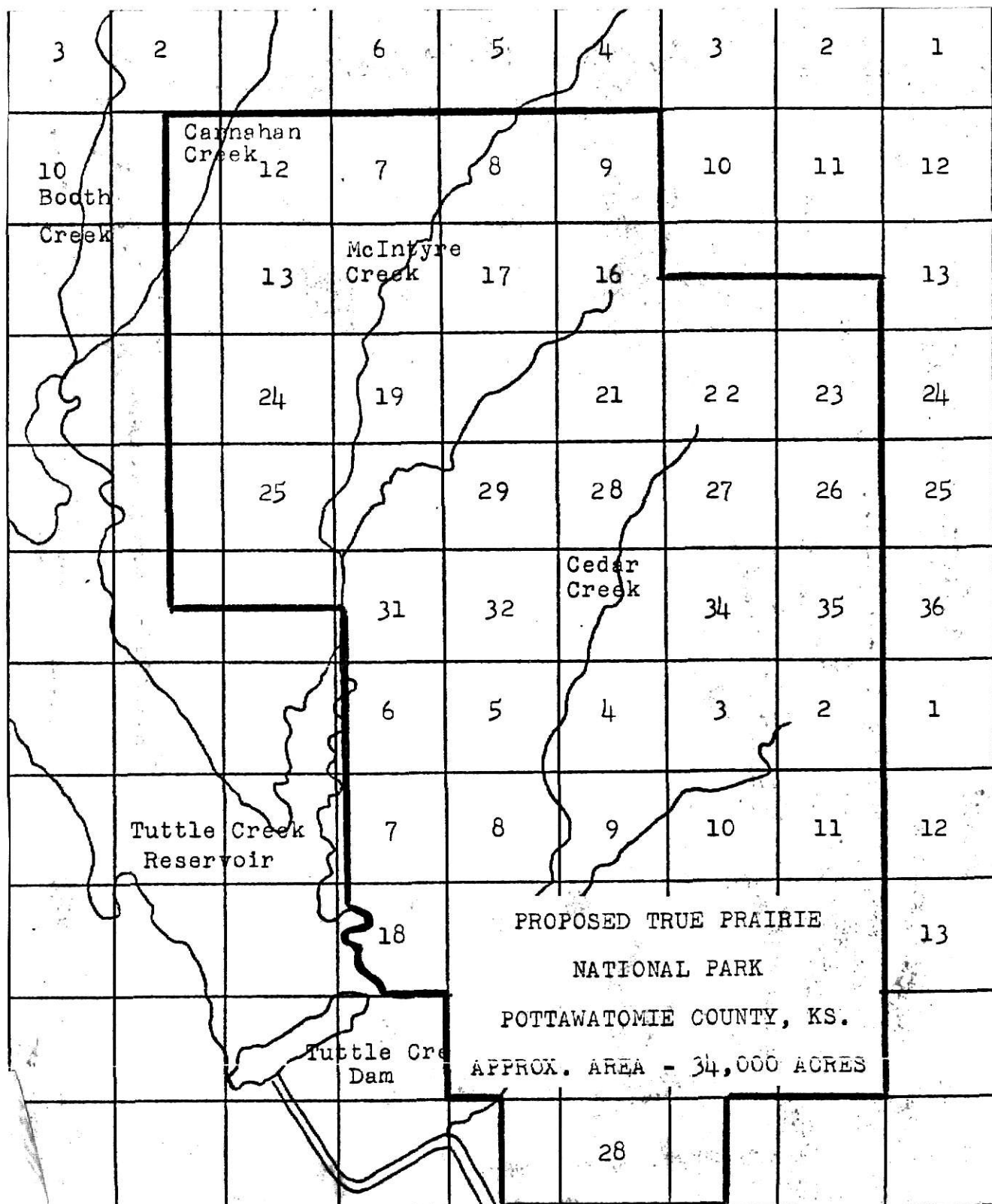
Another problem to arise was that concerning the construction of Kansas Highway 13 through the proposed park site. On June 6, 1959, Bill Colvin met with a delegation of the National Park Service and the Kansas Highway Commission to discuss the effects of Highway 13.¹² The Kansas Highway Commission reported that, while they were going to continue construction, they would do everything necessary to make it a suitable road for the needs of the National Park Service.¹³ On October 2, 1959, in a letter to Frank Carlson, acting Secretary of the Interior, Elmer Bennett cast doubts on the suitability and feasibility of the Pottawatomie County area because of Highway 13 construction.¹⁴ The following

¹¹Westmoreland Recorder, June 4, 1959. This information was furnished to the news media by Lloyd Hope, County Clerk of Pottawatomie County, who was preparing a report.

¹²The Colvin Files, Manhattan Area Park Development Association, Minutes of meeting of June 6, 1959. (Mimeographed.)

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Letter from Elmer Bennett to Senator Frank Carlson, October 2, 1959. Much of the material opposing the creation of the Prairie National Park comes from the private files of Mrs. Glen Dodge, a farmer's wife who lived in the area of the proposed park.



Source: U. S. Department of the Interior, Report on Proposed True Prairie National Park - Kansas, 1958.

day in a letter to James McCain, Fred Seaton said that he thought the highway was a detriment to the park proposal, but as yet was not giving up on the Manhattan area.¹⁵

Rumors were persisting, though, that an area north of Matfield Green in Chase County would be chosen instead for the Grasslands National Park. In late August, 1959, a news story was released by the Emporia Gazette that a site west of Emporia had been chosen, but noted that the ranchers in Chase County were violently opposed.¹⁶ Fearing the loss of the park, Bill Colvin informed the National Park Service that local objections were numerous in Chase County but "almost lacking in the Pottawatomie County area."¹⁷ On November 1, though, a Wichita Eagle Magazine exclusive stated that the National Park Service's second choice had been selected because Highway 13 was to bisect Pottawatomie County.¹⁸ This second choice would be in Chase County between Bazaar and Matfield Green, would comprise twenty-six thousand acres, and would have as its eastern boundary, the Kansas turnpike.¹⁹ The article went on

¹⁵The Dodge Files, Letter from Fred Seaton to James McCain, October 3, 1959.

¹⁶Westmoreland Recorder, August 27, 1959.

¹⁷The Colvin Files, Manhattan Area Park Minutes, June 6, 1959.

¹⁸Hal Conrad, "Flint Hills Park Idea Stirs Rebellion," Wichita Eagle Magazine, November 1, 1959, p. 6.

¹⁹Ibid.

to say, though, that residents of the area were against the suggestion forty-nine to nine, and were circulating petitions and writing to Congressmen.²⁰

By the late fall of 1959, the Manhattan Area Park Development Association was still confident. Bill Colvin assured members that, all things considered, progress was being made and that after his two summer trips to Washington to confer with government officials, the Association had every reason to be very optimistic.²¹

1960 - Prairie Park Proposal Makes Headway

The year 1960 began peacefully with regard to the proposed Grasslands National Park. Manhattan boosters were confident that Federal action would be taken soon and area residents of Pottawatomie County were convinced there was nothing they could do to oppose the proposal. Their only consolation seemed to be that at least they could commercially develop the zone between the park and the Tuttle Creek Reservoir. Making the best of a bad situation, the County Commissioners of Pottawatomie County adopted a resolution on March 14, 1960, approving the proposed Grasslands National Park, contingent on the fact that no attempt would be made to extend its boundary to the lakeshore.²² They also let it

²⁰Ibid., p. 17.

²¹The Colvin Files, Manhattan Area Park Minutes, June 6, 1959.

²²Pottawatomie County Courthouse, "Commissioners Journal," March 14, 1960, p. 495.

be known that they would appreciate the Federal government and the National Park Service directing all official mail directly to the Board of County Commissioners, Westmoreland, Kansas. Three days later there were rumors in the air that the park boundaries would be extended to the lake, taking in an area that Pottawatomie County officials felt was ideal for commercial, residential, and recreational purposes. Again the County Commissioners drew up a resolution, this time insistent that they be informed by direct correspondence from Washington.²³ Also taking up the cause was "Doc" Maskil, who sounded a warning to park officials when he editorialized that:

As yet, no organized fight has been made against the location of the Grassland National Park, within the boundaries of Pottawatomie County. But in our opinion if the Grassland National Park is going to deprive this county of reaping any benefits from the Tuttle Creek Dam, then it is time there should be.²⁴

By March 28, having still not heard any official word from Washington, the County Commissioners resolved that they would hold up all area road construction and development until they had met with National Park Service officials, hopefully within thirty days.²⁵

²³Westmoreland Recorder, March 17, 1960.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵"Commissioners Journal," March 28, 1960, p. 495.

As the weeks passed, support for the prairie park idea continued to grow. Within Manhattan, the Chamber of Commerce pledged by unanimous vote to support the grasslands park as being of "inestimable value to our State and Nation . . . and . . . will be of tremendous commercial benefit to all communities bordering thereon."²⁶ Contrary to the response that Pottawatomie County officials had received, they got a prompt reply of acknowledgment and appreciation from the National Park Service.²⁷ Other state agencies were likewise expressing opinions. In rapid succession the Kansas Federation of Garden Clubs, the Kansas Wildlife Association, and the Kansas Academy of Science went on record as supporting the establishment of the Grasslands National Park.²⁸

However, a snag appeared to be developing. On May 17, 1960, after several months delay, representatives of the National Park Service came before a Pottawatomie County Commission meeting. Not open to the public, its purpose was to acquaint the Commissioners with the park site proposals and to tell them the responsibilities of managing a Grassland National Park.²⁹ Pointing out the

²⁶The Dodge Files, I. C. Yeo letter to Conrad Wirth, March 26, 1960.

²⁷The Dodge Files, E. T. Seoyen letter to I. C. Yeo, April 12, 1960.

²⁸Westmoreland Recorder, June 9, 1960.

²⁹"Commissioners Journal," May 17, 1960, p. 497.

fact that Kansas was the only state west of the Mississippi River not to have any land under the National Park Service's jurisdiction, the park board went on to say that in its recommendations to Congress it would propose two sites, one with a buffer zone between the park and Tuttle Creek, the other without.³⁰ Two days after this meeting, the National Park Service went on record as saying that it needed the lake front for water and animal shelter. The County Commissioners retaliated by calling for a one mile wide strip for economic development.³¹

Sometime during the spring of 1960, an unsigned five page mimeographed circular was distributed by park supporters. It rehearsed the history and reasons for establishing a grassland park and praised Kansas for its farsighted goals. Confidently predicting its passage by Congress, the circular justified the selection of the Pottawatomie County area as being either superior or roughly comparable to all other possible locations.³²

On June 7, 1960, Glen W. Dodge, a farmer-rancher of the proposed park vicinity, received advanced warning of what was to

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Westmoreland Recorder, May 19, 1960.

³²The Colvin Files, This circular was written by Bill Colvin in the spring of 1960. In June, 1960, the thirty-thousand acre park discussed in this proposal had been dropped by the National Park Service in favor of a fifty-seven thousand acre site.

come. In a letter from Kansas Representative William H. Avery, Dodge learned that in the near future a bill would be introduced in Congress by Avery and by Kansas Senators Schoeppel and Carlson. It went on to point out that this would give Federal officials and possibly a Congressional committee the opportunity to come into the local area to gain the views of those concerned. Denying that he was necessarily in favor of the park, Avery stated that his intent was to have the bill sponsored by individuals personally concerned with the effects that such a proposal would have.³³

Two days later in an afternoon news release from Washington, the nation was informed that a bill (S. 3651 and H. R. 12538) authorizing the establishment of a Prairie National Park in Pottawatomie County, Kansas, had been introduced in Congress under the joint sponsorship of Senators Schoeppel and Carlson and Congressman Avery.³⁴ The Congressional contingent went on to issue a joint statement to be printed in the Congressional Record and immediately referred the bill to the Senate and House Committees on Interior

³³Mr. and Mrs. Glen Dodge became two of the most vocal opponents to the proposed park and were instrumental in helping to organize a functioning and effective opposition.

³⁴The bill as introduced in Congress used the term Prairie National Park for the first time. Prior to this date most accounts had formally referred to the proposal as the Grasslands National Park.

and Insular Affairs.³⁵

Within the statement, it was again pointed out that by introducing such a bill, government officials would have an opportunity to come to the region to gain first handviews.³⁶ Realizing that Congress was soon to adjourn and that nothing could be immediately expected, the Kansas Congressional delegation at least hoped that this would make it possible for the National Park Service to hasten detailed studies.³⁷ Pointing out that Kansas does not have a national park, the bill's sponsors said that this bill would stake the state's claim "to this valuable facility that will bring national attention to the major role played by the prairies in the settling and the civilization of our great Midwest."³⁸ They went on to express concern over the effect of the proposed park on the economy of the local area, but said they hoped that Federal studies would provide answers to some of the questions raised.³⁹ Calling for a deadline date of September 1, 1960, the Kansas Congressmen asked that an on-the-spot hearing be held to consider the proposal and make, if necessary, alternate proposals for official

³⁵U. S. Congress, Senate, Joint Statement of Senator Andrew Schoeppel, Senator Frank Carlson, and Representative William Avery, 86th Cong., 2^d sess., 1960, Congressional Record, 12178.

³⁶U. S. Congress, "Joint Statement Concerning a Bill to Authorize a Prairie National Park," 1960.

³⁷U. S. Congress, Senate, Congressional Record, 12178.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

and public consideration.⁴⁰

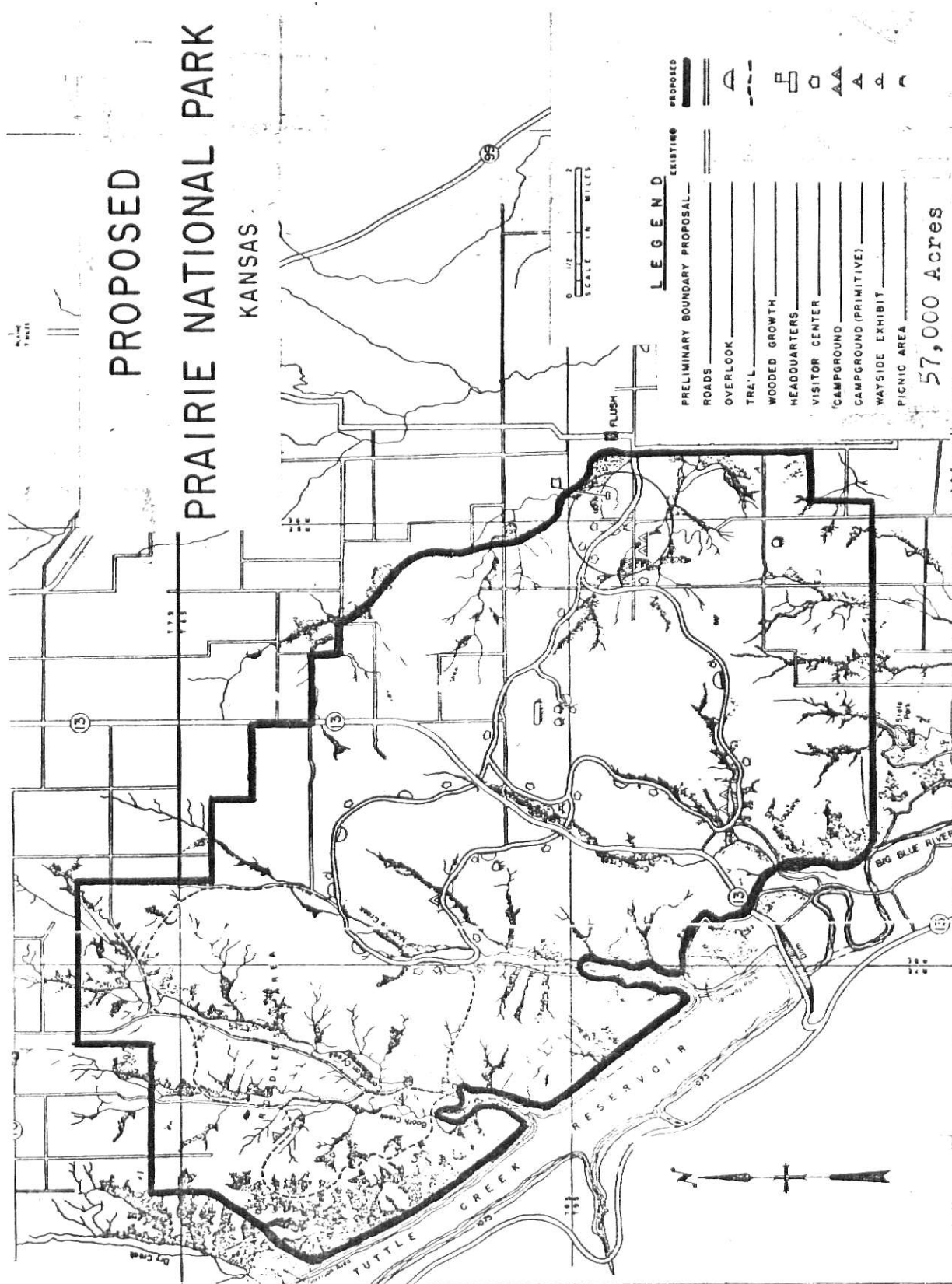
The joint statement that was released went on to rehash the early history of the park idea and then, in some detail, attempt to speculate on the economic implications of such a proposal. Calling for a park of fifty-seven thousand acres instead of the thirty-four thousand acres originally proposed, the Congressmen made it clear that these figures were by no means definite.⁴¹ In regard to persons living in the area, they noted that the National Park Service, unlike many other Federal projects, proceeds almost wholly on the basis of negotiations and if at all possible, prefers not to use condemnation. They further pointed out that such persons would probably be permitted to stay for their own lifetime.⁴² Quoting from Conrad Wirth, the Congressional statement handled the question of real estate tax losses by stating that in areas taken by the park service,

nearby communities have experienced increased employment opportunities; that commercial enterprises have expanded . . . that local tax receipts have become greater, and that adjacent property values have risen.

⁴⁰U. S. Congress, Senate, Congressional Record, 12178.

⁴¹This increased acreage figure was only printed in the Congressional Record and the bill itself probably was not known by most Kansas residents.

⁴²The land in this case, though, would be already owned by the National Park Service.



Source: St. Marys Star, March 30, 1961.

As examples, it was pointed out that in the Grand Tetons, local bank deposits from 1939 to 1960 swelled eleven times; also in the Cape Hatteras area the total assessed value of the surrounding land increased one-hundred and twenty-five percent during a nine year period from 1950 to 1959 while in the same area, tax rates were reduced from one dollar to eighty cents per hundred dollars.⁴³

In October, 1960, representatives of the National Park Service again met with the County Commissioners of Pottawatomie County. This time they left little doubt as to the outcome of the proposed park, stating that it would be built if the "sentiment of the people is for it," making it perfectly clear that the "sentiment of the people" did not mean those residents of Pottawatomie County but the nation as a whole. Speaking up to the National Park Service representatives, "Doc" Maskil stated that, "We could stomp our feet and raise all kinds of hell in the newspapers, and we would be just a voice crying in the wilderness," to which a park official agreed, "Yes, and a grass of wilderness at that." Telling rather than discussing, the park representatives went on to announce that the park would be comprised of fifty-seven thousand acres, an astounding figure to those persons that had not read the text of the Congressional bill.⁴⁴ Hope seemed

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Westmoreland Recorder, October 6, 1960.

lost to the park opponents as "public opinion" seemed to be gathering momentum daily, the latest endorsements coming from the National Geographic magazine and the Kansas City Flower and Garden magazine.⁴⁵

On October 27, "Doc's Dashes," an editorial comment, stated that there was no hope in fighting the park but that at least the local residents should try to get a just settlement. Seven days later, on November 3, National Park Service officials agreed to meet again with the County Commissioners to discuss the idea of a corridor between the proposed park and the Tuttle Creek Reservoir, but indicated that the Commission's chances were slim.⁴⁶

On November 5, in a letter to the National Park Service, Hurst Majors, a Manhattan real estate speculator, informed the park service that he could no longer defer development in Oak Creek Canyon, a portion of the proposed park site bordering on the lakefront.⁴⁷ Majors had already contracted for road construction, surveying and platting of lots, and commercial advertising in that area. Pointing out the loss that Tuttle Creek had already meant for the county, Majors asked why area residents should not at least have the right to participate in the commercial development of the area.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Ibid., October 13, 1960.

⁴⁶Ibid., October 27, 1960.

⁴⁷The Dodge Files, Letter from Hurst Majors to Hillary A. Tolson, November 5, 1960. Mr. Tolson was with the National Park Service.

⁴⁸Ibid.

Five days later, the zoning board of Pottawatomie County passed a resolution calling for the corridor to be kept open so that it might be commercially developed.⁴⁹

On November 30, 1960, the County Commissioners got their called for meeting with representatives of the National Park Service, at the Jayhawk Hotel in Topeka, Kansas, where it was hoped that differences concerning the controversial corridor could be worked out satisfactorily. Representing Pottawatomie County were the County Engineer, County Attorney, the three County Commissioners, and State Representative C. N. Bressler. Also in attendance were two representatives from the National Park Service, a representative from the Army Corps of Engineers, Senator Schoeppel, representatives from the offices of Carlson and Avery, and Glenn Miller, assistant director of the University of Kansas - Center for Research in Business.⁵⁰ The County Commission went on record as saying it was in favor of the proposed park, but feared a loss of fifty-seven thousand acres from the tax roll. To offset the tax loss, the Commissioners again proposed that a corridor from one-half to one mile in width be set aside for commercial development and that special legislation be introduced in Congress

⁴⁹Westmoreland Recorder, November 10, 1960.

⁵⁰"Commissioners Journal," November 30, 1960, p. 505.

to reimburse Pottawatomie County for the tax loss.⁵¹ Offering two proposals, the County Commissioners suggested either the area west of a line from Carnahan Creek to Olsburg or a one-half mile strip immediately south of McIntyre Creek; however, representative Chester Brown of the National Park Service stated that it would be impossible to build the park with the corridor.⁵² In closing the meeting, Glen Miller announced that he would immediately begin an economic study of the fifty-seven thousand acre expanse to determine such a park's impact on the Pottawatomie County area.⁵³

To further acquaint concerned citizens, the National Park Service printed up a mimeographed pamphlet entitled "Questions and Answers Concerning Prairie National Park Proposal in Pottawatomie County, Kansas." The pamphlet answered such questions as: what a national park is, why the prairie should be preserved, why the park should be located in Pottawatomie County, and how the land would be acquired. The pamphlet closed by devoting its greatest attention to the question, "Why is it desirable for the park, if authorized, to extend to the reservoir?" In answering this question, it was pointed out that first, any commercial or private development along the lake shore would create definite

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Westmoreland Recorder, December 8, 1960.

intrusions on important natural views, some of which are the most outstanding features of the proposed park. Secondly, this shore-front would provide necessary shelter and water for the park's animal population, and lastly, any type of reservoir recreation would be contrary to the ideals of the National Park Service.⁵⁴

Prairie National Park Support Reaches a Peak

1961 was to prove to be the peak year of support for those desiring to see a Prairie National Park created in Kansas. On January 8, the American Institute of Park Executives listed the prairie park as most important of four proposed parks that they felt were significant.⁵⁵ On January 26, the Pottawatomie County Commissioners printed a ballot in the Westmoreland Recorder to gain the sentiments of local residents. They found that by the ballots sent in, eighty-nine percent of the residents were opposed to the park if no corridor was included but that only fifty-five percent, opposed to forty-four percent, were against the park if provisions were made to include a buffer zone between the park and Tuttle Creek Reservoir.⁵⁶

⁵⁴This pamphlet was said by the National Park Service not to be construed as either indicating approval or disapproval of the park idea by the Department of the Interior since the proposal was still under consideration.

⁵⁵Manhattan Mercury, January 8, 1961.

⁵⁶Westmoreland Recorder, December 8, 1960.

In June, 1961, the report from the University of Kansas - Center for Research in Business written by Glenn H. Miller was ready. An eighty-page paper titled the "Proposed Prairie National Park - Pottawatomie County, Kansas," its purpose was to note current trends within the county, analyze the estimated economic impact of tourist spending, should such a park be established, and to indicate how much assessed value and revenue would be lost to the local governments affected.⁵⁷ This was figured with and without a corridor between the park's western boundary and Tuttle Creek Reservoir.

In the first chapter, Miller pointed out that, due to unstable and declining incomes from agriculture, a displacement of farm labor had been the trend and that, as of 1960, there were only an average of fourteen persons per square mile within Pottawatomie County. From 1954 to 1959, the number of farms in the county had declined by thirteen percent while farm sizes had increased by sixteen percent during the same time span. The predominant livestock base of operation was pointed out with forty-eight percent of those farms in Pottawatomie County involved in ranching while the state as a whole only had twenty-nine percent. In a composite picture of the Pottawatomie County economic situation, Miller was pessimistic concerning its agricultural base.

⁵⁷ Glenn H. Miller, "Proposed Prairie National Park - Pottawatomie County, Kansas," Center for Research in Business, University of Kansas, June, 1961. (Mimeographed.)

pointing out that its per capita income of \$1,299 was about seventy-eight percent of the state figure of \$1,676 and was declining in percentage.⁵⁸

In the second chapter an attempt was made to show some of the economic benefits that might be derived by the creation of a national park in Kansas by taking an average from surveys made at Kanopolis State Park (Kansas), Grand Teton National Park, and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Some interesting statistics were again presented, based upon the conclusion that by 1970 the park would have been in operation for five years. Predicting a yearly volume of 4,235,000 non-commercial vehicles within the general area of the proposed park, there would be about eight percent of those that would stop and visit or 338,800 cars a year. Estimating that each car visiting the park would contain an average of three and four-tenths persons, this would mean that in 1970, 1,152,000 persons would visit the Prairie National Park. Again, finding it necessary to draw upon surveys made in similar situations, it was predicted that by 1970 about 806,000 of these visitors would not stay in the vicinity overnight, and would spend, on the average, \$1.77 per person or about \$1,427,000 per year. Figuring that about 345,000 visitors would stay overnight within the park vicinity and spend an average of \$13.36 each, this would

⁵⁸The statistics presented were compiled from material found on pages 3-14 of the Miller study.

mean an expenditure of \$4,618,000 annually or \$6,045,000 in total visitor expenditures. Noting that when tourist traffic and spending increase that the income of businesses serving the tourists also increases, an attempt was made to estimate this spending stemming from and induced by tourist visitation. Using a figure of 1.79 as the business generating factor for Teton County, Wyoming and multiplying that figure by the 1970 spending figure of \$6,045,000, it was estimated that altogether \$10,821,000 would be spent annually in the vicinity of the Prairie National Park. The report also noted that there would be additional spending pumped into the local economy by the purchase, construction, development, and maintenance of a grassland park.⁵⁹

In appraising the possible effect of the park's establishment on the financial situation of Pottawatomie County, the economic report, in the third chapter, concerned itself primarily with estimating the loss of revenue of real estate tax and personal property tax. Assessing the 1960 valuation of the proposed fifty-seven thousand acres at \$998,000 this total was derived by figuring it as eight percent of the total rural real estate value for 1960 which was \$12.4 million. Computing the tax loss from the valuation estimates and the 1960 levies, the potential loss in taxes levied on real property by all governmental units would

⁵⁹In an interview with the writer August 7, 1968, Dr. Raymond Hall suggested that the research report's estimates on expenditures within the proposed park may have been too low.

total about \$53,000 annually. On the basis of a survey of county records, it was estimated that the park area had a valuation for personal property of about \$217,000. At four and one-half percent this would mean a local tax loss for personal property of about \$11,000 or a combined tax loss of \$64,000 annually. It would take a tax of \$63.06 for each \$1,000 valuation to make up this deficit. This would be up \$2.83 from the rate of 1960. It was pointed out that this could be offset, though, by the increased tourist spending, the consequent increased incomes, and the increased capacity to pay taxes which would therefore mean that the burden of tax payment would not be materially increased.⁶⁰

Critics of the report were quick to point out inadequacies. It seemed to them that too many variables were used, especially in comparing the grassland area to areas that were greatly different in geography and appeal. They also felt the report did not do justice to the livestock industry by statistically showing the amount of capital that it was pumping into Pottawatomie County. Most critical was the fact that, in pointing out the money that tourists would spend, the report failed to indicate that a good portion of this sum would be spent outside the immediate county.⁶¹

⁶⁰This same information was written up by Miller for an article entitled "The Proposed Prairie National Park" which was published by the Kansas Business Review in December, 1961.

⁶¹Interview with Mrs. Glen Dodge, August 8, 1968.

During the summer and early fall of 1961 support for the establishment of a Prairie National Park continued to grow. In July, a very colorful and well written booklet of twenty-two pages was printed by the National Park Service. Titled "A Proposed Prairie National Park," this booklet was made possible by private donations made to the National Park Service. Containing color photos, verses, quotes, and a map, this booklet persuasively traced the history, the ecology, and the need for the preservation of a segment of America's disappearing native grasslands.⁶² Soon to follow was a statement of support for a grassland park from the Christian Science Monitor and a favorable editorial in the New York Times.⁶³ On August 21, Frank Lombard, President of the Kansas Chamber of Commerce, went on record as supporting the park, and three days later from far away Washington, D. C. the Evening Star gave editorial support. On September 17, the Topeka Capital-Journal Sunday Magazine carried an article, complete with pictures and map of the Prairie National Park, that might one day be. One week later the proposed park was the subject of an NBC newscast on "Chet Huntley Reporting." On October 9, the Kansas Forestry, Fish, and Game Commission adopted a resolution favoring

⁶²Manhattan Mercury, August 21, 1961; Washington, D. C. Evening Star, August 24, 1961.

⁶³Westmoreland Recorder, September 7, 1961; New York Times, September 7, 1961.

the park and Governor Frank Morrison of Nebraska stated, "I think the proposed Prairie National Park would be a tremendous asset not only for Kansas but for the entire Midwestern area as well" as he accepted an honorary title as director of the proposed Prairie National Park.⁶⁴

The next day the Kansas City Star boosted the park idea in an editorial, and two weeks later Bill Colvin of the Manhattan Mercury praised the support that was coming from the Topeka Daily Capital.⁶⁵ On October 30, the Wichita Eagle called the park a "fine addition to Kansas."⁶⁶

On October 5, 1961, the proposed Prairie National Park got its biggest boost with the creation of the Prairie National Park Natural History Association, Inc. Meeting in the state house in Topeka, W. F. Farrell of Manhattan was elected president, Floyd Amsden of Wichita was elected vice president, L. B. Carson of Topeka was elected secretary-treasurer, and Governor John Anderson was selected as the honorary president.⁶⁷ At this meeting, an invitation was sent to Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall to visit the proposed park. The association also called for

⁶⁴Manhattan Mercury, October 9, 1961.

⁶⁵Ibid., October 10, 1961; October 27, 1961.

⁶⁶Ibid., October 30, 1961.

⁶⁷Prairie National Park Natural History Association, Inc., Minutes of the meeting of October 4, 1961. Dr. Gier says that this was the first park meeting that Bill Farrell had attended.

the Kansas legislature to appropriate funds to show that Kansas was solidly backing the proposal.⁶⁸ To make the organization official, a constitution was drawn up to list objectives, provide for membership, select officers, state meeting dates, list rules, and provide for an order of business.⁶⁹ On October 23, the association held its second meeting, again in Topeka, with twenty-three persons in attendance.⁷⁰ As the order of business they acknowledged a letter from Stewart Udall, decided to incorporate as a non-profit association, and scheduled a meeting with Governor Anderson for November 11, 1961 to discuss the prospect of getting state aid for the initial expense of getting the Prairie National Park proposal off the ground.⁷¹

By the late fall of 1961, it appeared that positive headway was being made toward the creation of a grassland park. Opposition was minimal. Most opponents were resigned to the fact that a park would be established and were content to try and get a just settlement in the construction of roads and the development of the Tuttle Creek shoreline. Proponents were optimistic. Daily,

⁶⁸Manhattan Mercury, October 5, 1961.

⁶⁹Prairie National Park Natural History Association, Inc., "Bylaws," October, 1961. (Mimeographed.)

⁷⁰Prairie National Park Natural History Association, Inc., Minutes of meeting of October 23, 1961.

⁷¹Ibid.

support was coming from magazines, newspapers, garden clubs, wild-life societies, and governmental agencies. It appeared that no major problems and only some minor snags would need to be worked out before Congress would pass a bill and the Prairie National Park would become a reality.

CHAPTER V

OPPOSITION ORGANIZES TO FIGHT PRAIRIE NATIONAL PARK

Next in importance to the divine profusion of water, light and air . . . may be reckoned the beneficence of grass.

--John J. Ingalls

The Access Roads Controversy

Ironically, the opposition to the Prairie National Park that was to swell into a vital and active force was first organized to demand the construction of a system of county roads. As the Tuttle Creek Reservoir was filling, it was realized that existing county roads along the east bank of the reservoir would be inundated by water, once flood stage was reached. As part of the settlement relating to the construction of the Tuttle Creek Reservoir, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers had been given the responsibility to provide suitable roads for those people that owned land along the reservoir or in the Booth, Carnahan, Dry, and McIntyre Creek areas.¹ On January 19, 1959, this was formally announced when the Army Corps of Engineers contracted with the Board of County Commissioners of Pottawatomie County, Kansas, to construct certain roads in connection with the Tuttle Creek Dam

¹Hurst Majors, "A Layman's Brief on the Question," February 17, 1962. (Mimeographed.) Hurst Majors was developing the Oak Canyon area of the east shoreline of Tuttle Creek Reservoir at the time the park issue flared.

and Reservoir project.²

According to this contract, landowners throughout the affected area were required by condemnation and voluntary agreement to grant road easements through their property. As compensation, assurance was given that new roads would be constructed before the water in the lake blocked normal access. Following this announcement, the Pottawatomie County Zoning Board officially platted this land.³

Early in 1960, road construction had still not begun, and spring rains were filling Tuttle Creek Reservoir to near the road level. During the last part of March, the lower two mile section of road between Carnahan Creek and McIntyre Creek became inundated for several weeks.⁴ This forced area residents who sent children to Strong School, a rural school north of Manhattan, to, on occasion, keep their children at home or board them in Manhattan.⁵

Corps of Engineers officials promised prompt action. On April 28, L. E. Laurion, a district engineer, informed Representative William Avery that construction would begin during the summer

²Pottawatomie County, Kansas, Board of County Commissioners, "Resolution," September 25, 1961. (Typewritten)

³Majors, "A Layman's Brief on the Question."

⁴The Dodge Files, Letter from Glen Dodge to Louis G. Feil, April 23, 1960. The Corps of Engineers claimed that the road in question had been inundated by water for ten days. Glen Dodge claimed it had been three weeks.

⁵Ibid., Letter from Glen Dodge to William Avery, May 9, 1960.

of 1960, and that hopefully it could be completed before the 1961 flood season.⁶ The following day Louis G. Feil, the chief engineer of the Kansas City district, wrote to Glen Dodge that work would begin as soon as a right-of-way could be obtained, hopefully that summer.⁷ On May 18, 1960, Feil announced that plans and designs were being made and that the "acquisition of right-of-way has been continuously and progressively carried on."⁸

Land developers were also put to a disadvantage. The east bank of the reservoir, some of it purchased as early as February, 1959, was being counted on as a source of income from its development as a recreation area.⁹ Within Oak Canyon three hundred and two lots were formally platted and accepted by the Pottawatomie County Zoning Board, but because of a lack of adequate roads the market price on lots was running as much as one thousand dollars or more below those of a comparable location on the west bank.¹⁰

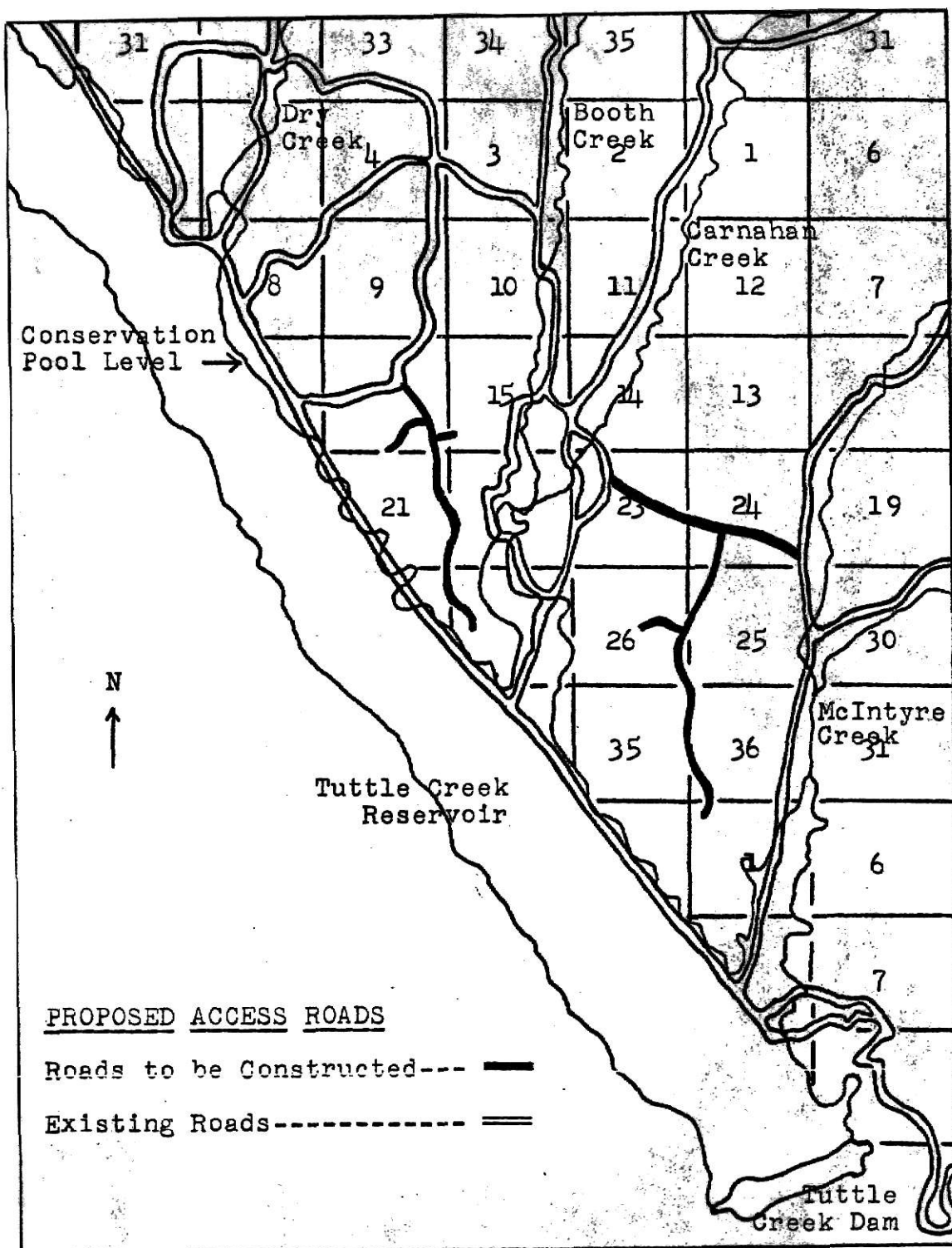
⁶Ibid., Letter from L. E. Laurion to William Avery, April 28, 1960.

⁷Ibid., Letter from Louis G. Feil to Glen Dodge, April 29, 1960.

⁸Ibid., May 18, 1960. Hurst Majors stated that in June, 1960, right-of-way had been purchased through the Oak Canyon area but that development had to wait until the Corps of Engineers announced exactly where the roads would go.

⁹Majors, "A Layman's Brief on the Question."

¹⁰Ibid.



Source: Manhattan Mercury, June 11, 1962.

On June 9, 1960, when the bill to create a Prairie National Park in Kansas was introduced in Congress by the Kansas Congressional delegation, those people demanding that access roads be constructed were struck a severe blow that in the long run united them in opposition to the entire park idea. In writing Section Three of H. R. 12583 and S. 36351, the identical bills proposing the creation of a Prairie National Park, the Kansas delegation stated that the bill:

shall preclude the development by the corps of access roads and such other development as would, in the judgment of the Secretary, defeat or impair the purpose of the park.¹¹

By the spring of 1961 nothing had been done about the access roads because nothing had been decided in Congress concerning the proposed Prairie National Park. To try and alleviate the problem, the Corps of Engineers proposed to delay the final impounding of water behind the Tuttle Creek Dam until at least July, 1961.¹² They were in hopes that a settlement could be reached by then. At the same time, they attempted to appease local residents by informing them that if the park bill failed to pass,

¹¹U. S. Congress, Senate, A Bill to Authorize the Establishment of the Prairie National Park in the State of Kansas, S. 3651, 86th Cong., 2^d sess., 1960.

¹²The Dodge Files, Letter from William Avery to Glen Dodge, April 10, 1961.

bids for the road construction would be issued in August and awarded in September.¹³

With the 1961 - 1962 school year approaching, local residents became more vocal in their demands for adequate roads. At the same time they were beginning to verbally attack the entire national park proposal. The letters that opponents were writing prompted Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall to inform area residents that the ultimate decision was in the hands of Congress, but "We are pleased to say we have been assured that H. R. 4885 and S. 73, dealing with the plains park, will be given a hearing at the second session of the 87th Congress."¹⁴

On September 25, 1961, interested parties met with the Board of County Commissioners of Pottawatomie County to demand the immediate start of road construction by the Army Corps of Engineers. Having twice before agreed to ask the Corps of Engineers to delay the construction of access roads, under pressure from the National Park Service, the Commissioners now called for immediate action. Noting that by the winter of 1961 - 1962 water would be impounded behind Tuttle Creek Dam and all existing roads inundated, the Commissioners adopted a resolution calling for the Corps of

¹³Ibid., Letter from A. P. Rollins to William Avery, May 11, 1961.

¹⁴Ibid., Letter from Stewart Udall to Charles Bietry, August 23, 1961. Bietry was in 1961 the chairman of the Pottawatomie County Democratic Party and an active voice opposing the Prairie National Park.

Engineers to proceed "at once and that no further delay be occasioned in the construction of such relocation roads."¹⁵ This was adopted despite the fact that another delay had been requested by the Corps, this time until March, 1962.¹⁶

During October and November, 1961, the access road question reached a climax that ended in a bitter anti-Prairie National Park movement. Early in October, Representative Avery privately toured the disputed area and agreed with the local residents that the Corps of Engineers had shirked its responsibility concerning the contract that had been signed.¹⁷ On October 17, Andrew P. Rollins, Kansas City district engineer of the Army Corps of Engineers, received a sharply worded letter from the Pottawatomie County Commissioners, accusing the Corps of offering a "payoff" to affected persons in lieu of the relocated roads and asking:

Are you or are you not going ahead with our contract, entered into good faith by representatives of the United States government and the people of this county.¹⁸

¹⁵Pottawatomie County, "Resolution," September 25, 1961.

¹⁶The Dodge Files, Letter from Charles Bietry to the St. Marys Star, September 28, 1961.

¹⁷Ibid., Letter from William Avery to Glen Dodge, October 11, 1961.

¹⁸Topeka Daily Capital, October 18, 1961. In a letter dated January 1, 1962, Mrs. Glen Dodge related to Charles Bietry how during the fall of 1961, Mr. Bradford, a civilian employee of the Corps of Engineers, had approached her husband and asked, "How much would you take to compensate you for your inconvenience for a year?" Glen Dodge's reply was that he would not consider it and only wanted a road.

The following day, Rollins refused to answer newsmen's questions but did state that "The man with the answer is on his way back from Washington right now," and that in the future "I refuse to subject any more of my people to criticism from Pottawatomie County."¹⁹

On October 26, 1961, area newspapers reported that a supposed deal had been worked out between the National Park Service and the Pottawatomie County Commissioners. As a compromise, the Commissioners reportedly reached an agreement that only seven and one-quarter miles of Tuttle Creek shoreline would be taken instead of the thirteen and one-half miles of the original park proposal.²⁰ Denying such charges, Commissioners went on record as saying that they were still holding out for a corridor, reserved for private development.²¹

At the same time it was announced that the Army Corps of Engineers had asked for a "closed door" meeting with the County Commissioners to discuss the access road problem. On November 2, this meeting was cancelled because word had not been

¹⁹Ibid. There was never any positive identification as to who this man might have been or what his answer was. "Doc" Maskil surmised that it might have been Secretary Udall giving the commands.

²⁰Westmoreland Recorder, October 26, 1961.

²¹St. Marys Star, October 28, 1961.

received by the Corps of Engineers from Washington as to what to say.²²

By December, 1961, the access road problem was still unsolved, but it was becoming of secondary importance to controversy swelling over whether or not a Prairie National Park should itself be authorized. Not completely dying out though, the road controversy flared on and off for several years. On March 26, 1962, a petition bearing the signatures of nineteen affected Pottawatomie County residents demanded that the County Commissioners take action to compel the Corps of Engineers to honor this contract.²³ This was done on May 31 when the County Commissioners filed a suit against the Army Corps of Engineers, despite the fact that the Corps had promised to build all access roads except the one from McIntyre Creek to Kansas Highway 13.²⁴ On June 21, Colonel A. P. Rollins of the Corps of Engineers called for the suit to be dismissed and announced that bids for eight miles of roads had been issued and would be opened July 12, 1962.²⁵ In

²²Westmoreland Recorder, November 2, 1961.

²³The Dodge Files, Westmoreland, Kansas, Petition Protesting the Delay of Access Road Construction, March 26, 1962.

²⁴Westmoreland Recorder, May 31, 1962. The National Park Service claimed that this stretch of road would ruin the proposed park.

²⁵Westmoreland Recorder, June 21, 1962.

October, Rollins announced that he hoped the park question would soon be decided and final road construction could be commenced, but by October, 1963, with the issue still unsolved word was received from Senator James Pearson that work would not be resumed until the adjournment of Congress estimated to be January 3, 1964.²⁶

Secretary Udall Makes On Site-Inspection

At a November, 1961 meeting of the Prairie National Park Natural History Association, an open invitation was extended to Stewart Udall, Secretary of the Interior, to make an on-site inspection of the proposed Prairie National Park.²⁷ Hoping to get some definite word from the National Park Service, an invitation was also extended to and accepted by National Park Service Director, Conrad L. Wirth. Planned for December 11, 1961, it was later announced that Udall and Wirth would come December 4.²⁸

On Sunday, December 3, a tentative schedule was announced as to the course of the visit. According to schedule, Udall and Wirth would arrive in Manhattan that night with National Park Service officials and several Kansas political figures. Early Monday morning, they would board U. S. Army helicopters from Fort

²⁶The Dodge Files, Letter from A. P. Rollins to Mrs. Glen Dodge, October 5, 1962; letter from Senator James Pearson to Mrs. Glen Dodge, November 8, 1963.

²⁷Manhattan Mercury, November 26, 1961.

²⁸Ibid., November 27, 1961.

Riley at the Manhattan Municipal Airport to begin an inspection tour. Accompanying Udall and Wirth would be Kansas Congressmen William Avery and Floyd Breeding, Democratic National Committeeman Frank Theis, Howard Baker and Chester Brown of the Region Two office of the National Park Service at Omaha, Colonel A. P. Rollins, chief of the Kansas City district of the Army Corps of Engineers, Matt Rezac, chairman of the Pottawatomie County Commissioners, and Lynn Burris, director of the Kansas State Park and Resources Authority. Following the tour, a meeting with county officials would be held, a luncheon in Westmoreland, and then an afternoon hearing aimed at gaining the viewpoints of those pro and con to the national park idea.²⁹

While all of this planning was going on, local residents of the proposed park site were never consulted. Having no formal organization, concerned citizens made several attempts to find out what would be the itinerary of the inspection tour, but in each instance they were given an "I don't know."³⁰ Disgusted at not being consulted or being asked permission to inspect their land, several area residents ran classified advertisements in the Westmoreland Recorder stating, "No Trespassing - to any of the

²⁹Manhattan Mercury, December 3, 1961. According to the original plan, Udall was to depart for Washington before the public hearings at Westmoreland, but he had a change of mind and stayed to hear the pro and con arguments.

³⁰Interview with Dave Carlson, Manhattan, Kansas, August 21, 1968.

National Park Service or their fellow travelers."³¹ These prompted "Doc" Maskil to comment:

Secretary Udall has just scaled Mt. Fujiyama in Japan, and now he's coming out to try his hand at Twin Mounds. But according to a couple "No Trespassing" notices in the paper this week he'd better choose his hills.³²

On the Sunday prior to the scheduled inspection, a dry run helicopter trip was made over the proposed tour route. Flying low over the inspection site, the helicopter spooked several horses that were cut up badly as they ran into a barbed wire fence. Upon arriving at Westmoreland the helicopter hovered over the town disrupting morning church services.³³

Consequently, by the time the government inspection tour began, local residents were in an uproar. Guessing that the inspection party would land near the Twin Mounds area, Carl Bellinger, a local rancher, was waiting as a one man reception party. Having received permission from Lowell Barr, the owner of the land where the helicopter sat down, Bellinger informed Udall, Wirth, and Avery that they were trespassing and he was asking them to leave.³⁴

³¹Westmoreland Recorder, November 30, 1961.

³²Ibid.

³³Interview with Carl Bellinger, Manhattan, Kansas, August 16, 1968; Dave Carlson interview, August 21, 1968.

³⁴Omaha World-Herald, December 6, 1961; New York Times, December 5, 1961.

Promptly boarding the helicopter, the inspection party traveled on to Westmoreland. In Westmoreland, Udall commented to reporters that Bellinger's action was a "very human reaction," but "It's too bad when a member of the President's Cabinet tries to take a walk he is told to get off."³⁵

Upon arriving at what was to be a private meeting with Pottawatomie County Commissioners, Udall and Wirth found a packed courtroom comprised mostly of local residents displeased with the park idea. Listening to a barrage of protest centering around a theme that the grasslands are not disappearing and are in better shape at the present than at anytime in the past, Udall showed sympathy to the inconvenience and hardship brought on local residents. He predicted though, that "with an all out, bipartisan effort" the Prairie National Park would be authorized in the next session of Congress.³⁶

By that night, news of the day's events had reached the major wire services. At 3:00 A.M. Carl Bellinger received a call from the New York Journal American wanting to know about the incident and if he had had shells in the gun he was supposedly carrying.³⁷

³⁵Omaha World-Herald, December 6, 1961; New York Times, December 5, 1961.

³⁶Manhattan Mercury, December 4, 1961.

³⁷Carl Bellinger interview, August 16, 1968. Many reports at the time of the incident claimed erroneously that Bellinger was carrying a gun when he ordered Udall off of the land.

The next day, papers from all over the country, including the New York Times, the Chicago Daily News, the Los Angeles Examiner, the Washington Post, and dozens of others, carried front page pictures and stories of the by this time famous incident; "Rancher Ejects Trespasser Udall."³⁸ By that evening, telegrams and telephone calls began pouring into the Bellinger residence, and on December 6, letters started arriving. In nearly every instance the writer of the letter heaped praise on Bellinger for standing up and exercising a taxpayer's and citizen's rights against the bureaucracy and oppression of the Federal government.³⁹

Twin Mound Ranchers Organize

Heartened by the support that was being shown their cause from around the country, Prairie National Park opponents began to feel they had at least a chance. Prior to the Udall trip, there had been only feeble attempts at an anti-park organization. On several occasions though, opponents had gotten together after hearing of a pro-park meeting and, unannounced, invited themselves in.

³⁸Westmoreland Recorder, December 14, 1961.

³⁹Ibid. Bellinger states that he received over four hundred letters of which only two unsigned ones criticized his action. Many of the letters were written by people who had had a similar fight with the Federal government concerning the condemnation of land. In some cases a small cash donation was sent to help fight the park proposal.



Man With the Hoe

Source: Los Angeles Times, December 6, 1961.

This was to change though, after the Udall trip. Secretly getting together with friends and neighbors, owners and lessees of the proposed park area began to mount an anti-park drive. Reluctant to inform newsmen of what they were up to, Bellinger would only say, "If the proponents of the park knew what we were doing they'd hop right on it."⁴⁰

On December 7, 1961, those interested parties that opposed the proposed grassland park held a mass meeting in the Green Valley school near Manhattan. Rehashing and solidifying their arguments as to why a Prairie National Park should not be created, these people selected a steering committee to further organize their efforts. On December 10, the committee met and selected Dave Carlson, a Manhattan farmer-rancher, as chairman; Wendell Moyer, from the Kansas State University Division of Extension, as vice chairman; Dr. John McCoy, a Kansas State University Professor of Agricultural Economics, as researcher and publicity director; Roland Irvine, a farmer-rancher, as treasurer; and Mrs. Glen Dodge as secretary. At this meeting it was decided to present their case to a nationally televised audience. Planning on a ten minute segment, they decided to allot five minutes to scenes of the proposed park and two and one-half minute segments to both the opponents and proponents of the park. Plans were also

⁴⁰"I'll Stand Right Up to Him - Again," Grass and Grain, (January 2, 1962), p. 3. What Bellinger was speaking of was the idea of presenting a television show.

discussed to begin a campaign for funds, and it was announced that contributions could be sent in care of Roland Irvine.⁴¹

Holding another general meeting December 14, the opposition decided to name the organization the "Twin Mound Ranchers," a name taken from the location of the by this time famous Bellinger - Udall confrontation. It was also decided that another general meeting would be held December 29 for all interested persons, and that anyone who would sign a petition against the park proposal would be considered a member of the organization.⁴²

On December 29, a crowd of more than two hundred persons gathered at the Pottawatomie County Courthouse. Spurred on by a Carl Bellinger statement that, "I'll stand right up to him again," the crowd cheered time and time again as proposals were made as to how to combat the park. Dave Carlson informed those in attendance that a petition had been sent to Senators Schoeppel and Carlson and Representative Avery, and that the pro and con television show would be taped by WDAF-TV of Kansas City and then sent on to the National Broadcasting Company. John McCoy announced that contacts had been made with all livestock auctions, the Kansas Livestock Association, and the livestock terminals at St. Joseph, Kansas City, Wichita, and the Drovers Telegram asking for support.

⁴¹Westmoreland Recorder, December 14, 1961.

⁴²Ibid., December 21, 1961. This meeting was scheduled for 8:00 P.M. at the Pottawatomie County Courthouse.

A plea was made to each individual in attendance to write at least four letters to officials, and although some proposed that they still fight for a corridor for the park, Bellinger informed them that "the park itself was the battleground."⁴³

Riding the wave of support that was building, park opponents continued their fight. In area newspapers, two large advertisements were taken out. Written by Dave Carlson and Mrs. Glen Dodge, the first one pointed out economic reasons for opposing the park, and the second discussed what opponents considered a National Park Service myth that the grasslands were vanishing.⁴⁴ Printed up as handbills, they were circulated to interested persons along with several other mimeographed sheets that gave various reasons for opposing the creation of a prairie park.

To help in the fight, financial support from concerned citizens of the proposed park region began to pour in. Ranging from one dollar to one hundred and fifty dollar contributions, altogether sixty-two parties contributed a total of one thousand and fifty-four dollars.⁴⁵

⁴³"I'll Stand Right Up to Him - Again," Grass and Grain.

⁴⁴Twin Mound Ranchers, "The Prairie National Park." (Mimeographed.) This circular was written in the early spring of 1962. One of the arguments used was that the Kansas Farm Bureau Federation had polled its county units and found of those that replied that thirty-three of thirty-six were opposed to a prairie park. In possession of Mrs. Glen Dodge.

⁴⁵Twin Mound Ranchers Association, Treasurers Records, 1962. (Handwritten.) In possession of Mrs. Glen Dodge.

From around the nation a similar response was beginning. People from as far away as Alaska began to write letters. Some sent small contributions, some said they wished they could, some told of similar events in which they had lost land by Congressional action, but nearly all favored the stand of the Twin Mound Ranchers and praised their determination. All together, two hundred and fifty-three letters containing seventy-seven dollars were received of which eleven said they were opposed to what the ranchers were fighting for.⁴⁶ From St. Joseph, the livestock market joined the fight. Glen Pickett of the Kansas Livestock Association gave his support and Whitley Austin, editor of the Salina Journal, agreed that a national park would make the area more unnatural than it already was.⁴⁷

Recognizing the ground swell that park opponents seemed to be getting, the Prairie National Park Natural History Association completed plans for incorporation January 6, 1961.⁴⁸ At the

⁴⁶Ibid. Some of the more interesting letters came from people who identified themselves as members of such organizations as: John Birch Society, Arizona Mothers for Earl Warren's Impeachment, Colorado Committee for Economic Freedom, Conservative Society of America, and Christian and Anti-Communist Crusade of California.

⁴⁷"I'll Stand Right Up to Him - Again," Grass and Grain; Salina Journal, December 7, 1961. On March 22, 1962 the Kansas Livestock Association formally went on record as opposing the park.

⁴⁸Incorporators were Governor John Anderson, Alf Landon, Frank Theis, Charles Arthur, W. F. Farrell, H. T. Gier, and Raymond Hall.

same meeting a call was made for financial contributions to be made, pointing out that this was a non-profit organization.⁴⁹ On February 21, another meeting was held but only twelve persons attended. After Bill Colvin discussed the success of his recent trip to Washington, a motion was made to open an account at the First National Bank of Topeka, and in account 8508, opened February 23, 1962, six hundred dollars was deposited.⁵⁰

Park Proposal Enters Kansas Politics

The Prairie National Park proposal was for the most part a non-partisan political issue. Recommended by Fred Seaton during the Eisenhower administration and introduced in Congress by Senators Schoeppel and Carlson and Representative Avery, the proposed grassland park was widely accepted by Republicans. With the verbal support of President Kennedy, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, and Kansas Democratic National Committeeman Frank Theis, Democrats were likewise receptive. On the local level though, the Democratic central committees of Riley and Pottawatomie

⁴⁹Manhattan Mercury, January 7, 1962.

⁵⁰Prairie National Park Natural History Association (PNPNHA), Minutes of meeting of February 21, 1962. This account was opened from a contribution of six hundred dollars given by Lawrence Wagner in the name of himself, Walter Moyer, and Robert Osburn. This was the only deposit ever made. In possession of William Colvin.

Counties were opposed, as was Democratic State Senator Alvin Bauman of Sabetha. Even though the Republican committees of these counties never went on record as opposing the park, many of those residents within the park area were registered Republicans.

Early in 1962, the proposal for the Prairie National Park shifted to the Kansas state legislature. At the time of the October 23, 1961 meeting of the Prairie National Park Natural History Association, W. F. Farrell, president of the association, appointed a seven man committee to discuss with Governor John Anderson and the Senate and House Ways and Means Committees the possibility of a state appropriation of funds to get the park project started.⁵¹ Meeting with Governor Anderson November 11, the seven man committee, comprised of State Senator Joe Warren, State Representatives Charles Arthur, Donald Joseph, and Marvin Clark and Dr. E. Raymond Hall, Bill Colvin, and W. F. Farrell, asked for a state appropriation of \$550,000 as Kansas' share for establishing a prairie park.⁵²

On January 9, 1962, Governor John Anderson asked the state legislature to appropriate \$250,000 as an expression of "good faith" for the establishment of the Prairie National Park, saying that this would be a "great step forward for recreational development in our state."⁵³ Eight days later, about one hundred persons crowded

⁵¹PNPNHA, Minutes of meeting of October 23, 1961.

⁵²Manhattan Mercury, October 24, 1961. Warren and Joseph were Democrats while Arthur and Clark were Republicans.

⁵³Ibid., January 10, 1962; State of Kansas, Governor's Budget Report 1962 (Topeka: State Printing Plant, 1962), p. 490.

into the meeting room of the Senate Ways and Means Committee to attend a hearing concerning the \$250,000 appropriation proposal. Listening for two hours, the committee, headed by Republican Senator A. W. Lauterbach, was given a rehash of the arguments for and against the park, that by this time were well memorized but no less vocal. On several occasions chairman Lauterbach had to threaten to close the hearings because of outbursts.⁵⁴

With the Kansas budget session getting close to adjournment, action was not long in coming. Discussed in the Senate Ways and Means Committee, it was decided that \$250,000 was too much and that a more appropriate sum would be \$100,000. Upon reaching the floor of the Senate as Bill 27, the issue was heatedly debated. In a vote taken January 26, it appeared the measure was dead as the bill was voted down seventeen to sixteen, but later that same day a motion was made and carried to reconsider the appropriation.⁵⁵ On January 30, the Kansas Senate picking up where it left off in debating pro and con over the appropriation, heard a motion made

⁵⁴Topeka Daily Capital, January 18, 1962. At the hearing Dr. John McCoy, Professor of Agricultural Economics at Kansas State University, took sharp issue with the Glenn Miller economic report claiming that the report made no allowance for potential tax revenues from the development of the east shore of the Tuttle Creek Reservoir.

⁵⁵The Dodge Files, Letter from Alvin Bauman to Dave Carlson, February 13, 1962. Bauman claimed that the bill was unconstitutional under Article 2, Section 16 and Article 2, Section 9 of the state constitution.

by Senator Paul Lamb to kill the measure.⁵⁶ By a standing vote though, Lamb's motion failed twenty-one to thirteen.⁵⁷ In an attempt to make the most of the situation, Senator Alvin Bauman moved to make the appropriation contingent upon a two and one-half mile corridor between the park and Tuttle Creek, but it failed by a voice vote.⁵⁸ By a vote of twenty-eight to two, the appropriation was passed as part of the state parks bill and sent to the House.⁵⁹

When the bill got to the House, the going was no less rough. The State Affairs Committee voted eleven to four to strike from the State Parks Authority bill the national parks appropriation amendment, but the Ways and Means Committee re-instated it, eleven to ten with the chairman breaking the tie.⁶⁰ Sent on to the floor of the House, the measure was hotly debated for three hours in the longest single debate of the budget session on the only Saturday that the representatives were called to meeting. Voting first on

⁵⁶Topeka Daily Capital, January 31, 1962.

⁵⁷Letter from Bauman to Carlson.

⁵⁸Manhattan Mercury, January 31, 1962. In jest, Senator Lauterbach proposed that the \$100,000 be appropriated for a dam in his home county (Thomas) which had no streams but might attract tourists. Another Senator retorted that it should be named "Dam Lauterbach."

⁵⁹Topeka Daily Capital, January 31, 1962.

⁶⁰Westmoreland Recorder, February 8, 1962.

the appropriation amendment, it carried sixty-one to fifty-two.⁶¹

With the first big hurdle cleared, the entire measure passed seventy-nine to twenty-six and was sent back to the Senate for its final approval.⁶² This was accomplished, and on February 5, Governor Anderson signed into law the controversial \$100,000 appropriation only minutes before the House voted to have the bill brought back to their chamber for further consideration.⁶³

Opponents Wage All-Out Fight

During the spring and summer of 1962, park opponents waged a well organized and thorough campaign in an attempt to defeat the proposed Prairie National Park. Behind the leadership of Alvin Bauman, Charles Bietry, and Mrs. Glen Dodge, the Twin Mound Ranchers conducted a program aimed at reaching all Americans, and in particular those that would have some bearing on the final outcome of the grassland park. When newspaper editors wrote pro park articles, opponents countered with "Letters to the editor." When television and radio announcers commented on the need for a prairie park, the Twin Mound Ranchers demanded equal time. Most importantly though, they sat down and wrote countless letters to the Senators and

⁶¹Topeka Daily Capital, February 4, 1962. The vote was bipartisan. Thirty-six Republicans and sixteen Democrats voted no and thirty-nine Republicans and twenty-two Democrats voted yes.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid., February 6, 1962.

Representatives that would decide the fate of the bill.

As news media broadcasts covered the events of December, 1961, and January, 1962, interest in the proposed park became widespread and news coverage increased. In January, WDAF-TV of Kansas City taped the film strip planned by the Twin Mound Ranchers. On January 23, Dev Nelson, sports director of WIBW-TV of Topeka, Kansas, asked for listeners' opinions to be sent in so that he might air some of these during his evening sportscast.⁶⁴ On January 30, in a WIBW-TV editorial, Thad Sandstrom presented a pro-park appeal to the listening public.⁶⁵ Equal time though, was offered to the anti-park side by allowing Alvin Bauman to tape a film clip.⁶⁶

Nationally, the park controversy also got coverage. Besides newspaper editorials such as one from Williamsburg, Virginia titled "Udall the Magnificent," park opponents were getting their opinions aired through television and radio broadcasts.⁶⁷ On February 3, a United Press International feature by Norman Runnion titled

⁶⁴The Dodge Files, Letter from Alvin Bauman to Dev Nelson, January 24, 1962.

⁶⁵Ibid., Thad M. Sandstrom, "Prairie Park and Television," WIBW-TV Editorial, January 30, 1962. (Mimeographed.)

⁶⁶Bauman's comments were meant to economically prove that the park's value would not be what some people claimed it would.

⁶⁷Virginia Gazette, December 15, 1961.

"Revolt on the Prairies - A World Horizons Special" was broadcast nationally. Presenting both sides of the story, Runnion rehashed the conflict from the Bellinger - Udall incident to the present and closed by saying:

Win or lose, it is a war in which the good guys and the bad guys are all mixed up. Congress alone may have to decide whether the good side is that of the park service . . . or that of the rights and beliefs of a hardy group of men and women⁶⁸

Exactly one month later on March 3, a national television special titled "Land" focused a segment of its broadcast on Westmoreland and the proposed park site area.

Periodical articles were also giving park opponents exposure. On January 9, 1962, the Kansas Farmer carried an article expressing reasons pro and con for a national park.⁶⁹ On April 16, The Cooperative Consumer, in a three page feature complete with pictures, presented the sentiments of local area residents. Harking back to the same basic arguments, the article pointed out that this park would violate the rights of private property, hurt the live-stock industry, ruin the finances of Pottawatomie County, and

⁶⁸Norman Runnion, "Revolt on the Prairies - A World Horizons Special," United Press International, February 3, 1962. This news special was taped for national broadcast. In possession of Mrs. Glen Dodge.

⁶⁹Ralph Foster, "As Kansas Farmer Sees It," The Kansas Farmer, January 6, 1962.

further aid the trend toward government socialism.⁷⁰

Within Congress, 1962 was a year in which little attention was given to the proposed Prairie National Park. Informing his constituents that Congressional action would soon be coming on S. 73 and H. R. 4885, Representative Avery was forced to eat his words in announcing on May 8, 1962, that there was little likelihood for committee action, at least in the House of Representatives, during the 87th session of Congress because of a heavy work load.⁷¹

Such news was disheartening to park supporters. Believing that action would be soon in coming, they were discouraged by the House announcement but still entertained ideas that possibly the Senate could soon make an investigation and begin hearings.⁷² They realized, though, that this would add fuel to the anti-park movement and that demands for access road construction and Tuttle Creek shoreline development would continue to increase. Park supporters were beginning to comprehend that each of these setbacks made the possibility of a national park for Kansas more remote.

⁷⁰Bob Beasley, "Bad Day at Twin Mounds," The Cooperative Consumer, April 16, 1962.

⁷¹Westmoreland Recorder, April 26, 1962; Manhattan Mercury, May 9, 1962. At the same time that Avery said action would soon come, he commented that the character of the park plans had changed so greatly since it was first proposed that it was now a project of the Kennedy administration. This prompted Alvin Bauman to comment in speaking of Avery that "It's a slick way to get the heat off his back. I've heard of changing horses in the middle of the stream but I've never heard of the horse asking someone else to pull the load."

⁷²Manhattan Mercury, May 10, 1962.

If Congress was paying little attention to the park proposal in 1962, the park opponents were making up for it by paying a great deal of attention to Congress. Writing ream after ream, Twin Mound Ranchers were making sure that their views were known by all on the floors of Congress. To further implement the effect of their propaganda, a mimeographed sheet was prepared and distributed which contained the names of the thirty-two members of the House of Representatives and the seventeen members of the Senate that comprised their respective committees on Interior and Insular Affairs.⁷³ Also included were the names of the Kansas Congressional Delegation and how to properly address each of these distinguished Americans.

By the end of 1962, park opponents were encouraged and proponents were disappointed. After all, a park bill had been introduced in two Congresses and still there was no action. To complicate matters, access roads were being constructed and the Tuttle Creek shoreline was being developed. Still, there was a great deal of support for a national park in Kansas and proponents were heartened by the fact that it might be introduced again. As the Wichita Eagle editorialized, "There will be need in the coming

⁷³This sheet was a suggestion sent to the Twin Mound Ranchers from people that were fighting the Current, Eleven Point, and Jacks Forks Rivers proposal in Missouri.

months to gird for a new effort to gain its approval in the next session of Congress."⁷⁴ As 1963 approached, both sides prepared for battle. 1963 would be the year of decision.

⁷⁴Wichita Eagle, October 8, 1962.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEFEAT OF THE PRAIRIE NATIONAL PARK

These are the gardens of the Desert,
these
The unshorn fields, boundless and
beautiful,
For which the speech of England has
no name--
The Prairies.

--William Cullen Bryant

Prairie Park Politics - 1963

The fall and early winter of 1962 was a period of lull in the prairie park battle, but with the new year approaching both opponents and supporters picked up activity. On December 24, 1962, the Prairie National Park Natural History Association held a strategy meeting in Topeka. At the meeting W. F. Farrell stepped down as president, and Henry Jameson, editor of the Abilene Reflector-Chronicle, succeeded him. Elected vice president was H. T. Gier with L. B. Carson being elected secretary-treasurer.¹ Not losing faith, the association decided to make an all-out effort to get the park proposal introduced as early as possible in Congress in hopes that action would soon be forthcoming.

While park boosters were writing to Congressmen, the Twin

¹Topeka Daily Capital, December 26, 1962. Up to this time, Jameson had not been active in the organization but he was drafted to accept the position in the PNPNA because of his political influence within the state.

Mound Ranchers were wondering what was going on. Carefully reading the text of both Governor Anderson's and President Kennedy's proposed budgets, they noticed no appropriations for the Prairie National Park. Rather than being elated they were leary. They remembered only too well how Tuttle Creek had been authorized by Congress in 1938 without any appropriation, leaving people in suspense until 1951 when the time was more opportune and money could be secured. Fearful of the same type of cliff-hanging tactic, the Twin Mound Ranchers renewed with vigor their letter writing. Senator Alvin Bauman suggested that it would be money well spent to hire Charles Bietry and Frank Theis to contact the committees in Washington that would act upon the park issue if reintroduced to Congress.²

Although there was bipartisan support, both for and against the park, political feelings did flare in the early months of 1963. They centered around what were thought to be the political aspirations of Representative William Avery. In January, Frank Carlson informed Alvin Bauman that he was willing to let the park issue die as it was, in his opinion, a dormant matter.³

²The Dodge Files, Letter from Alvin Bauman to Dave Carlson, January 23, 1963.

³Ibid., Letter from Charles Bietry to Alvin Bauman, January 31, 1963. Bietry spent a great deal of his time informing area residents of what he thought were the political actions of William Avery, both in opposition and support to the proposed park.

On February 14, Twin Mound Ranchers, who were mostly Republican, were informed by Senator Carlson that Avery intended to introduce within the next two or three weeks a bill calling for authorization but no appropriation of a Prairie National Park.⁴ This action befuddled area residents since Avery had informed them the previous fall that the park issue was now a Kennedy matter and contrary to his original plan.⁵ They dismissed their puzzlement in part after being informed that Avery was being pressured by park director Wirth and Secretary of the Interior Udall. This was refuted, though, in a February 8 letter from Udall to Alvin Bauman in which he stated that "neither I nor Director Wirth have requested Congressman Avery to reintroduce the bill."⁶

Within the Prairie National Park Natural History Association, action was continuing. On February 10, a listing was sent out to previous members asking for 1963 dues.⁷ On March 1, a payment was made to Bill Colvin of \$267.77 for a recent trip he

⁴Ibid., Letter from Charles Bietry to Bob Brown, February 14, 1963.

⁵Ibid., Letter from Charles Bietry to Alvin Bauman, January 31, 1963.

⁶Ibid., Letter from Stewart Udall to Alvin Bauman, February 8, 1963. It appears that Avery, looking ahead to the governorship race in 1964, was trying to keep support in Pottawatomie County by calling the park a Kennedy-Udall project while in Riley County and the rest of the state he wanted it known that if the park passed that he had sponsored it.

⁷Ibid., Letter from L. B. Carlson to E. Raymond Hall, February 10, 1963. This list included the names of such Kansas notables as Alf Landon, Karl Menninger, Nyle Miller, and Stanley Stauffer.

had made to Washington to check on the status of the grassland park proposal and to attempt to win support from Congressmen.⁸

On March 4, 1963, the long awaited news was received that Senators Frank Carlson and James Pearson and Representative William Avery had introduced into their respective chambers of Congress identical bills (S. 986 and H. R. 4424) calling for the establishment of a Prairie National Park in Pottawatomie County, Kansas. Worded differently than the two previous bills, these called on the Secretary of the Interior to be permitted to authorize such lands:

as he determines are necessary and desirable to preserve representative portions of the prairie grasslands and the native wildlife: Provided, that the area as designated shall not exceed sixty thousand acres.

To help the Secretary determine such an area, it was proposed in the bill that there be established an advisory commission to be composed of seven members as follows: (1) the chairman of the National Parks Advisory Board; (2) two members selected by the Secretary from among individuals recommended by the Board of County Commissioners of Pottawatomie County, Kansas; (3) two members selected by the Secretary from among individuals recommended by the Governor of the State of Kansas; and (4) two members selected by the Secretary of the Interior. Contrary to the statements made

⁸PNPNHA, Minutes of meeting of March 1, 1963. The payments made were \$147.27 for plane fare, \$62.50 for hotel, \$8.00 for cab fare, \$45.00 for lunches for Senators, and \$5.00 bus fare.

earlier to Pottawatomie County residents by Avery, that he did favor a corridor and that the access roads should be built immediately, the bill contained a clause that, its passage:

shall preclude the development by the corps of access roads and such other development as would, in the judgment of the Secretary, defeat or impair the purpose of the park.

The final section of the bill stated what most area residents most feared to hear, that if passed; "There are hereby authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act."⁹

As news of the bill's introduction reached Kansas, both opponents and proponents had reason to fight that much harder. On March 31, H. T. Gier informed L. B. Carson that he would be in Washington and was wondering if there was "anything ripe for picking."¹⁰ On April 2, the Prairie National Park Natural History Association was billed \$36.01 by an Abilene firm for stationary and envelopes.¹¹ The following day an appeal was made to the Kansas

⁹U. S. Congress, Senate, A Bill to Authorize the Establishment of the Prairie National Park in the State of Kansas, S. 986, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963. Senator Carlson explained his reason for introducing the bill in a letter to Mrs. Dodge, March 14, 1963. He indicated that since it was introduced in the House it would give the Senate better control over it if it was also introduced in their chamber.

¹⁰PNPNHA Files, Letter from H. T. Gier to L. B. Carson, March 31, 1963.

¹¹Ibid., Invoice to Shadlinger-Wilson, Abilene, Kansas, April 2, 1963.

Association of Wildlife Clubs for monetary support for the prairie park idea.¹²

For opponents, their task was no less demanding. On April 15, 1963, the Twin Mound Ranchers met to discuss appropriate action. It was decided to continue writing letters but also, when possible, make speaking engagements to civic clubs, social organizations, or anyone else who would listen. Put in charge of such activities was Mrs. Glen Dodge who began making speaking engagements to ladies clubs. Whenever possible she tried to persuade them to write to the various members of the Congressional committees acting on the park issue.¹³ As Senator Alvin Bauman suggested to Dave Carlson, "The next few months are very important, so use everything to your advantage possible."¹⁴ To Mrs. Dodge he wrote, "it's now or never."¹⁵ On May 1, 1963, the Board of County Commissioners of Pottawatomie County, Kansas issued a six point statement concerning the proposed park. In the statement they went on record as being strongly opposed to its creation because: (1) the grasses were not disappearing, (2) the county had already lost Tuttle Creek

¹²Ibid., Letter from L. B. Carson to Mrs. Ralph White, April 3, 1963.

¹³The Dodge Files, Letter from Alvin Bauman to Mrs. Glen Dodge, April 16, 1963.

¹⁴Ibid., Letter from Alvin Bauman to Dave Carlson, April 16, 1963.

¹⁵Ibid., Letter from Alvin Bauman to Mrs. Glen Dodge, April 16, 1963. Bauman even suggested that Mrs. Dodge should run against Avery for his Congressional seat in the coming election. She declined.

land, and (3) the proposal would forestall shoreline development of the Tuttle Creek area.¹⁶

Prairie National Park proponents suffered another blow on May 4, 1963, when Secretary of the Interior Udall made an appearance in Wichita at a Kansas Democratic party Roosevelt-Truman fund raising dinner. Speaking before a crowd of over five hundred, Udall predicted that the park proposal would fail because of what he called a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Kansas Congressional Delegation.¹⁷ "We're strongly for it," he said "but so far the Kansas delegation has lacked the enthusiasm and drive necessary."¹⁸ Speaking to a closed audience later that afternoon, Udall also noted that there seemed to be a singular lack of interest in the Interior Committees of both Houses, and as of the present several other projects had a higher priority.¹⁹ Retorting to these charges, Kansas Senator James Pearson said Udall's remarks were "completely unsupported" and "politically motivated."²⁰ He went

¹⁶Pottawatomie County Courthouse, "Commissioners Journal," May 1, 1963.

¹⁷Topeka Daily Capital, May 5, 1963.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹The Dodge Files, Letter from Charles Bietry to Roy Currie, May 6, 1963.

²⁰Manhattan Mercury, May 10, 1963.

on to comment that requests had been made in both houses of Congress to hold on-site hearings in Kansas.²¹

Park supporters did not lose faith, though, because at the time Udall was in Wichita, Larry Knowles, the regional chief of proposed park studies of the Omaha office of the National Park Service, was in Westmoreland. His mission was to gather material for a report to be made to the Department of the Interior. Spending three days at the task, he reported that the prairie park proposal was one of the top five in the nation, and that he felt certain that it would be established.²²

On-Site Senate Hearing Held

In July, 1963, both opponents and proponents of the proposed Prairie National Park got their wish, a chance to personally air their opinions to a Congressional committee. Plans were announced for the trip by Kansas Senator James Pearson on June 26 when he phoned the Manhattan Mercury. He announced at that time that there would probably be visitation by six Senators of the Public Lands Committee of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee and possibly six other "officials" concerned in some way or another with the National Park Service. He also announced that after an

²¹Ibid.

²²Westmoreland Recorder, May 9, 1963. The specific purpose of his mission was to update the information on land ownership in the area, including expected purchasing costs and population surveys.

on-site visit of the proposed park that hearings would be held in the Kansas State University Student Union, and that witnesses both pro and con would be invited to speak on an invitational basis.²³

Park supporters were elated. From the Kansas City Star came an editorial stating, "Once they stand on the spot we think the lawmakers will share our enthusiasm." The Manhattan Mercury commented that the "area will sell itself." From the Wichita Eagle came a facetious crack at the Twin Mound Ranchers when it editorialized:

If these hearings follow the usual pattern, there will be quiet, well prepared presentations by advocates of the park. Then these will be followed by opponents speaking more from emotions and personal interests than to the value of the park.²⁴

As July 8, the date set for the hearing approached, underhanded political tactics became more apparent. The Twin Mound Ranchers, having read that the Senate committee was coming, queried as to how many speakers they would be allowed at the hearing but were given no answer. Fearing they were being left out altogether, Dave Carlson called Senator Carlson and got his promise that the Twin Mound Ranchers would be given a chance to speak.²⁵ It was not until the day before the hearing, though, that

²³Manhattan Mercury, June 26, 1963.

²⁴Ibid., June 25, 1963; June 28, 1963; July 1, 1963.

²⁵Interview with Dave Carlson, Manhattan, Kansas, August 21, 1968.

Dave Carlson learned he was to speak by reading it in the Manhattan Mercury.²⁶ On July 7, an article in the Topeka Sunday Capital-Journal commented that plans had been made to guarantee that an incident similar to the one of 1961 would not happen again, and that even though the Twin Mound Ranchers are planning "one of the loudest protests at Monday's hearings," it would not be like the "crowd of Levi-clad ranchers," that had greeted Udall in Westmoreland two years earlier.²⁷

At the time Dave Carlson learned he was to speak, he also learned that there would be five witnesses for each side, each of the others having been extended a written invitation.²⁸ Speaking for the park would be Governor Anderson; Frank Lombard, former president of the Kansas Chamber of Commerce; Dr. E. Raymond Hall; Henry Jameson; and Don Wright, head of the Kansas Campers and Hikers Association. Speaking against the park proposal would be Roy Currie, chairman of the Board of County Commissioners of Pottawatomie County; William House, vice president of the Kansas Livestock Association; State Senator Alvin Bauman; State Representative Robert Brown; and Dave Carlson.

²⁶Manhattan Mercury, July 7, 1963.

²⁷Topeka Daily Capital, July 7, 1963.

²⁸Manhattan Mercury, June 26, 1963.

On July 7, Senator Pearson arrived in Manhattan to make final plans for the hearing and then that night, greeted the Congressional committee upon their arrival at the Manhattan Municipal Airport.²⁹ Coming to Kansas as members of the Public Lands Committee were Senators Alan Bible, chairman of the committee and Democrat from Nevada; Frank Moss, Democrat from Utah; Len Jordan, Republican from Idaho; Quentin Burdick, Democrat from North Dakota; and Milward Simpson, Republican from Wyoming. The only member of the committee not making the trip was Ernest Gruening, Democrat from Alaska.

Early on the morning of July 8, the committee began an on-site inspection of the proposed Prairie National Park. Beginning at Flush, near where the park headquarters would be located if authorized, a simulated bus tour was taken. To gain entrance to the land and prevent an incident similar to the Bellinger-Udall confrontation of 1961, three members of the Twin Mound Ranchers were permitted to accompany the Senators on the bus trip.³⁰

Serving as guide for the tour was Howard Baker, director of the Region Two office of the National Park Service in Omaha. At each stop, Dr. Tomanek of Fort Hays Kansas State College was called upon to discuss the grasses and answer any questions that the Senators might have. After nearly a hundred mile tour, some

²⁹Ibid., July 8, 1963.

³⁰Ibid., Twin Mound Ranchers making the tour were Earl Moyer, Dave Carlson, and Carl Bellinger.

of it by jeep over land the bus could not travel, the Senators returned to Manhattan for a luncheon and hearing in the Little Theatre of the Student Union.³¹

Before a nearly full house, Senator James Pearson began the proceedings that were to last nearly five hours, by offering some opening remarks. He stressed that this was a facet of America's natural beauty not represented in the national parks and that "It offered to all Americans, the challenge of the frontier, the best of nature and an appreciation of the vastness of our country." He went on to call for a favorable report from his colleagues and urged them to act quickly. He was followed by similar statements from Governor John Anderson and Representative William Avery.³²

Following these opening statements, proponents of the proposed park had their say. They pointed out the need for preservation of a representative area of the true prairie region, emphasizing that this was a part of American heritage that should be saved for future generations. They also argued that it would be of tremendous scientific value, especially to agronomists, microbiologists, and soil experts, and that the park with its own and

³¹KMAN Radio, Manhattan, Kansas, "Prairie Park Hearings," July 8, 1963. (Mimeographed) This broadcast was prepared for the 6:55 P.M. news report.

³²Manhattan Mercury, July 9, 1963.

the adjacent recreational facilities of Tuttle Creek, would be of greater economic value to the state than leaving it in ranchland.³³

Besides the proponents that had been formally invited, other witnesses were heard from who gave short oral statements summarizing written statements they had presented to the committee. These included Topeka Mayor Hal Gerlach, George Halazon, and Dr. Lloyd Hulbert. Hulbert submitted a statement of support signed by thirteen scientists from Kansas State University.³⁴

Following the statements made by park supporters, opponents were given their chance. As was the case with those favoring the park, others besides the invited opponents were permitted to make short remarks. These included Earl Moyer, Hurst Majors, John Armstrong, director of the Kansas Farm Bureau, Carl Bellinger, and last but not least Mrs. Glen Dodge.³⁵

Opponents of the proposed park argued in an equally convincing manner. They emphasized that there were already sufficient areas of grasslands in the public domain, that the grasses were not disappearing, and that this would be another case of the increasing encroachment of the Federal government on private land. They further denied they were overgrazing, pointed out the prospect

³³KMAN Radio.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid. The testimony of Mrs. Dodge, consisting of eight pages of printed material, made such an impression that parts of it were printed in several Kansas publications.

of prairie fires, and maintained that these pastures were necessary as a grazing area during drought years. They further alleged that the access roads promised, but not built by the Army Corps of Engineers, had denied them use of their land, that the county would lose fifty thousand dollars in taxes, and that the creation of such a park would cause one hundred and one families to have to move, would economically ruin forty-four others who owned land in the park site, and would affect five other families that lived in the park area but rented.³⁶

On several occasions during the hearings the Senators seemed especially inquisitive. They were most concerned about the access road problem and said they would look further into the matter.³⁷ They also showed interest in the reports given by opponents concerning their ranching operations and were amazed at the number of cattle that could be grazed on a section of land. Several of the Senators themselves had been former ranchers.³⁸

In closing, Senator Bible said that the files for the case would remain open for thirty days, and that any further evidence,

³⁶The Dodge Files, Statement prepared by Mrs. Dodge for presentation at Senate Subcommittee hearing, July 8, 1963. (Typewritten.); Kansas State University Collegian, (Manhattan) July 9, 1963.

³⁷Manhattan Mercury, July 9, 1963.

³⁸Dave Carlson interview, August 21, 1963.

facts, or testimony should be sent to Washington. He also commented that he could give no definite date for a decision but promised that "a decision will be reached just as soon as possible."³⁹

Following the hearing, Senator Pearson left little doubt that he was afraid the hearing had not accomplished what he had hoped it would. Refusing to speculate what the committee might decide, he noted that they had been more probing on details than many such committees. Dejectedly he commented, "We didn't bowl them over."⁴⁰

To others in attendance a similar opinion was felt. It seemed that the Senators were more interested in discussing ranching techniques than in being shown stuffed prairie chickens and asked how they would feel if such wildlife would become extinct.⁴¹

From around the state there was still hope. The Kansas City Star commented that "the process that may create the 31st national park has begun."⁴² The Great Bend Daily Tribune was even more confident. Noting that on July 9 the Interior Department had recommended to Congress that the park be established, the paper speculated that "the hearing was simply a formality."⁴³

³⁹Kansas State University Collegian, (Manhattan) July 9, 1963.

⁴⁰Manhattan Mercury, July 9, 1963.

⁴¹"Doc" Maskil interview, August 8, 1968.

⁴²Kansas City Star, July 10, 1963.

⁴³Great Bend Daily Tribune, July 10, 1963. The story was relayed by Charles Bietry to Senator Bible.

Prairie National Park Proposal Defeated

In the weeks following the Senate hearing both opponents and supporters of the park idea kept up a flow of letters to Washington. Taking Senator Bible at his word, that any evidence to be considered should be sent within thirty days, one correspondent went so far as to send a news article about a young buffalo charging into a car in Illinois.⁴⁴ Charles Bietry alone wrote eight letters to Senator Bible between July 15 and August 1, plus letters to Senator Hubert Humphrey, Senator Mike Mansfield, and Attorney General Robert Kennedy.⁴⁵

Near the end of July, it was announced that a Public Lands Committee hearing would be held August 8 to consider additional evidence and hear any new arguments either pro or con. Among the Twin Mound Ranchers, it was decided to send Dr. John McCoy to testify.⁴⁶ On August 4, Dave Carlson received a letter from State Senator Alvin Bauman suggesting that it might be a good idea if Earl Moyer, Dave Carlson, or Mrs. Dodge would also attend.⁴⁷ Not

⁴⁴The Dodge Files, Letter from Charles Bietry to Alan Bible, August 9, 1963.

⁴⁵Duplications of the letters were given to Mrs. Dodge by Charles Bietry.

⁴⁶St. Marys Star, August 15, 1963.

⁴⁷The Dodge Files, Letter from Alvin Bauman to Dave Carlson, August 4, 1963.

knowing what the Prairie National Park Natural History Association was planning, Bauman felt that one of these persons would be beneficial since Moyer and Carlson had ridden the bus on the July tour, and Mrs. Dodge had made such a favorable impression at the Senate hearings. In closing, he said, "You folks have carried the load a long way don't let it down any now."⁴⁸ Speculating that if one would help, three would clinch it, Carlson, Moyer and Carl Bellinger flew to Washington to offer their support.⁴⁹

The hearing itself turned into a one sided affair. It began with Senator Pearson stopping by to give a short speech in favor of the park. He noted that it had widespread support in Kansas, that the state legislature and Governor Anderson were for it, and most of the state's major newspapers.⁵⁰ He then thanked the Senate committee for its consideration of the proposal and left leaving only National Park Service Director Wirth to give support to the park proposal.

For the next two hours, Wirth fielded a barrage of questions and attempted to answer them. Senator Gordon Allott of Colorado asked if it was not dangerous to turn buffalo loose in the same

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹St. Marys Star, August 15, 1963.

⁵⁰U. S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Prairie National Park, Hearings, before a subcommittee of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Senate, on S. 986, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963.

area with people. Senator Simpson of Wyoming followed by complaining that the park would take valuable grazing land out of production, that families would be displaced, and that the cost estimates were too low. After listening to Wirth's feeble reply, Simpson went on to comment:

Regardless of all the poetry the National Park Service puts into these projects we discommode and dislocate families, take land off the tax rolls, and in this case reduce the number of cattle, and that's why I'm unalterably opposed to acquisition of private land.

Senator Bible of Nevada then queried why the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge of Oklahoma was not good enough, and Senator Allott asked if a person could not get the same effect by driving across Kansas on Highways 40, 24, 70, 36, and the Kansas Turnpike. Allott went on to disagree that the park would draw one million visitors a year as was contended. Senator Jordon of Idaho noted that the park service had a very poor record in respect to grazing land and that "I would not want to see that happen to Prairie National Park, it is so lush and productive now."⁵¹ To complete the session, Carlson Moyer, and McCoy were permitted to speak and, being the only others in attendance, either for or against, their perseverance and concern commanded Senatorial respect.

It was decided at the hearing to keep the files on the

⁵¹Kansas City Star, August 8, 1963. Wirth used as an example the Wind Cave National Park when he said that buffaloes could be kept without any trouble to park visitors.

prairie park open until August 15 so that any late arriving material might be reviewed. Encouraged but not overly confident, the Twin Mound Ranchers kept up their correspondence, sending in a four page report August 12 concerning the faulty reporting given the Washington hearing by the Kansas City Star.⁵² To this, Bill Colvin bitterly retorted, "The feudin goes on, if it's not grasslands it's something else, the opposition always unable to see the forest for the trees."⁵³

Proponents of the grassland park did not completely give up. On September 1, 1963, a major feature called "The Wide Land" was run in the Kansas City Star. Claiming "We are not trying to sell the prairie to anyone," the article only asked that a person travel to the Flint Hills and give it a chance to sell itself.⁵⁴ From New York, a woman wrote, "I would thank Congress heartily for pulling the bill out of the attic and ratifying it before the area is lost to the ravages of individual enterprise forever."⁵⁵ On September 5, a New York Times editorial stated:

⁵²The Dodge Files, Letter from Dave Carlson to Alan Bible, August 12, 1963.

⁵³Manhattan Mercury, August 16, 1963.

⁵⁴This article was written by Ray Heady, the outdoor editor of the Kansas City Star, who spent several days in the park area on a camping trip with Bill Colvin.

⁵⁵New York Times, September 17, 1963. This was reprinted from a letter to the editor written September 6, 1963.



Source: Kansas City Star, August 12, 1963.

If the wind that sweeps across the waist high bluestem grass of the prairies and makes a poet think of the sea could blow through the halls of Congress, it might lift out of committee the long pending bills that would establish the Prairie National Park in historic Pottawatomie County, Kansas.⁵⁶

All was for naught, for on September 11, 1963, the Public Lands Committee of the United States Senate unanimously voted to table the matter on the grounds that in the committee's opinion, the area does not meet the criteria of a national park.⁵⁷ It was emphasized that the House of Representatives could still act on the matter but official sources recognized the handwriting on the wall. Senator Pearson called the action "a severe blow" and in the office of Representative Avery the feeling was one of "disappointment."⁵⁸ In Omaha, representatives of the Region Two office of the National Park Service termed the news "a big disappointment and a severe setback."⁵⁹ Bill Colvin expressed no regrets for the time and effort spent pushing the park idea but stated "We do not believe there is going to be a Prairie Park in Pottawatomie County, Kansas."⁶⁰

⁵⁶Ibid., September 5, 1963.

⁵⁷Manhattan Mercury, September 11, 1963.

⁵⁸Ibid. According to an article in the Topeka Daily Capital on September 12, Avery said he still thought the park bill would pass the House of Representatives but in the Kansas City Times of September 12, it was reported that Avery felt the Senate's action had killed the bill's action in the House also.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., September 13, 1963.

The Twin Mound Ranchers were jubilant, Dave Carlson commented he was "very happy" and all Carl Bellinger could initially say was, "good deal . . . good deal."⁶¹ Once over the shock Bellinger stated, "I'll tell you, we are going to celebrate this one. There isn't anyone in the world happier than me right now."⁶² With almost a twinge of sadness that the fight was over, Charles Bietry commented, "I hope Dave calls another meeting soon. I'd like to attend one where we didn't have something to get indignant about."⁶³

Any concern that the House of Representatives might later act on the measure was soon dispelled. In a letter to Mrs. Dodge on November 13, Representative Wayne Aspinall, chairman of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, wrote that he had no reason to believe that his committee would take any action on the Prairie National Park bill during the current session of Congress.⁶⁴ In July, 1964, Congress adjourned with no further action having been taken. A Prairie National Park for Pottawatomie County, Kansas was dead.

⁶¹Wichita Eagle, September 12, 1963. Carl Bellinger was attending a cattle auction at the time he was contacted by a reporter and told the news.

⁶²"Ranchers Win Park Fight," Grass and Grain, (September 17, 1963), p. 1.

⁶³The Dodge Files, Letter from Charles Bietry to Glen Dodge, September 12, 1963.

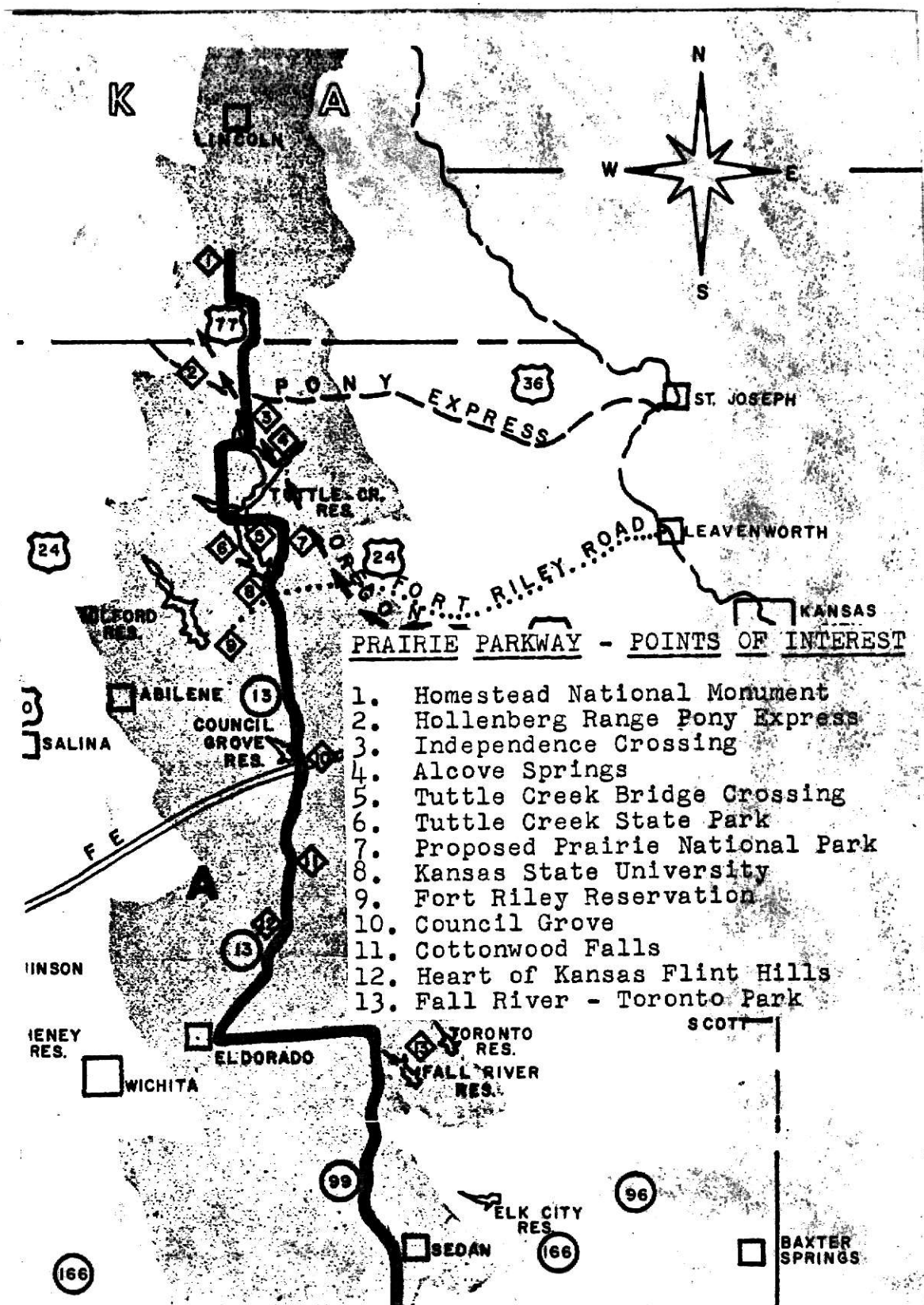
⁶⁴Ibid., Letter from Wayne Aspinall to Mrs. Glen Dodge, November 13, 1963.

Prairie National Park Proposal to Date

With the park proposal killed, an attempt was made in 1964 to offer a substitute. As there seemed to be no hope that a Prairie National Park would be created in the immediate future, there seemed to be some merit in officially recognizing a scenic roadway through the Flint Hills region. This idea was presented to the National Park Service in June, 1964, on behalf of the State of Kansas by C. V. Borgeman, chairman of the Kansas State Park and Resource Authority. Doing most of the groundwork for the movement to establish a parkway was Bill Colvin. He was hoping to see some result for the years of work that he had put in on behalf of the grassland park idea. Within the National Park Service, the roadway was termed "an interesting and encouraging approach to achieving national recognition for the tall grass prairies."⁶⁵

In 1965, prairie park supporters gained some consolation with the official recognition of the Prairie Parkway. It was hoped that this would be the first step in the recognition of a Great Plains Parkway - Tourway running north and south connecting North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Within Kansas, the Prairie Parkway was posted with signs and designated as following U. S. Highway 77 from the Nebraska border south to U. S. Highway 24. From there it proceeded southeast to Kansas

⁶⁵Manhattan Mercury, June 14, 1964. Colvin stated that this was not meant to take the place of a prairie park but only to give some attention to the Flint Hills region.



Source: Kansas State Historical Society, Map Files, 1965.

Highway 177 and then south to El Dorado. Proceeding east along U. S. Highway 54, the Prairie Parkway turned south at the junction of Highway 54 and Kansas Highway 99 and extended from there on to the Oklahoma border. Bryon Stout, the new chairman of the Kansas Park and Resources Authority, commented, "While the parkway idea deviates from the actual park, it offers more opportunities to achieve the same results."⁶⁶

The idea of a Prairie National Park for Kansas did not completely die out. Disappointed, the Prairie National Park Natural History Association held no meetings for several years after the bill had died in Congress, but on February 29, 1968, an invitation was sent to former members for a meeting to be held March 15 at the Ramada Inn in Topeka, Kansas.⁶⁷ Still incorporated, it was decided that a consensus opinion should be gained from members as to what to do in the future.

Invitations were sent to thirty-one members and on the invitation association secretary L. B. Carson stated that the principal purpose of the meeting would be to elect officers and care for any other business that might arise. On the afternoon of the meeting,

⁶⁶Kansas State Historical Society, "Prairie Parkway Tour News Release," 1965.

⁶⁷PNPNHA Files, Letter from L. B. Carson to members of PNPNA, February 29, 1968. One of the reasons for calling the meeting was to relieve himself of the job as secretary-treasurer.

twenty persons showed up, but Henry Jameson, president of the association, was not in attendance.⁶⁸

L. B. Carson began by reading the minutes of the last meeting, December 19, 1962. He pointed out that from dues collected and a six hundred dollar donation that the association's account now stood at \$558.29. For new business, Dr. Raymond Hall reported that the National Park Service still wanted a tall grass prairie park but not in Pottawatomie County. He went on to say that the most logical choices at the present, were in the Elk County area of Oklahoma or in Chase County, Kansas. It was emphasized that the area residents of such a proposed park site would have to be at least fifty percent receptive to the idea before it would be considered, and that it would need to be at least twenty-six thousand acres in size.⁶⁹ Elected as new officers were Dr. Hall, president; Dr. Gier, vice president; and Fred Stebbins, a free lance writer, secretary-treasurer.

After adjournment of the meeting, nothing more came of the prairie park proposal until October 11, 1969. On that date Secretary of the Interior Walter Hickel, speaking to an audience in Salina, Kansas, suggested that Kansas make another bid for its first

⁶⁸ E. Raymond Hall, Notes made at PNPNA meeting, March 15, 1968.

⁶⁹ PNPNA, Minutes of meeting of March 15, 1968. Hall reported that he did not think a park could be established in Chase County because of a lack of support from fifty-one percent of the residents.

national park. Indicating that he would be receptive to the idea, he said that Kansas must recognize that there is tremendous competition for national parks and that Oklahoma had already shown an interest.⁷⁰

The following day, State Senator Jack Steineger, Democrat from Muncie, submitted a bill to the Kansas legislature calling for the creation of a governor's commission to study the possibility of creating a Prairie National Park. Even though the legislature would not meet until January, 1970, Steineger was exercising his right to pre-file bills with the secretary of state.

The bill called for a seven member commission to be named by the governor and to include three Democrats, three Republicans, and a seventh member from any party. Members would make recommendations on size, location, and means of development of potential prairie park sites.⁷¹

With the coming of a new decade, support for a Prairie National Park picked up. On January 7, 1970, Steineger officially filed the governor's commission bill which would be introduced in the state legislature upon its convening.⁷² In the days that followed, conservationists, garden clubs, wildlife societies and newspapers lent verbal and written support to the park idea.

⁷⁰Topeka State Journal, October 14, 1969.

⁷¹Ibid. This was permitted by a state law passed in 1969.

⁷²Emporia Gazette, January 9, 1970.

On February 4, after formal introduction and referral to a committee, the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee heard twelve persons testify in support of the Steineger bill.⁷³ In what sounded like a rehash of arguments ten years earlier, persons testifying told of the disappearance of the prairies, the fact that Kansas lacked a national park, and the tremendous economic boost that such a park would make to the economy of the state.⁷⁴ Approved in committee, the bill was sent to the floor of the Senate. A preliminary voice vote on February 11, narrowly won approval and on February 12, the Senate passed the measure twenty-nine to ten and sent it on to the House of Representatives.⁷⁵

Within the House, the park commission bill met greater opposition. Introduced on the floor, the bill was sent to the House Federal and State Affairs Committee. Led by Representative Bob Brown, a Pottawatomie County rancher, the opposition claimed, as they had a decade earlier, that there was no need for a park, that it would destroy good grazing land, that it would disrupt a large number of farm families, and that it would ruin the Pottawatomie County economy. Paying heed to these arguments, the House

⁷³Wichita Eagle, February 5, 1970.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Topeka Daily Capital, February 13, 1970.

committee killed the measure twelve to seven on March 7, 1970.⁷⁶

In April, 1970, the question of a prairie park for Kansas was again raised. At a news conference in Manhattan during Environmental Awareness Week, Secretary of the Interior Hickel commented, "I like the idea," when asked his reaction to a prairie park. He went on to encourage Governor Docking to become more active by establishing his own commission to study the matter.⁷⁷ As part of the weeks events, a two hour seminar entitled "Do We Want a Prairie National Park?" was held in the Manhattan City Auditorium. Participating in what amounted to a rehash of the same time worn arguments were State Senator Jack Steineger, State Representative J. Bryon Brooks, Dr. E. Raymond Hall, and Mrs. Viola Dodge.⁷⁸

Since that time little has been said or done concerning the prairie park idea. Supporters still indicate some interest. Newspaper editorials speak of the desirability of a national park when world and domestic crises are at a lull. Scientists and environmental specialists mention a prairie park's need when speaking of population and pollution problems. Opponents still operate ranches on the land that was in question and indicate that if brought up again they will pick up the fight.

⁷⁶Manhattan Mercury, March 8, 1970.

⁷⁷Ibid., April 6, 1970. Docking did set up a commission but it has had no success on either the state or national level in getting government support for a Prairie National Park.

⁷⁸Citizens for a Better Environment, Manhattan, Kansas, "Environmental Awareness Week," April 5-11, 1970. (Mimeographed.)

So stands the issue of the Prairie National Park. At present there is no apparent reason to believe that one will ever be established, at least not in the hilly, tall grass pastures of Pottawatomie County, Kansas.

CONCLUSION

The history of the proposed Prairie National Park provides a classic in-depth study of the problems faced by the National Park Service in its attempts to set aside for all time, areas of America's natural beauty and wilderness. Even if the prairie park idea is never again seriously considered, the National Park Service will be faced with challenges to its other proposed parks that will be better organized and more formidable, having been able to draw upon the experiences of those who have fought the park service before. This will mean that the National Park Service and its supporters will themselves need to seriously re-evaluate their methods of acquiring unaltered lands if future areas of scenic magnitude are to be set aside as national parks.

At no time in the foreseeable future does it appear that the National Park Service will be free from controversy and receive an open armed welcome from all Americans. With the population increasing and technology making rapid advances in land use and management, it appears that the uses to which lands are put will become even more and more selective, primarily keyed to economically exploiting the land for its highest material value.

At the same time it does not appear that the National Park Service is a dying institution. Within the last few years the park service has made tremendous advances not only in the improvement and

expansion of national parks but also in national recreation areas, national rivers, national monuments, and national parkways. Even at the present, there are approximately seventy-five significant areas or historic places that the National Park Service has either on its proposal or suggestion list as potential places to be preserved for future generations.

What this will mean is an even more incongruous and controversial land use policy than before. No longer is it possible to set aside a tract of land because it is part of America's public domain as were Yellowstone, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, the Grand Tetons, and other now well known wonders of beauty and inspiration. Now in order to set aside lands, the National Park Service is being forced into battles with private owners, corporations, local municipalities, and state governments as can be witnessed by the controversies of the Indiana Dunes, Fire Island, the Redwoods National Park, and the proposed Prairie National Park.

For the National Park Service and its supporters, the lessons to be learned from studying the proposed Prairie National Park are immense. In hindsight these are often more easily seen and if the park service hopes to in the future see a grassland area or for that matter any other area set aside as an unimpaired natural wonder, its ability to deal with these problems is going to be most critical in deciding the fate of such suggested projects. Of foremost importance to the National Park Service and its backers should be a sincere

look at why such recent proposals as the Indiana Dunes, Fire Island, and the Redwood forests were successfully pushed to their completion and the Prairie National Park proposal was not. If this is to be thoroughly done, the problems faced must be viewed as not only national or local in origin but as a combination of both.

Although profusely different, each of the recent acquisitions of the National Park Service and the proposed Prairie National Park had unique similarities which united them. Each area was atypical in its beauty and wilderness and for the most part only slightly altered by the hand of man at the time it was proposed as a national park. All four areas were exclusive in that nowhere within the National Park Service was there anything quite like them. Fire Island had its unspoiled island solitude, Indiana Dunes was a sandy lakeshore, the Redwoods were a forested region unparalleled in size and majesty, and the Flint Hills prairies offered a sea of grasses. Each proposal was also an area that had been talked about by scientists and nature lovers for generations, and in each case it had been vaguely discussed as a region that the United States might wish to set aside at some future date in its unimpaired state.

Here the similarities end and reasons can be seen, some abstract, some concrete, why the Prairie National Park proposal was never carried through to its completion. In the case of the Indiana Dunes, Fire Island, and the Redwoods, the land to be taken belonged either to big corporations or the Federal government rather than

individual citizens who were using the land to sustain their livelihood. Nothing in the history of the United States has bred more contempt in Americans than the threat of the Federal government overextending its power or the evils of big business monopolizing the economy. On the other hand, nothing has bred more respect than the belief in the right of an individual to economically better his existence through his own toil and sweat.

A second reason for failure was the fact that the proposed Prairie National Park was only a small segment of a very similar and much larger area known as the Kansas Flint Hills while the other three areas were in and of themselves one of a kind and not natural wonders that could be found in any other place. Another very important ingredient in the defeat of the Prairie National Park was the fact that it was never sufficiently proven that the grasslands of the Kansas Flint Hills were disappearing or immediately threatened in any way. In the Indiana Dunes, steel mills were actually dredging out a harbor and leveling the dunes. On Fire Island, a four lane highway was in the offing and within the Redwood forests, lumber companies were sharpening their saws.

A fourth factor that must be considered is the reception that each proposal received from the administration in Washington. Within the Indiana Dunes, President Kennedy actively intervened by ordering a Bureau of the Budget investigation of steel company activities, and in the Redwoods, President Johnson ordered emergency legislation

to stop the harvesting of trees. On Fire Island, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall threatened court action to stop local development. Within the proposed Prairie National Park such action was never expressed. There was only token administrative support in the form of recommendations and in all correspondence, Secretary Udall pointed out the burden for the park's creation rested on the shoulders of local support. A final reason for the prairie park's failure was the unwillingness of the National Park Service to compromise. Within the Indiana Dunes, a settlement was finally reached after the western edge of the original proposal was given back to private development and two thousand and one hundred acres were included that already belonged to the Indiana State Park system. In the case of the Redwood forests finally being set aside as a national park was the fact that only sixty-one thousand acres were taken, down from the ninety thousand acres originally proposed. On Fire Island, the enacted legislation called for the taking of twenty-six miles of shoreline rather than Stewart Udall's proposal of fifty-two miles. In Pottawatomie County though, the National Park Service was emphatic in its demands. Upping the original proposal of thirty-four thousand acres to fifty-seven thousand acres, the park service rebuffed all compromise by saying it was not interested unless thirteen miles of the Tuttle Creek shoreline was included.

It is only speculative whether a Prairie National Park could have been established in spite of the errors already discussed. It

is evident though, that there were a series of blunders committed on the local level that at least contributed to the defeat of the grasslands park proposal. Foremost in importance was the selection of the Pottawatomie County site. This was a county that had already had a most unpleasant experience with the Federal government, in acquiring the land for the Tuttle Creek Reservoir. This had made area residents hardened, more convinced of the encroachment of the Federal government, and certain that a loss of fifty-seven thousand acres would economically ruin their county. Equally important was the experience gained from having already fought an agency of the Federal government, the Army Corps of Engineers. Battling them for years over the Tuttle Creek issue, area residents were experienced to the ways and extent that one might have to go in opposing a Federal agency. By the very nature of its purpose, the Corps of Engineer's activities had proven an invaluable testing ground for the strengthening of local opposition. Since the Corps in its Tuttle Creek battle had been dealing with more valuable land and more people than the National Park Service it had aroused more opposition and had showed area residents that their best chance was in presenting a well organized and united front. Furthermore, the Army Corps of Engineers provided the grindstone for area residents to sharpen their axes in the early 1960s by its failure to comply with its contract to complete the construction of access roads.

Other errors were also committed. The fact that area

residents were never consulted prior to the initial prairie park recommendation, prior to the introduction of the bill in Congress, or prior to the planned on-site inspection of 1961 were inexcusable. Such action gave the impression that Pottawatomie County residents were only uneducated "Levi-clad farmers" and that the park could be railroaded over their heads without any trouble from the local hicks. This was particularly evident in the disrespectful way that the Pottawatomie County Commissioners a group that had initially voted unanimous support for the proposed park, were ignored in their attempt to find out what was going on.

Within the state of Kansas, park boosters also committed blunders. In comparison with the Twin Mound Ranchers, the Prairie National Park Natural History Association was a weak organization. Its leadership lacked initiative and insight concerning the work that had to be done and was primarily picked because of supposed political influence. There were too many pretended chiefs and there were not enough workers that were willing to get out and campaign for the park. The organization itself was weak. Meetings were called at random, few people showed up, and a general lackadaisical attitude expressed that there was nothing to worry about. Another significant solecism was the lack of finances. Only one six hundred dollar contribution was ever collected by the Prairie National Park Natural History Association and except for a few "pay when you want" dues, this was the extent of the money collected

that was to be used to work for the creation of a project of such magnitude. Yet another serious blunder was the unwillingness of the Kansas legislature to take the initiative. Although in some recent cases, parks have been created despite opposition from the local state legislature, the National Park Service and Federal government have always been most receptive to a park's creation in instances where the state legislature has been solidly behind the proposal. The National Park Service has been reluctant to use condemnation and a park proposal has a much better chance of passing if the state involved proves willing to help purchase the desired land. This was never accomplished by the park boosters in Kansas. Only a one hundred thousand dollar "token" appropriation was made and that involved the Kansas legislature in its most heated battle of 1962. It appears quite evident that the prairie park boosters in Kansas were convinced that the only work that needed to be done was in the halls of Congress and that a grassroots movement of support was not of absolute necessity.

Last but not least was the underestimated power of the Twin Mound Ranchers. They were well organized, they were dedicated, they worked hard, and they used their resources to their greatest advantage through the efforts of such people as Mrs. Glen Dodge, Dave Carlson, Charles Bietry, and Alvin Bauman.

If a Prairie National Park is ever to become a reality, such errors cannot be made again and perhaps the opportunity has been

lost. Good leadership and good organization, so evidently lacking in the Pottawatomie County proposal, are needed. Hard work and total dedication will be necessary. A new approach is needed.

What the ultimate outcome for the National Park Service and its treasured preservations will be is hard to say. Even though the "Mission 66" plan of the National Park Service talked in terms of eventually completing its acquisitions, the proposals and suggestions show that they are still far from the goal. Possibly at some future date these aspirations may be realized but as individual case studies point out, it will be a long and hard fought battle that will grow in its intensity as America's lands become more and more valued. In the meantime, opponents of national parks can console themselves with the thought that the nation should "get out of show business" and "quit raising wild animals" while supporters of the park system morally arm themselves for battle with the words of former President Johnson: "If future generations are to remember us . . . with gratitude . . . we must . . . leave them a glimpse of the world as God really made it."

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THE PROPOSED PRAIRIE NATIONAL PARK: A CASE STUDY
OF THE CONTROVERSIAL NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

by

JAMES LESTER SWINT

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The National Park Service has had many stormy battles in its attempts to set aside areas of beauty and inspiration since its establishment as a part of the Department of the Interior in 1916. One of the least known but most controversial conflicts was a confrontation that raged across the Kansas Flint Hills in the late 1950s and early 1960s concerning a proposal to carve from the grasslands of Pottawatomie County, Kansas, a Prairie National Park.

This isolated incident provides a classic example of the theory; that because of the land use philosophy of the National Park Service to maintain land in an "absolutely unimpaired form," the creation of every future national park and monument will meet with violent opposition. With this in mind, one can view the controversial Prairie National Park proposal as not only an individual struggle but also in terms of a patterned confrontation between the land use philosophy of the National Park Service and the many other demanding agencies that are concerned with land use.

A background chapter presents a history of the National Park Service and the development of its ideals into a functioning organization in 1916. Here is traced some of the park service's early confrontations at such places as Hetch Hetchy and Jackson Hole and then a comparison of these conflicts to the more recent proposals of the Indiana Dunes, Fire Island, and the Redwood forests.

Next the history of the Prairie National Park proposal is discussed from the time of its origin over one hundred years ago.

During the 1930s, various reports were made concerning the feasibility of a grassland park but it was not until 1954 that the National Park Service entered into contracts with Drs. F. W. Albertson and G. W. Tomanek of Fort Hays Kansas State College to investigate potential park sites. In 1958, Dr. Tomanek further studied three areas within Kansas. From these Fred Seaton, the Secretary of the Interior, made a recommendation that a Grasslands National Park of approximately thirty-four thousand acres be created in the western part of Pottawatomie County, Kansas. The geology, climate, vegetation, and animal life of the recommended site are also discussed. Emphasis is provided about the inhabitation by man of the Flint Hills region and the establishment of a highly productive and specialized ranching economy.

On June 9, 1960, Kansas Senators Andrew Schoeppel and Frank Carlson and Representative William Avery introduced in their respective Congressional chambers identical bills calling for the establishment of a Prairie National Park of approximately fifty-seven thousand acres in Pottawatomie County, Kansas. From around the state and nation, widespread support was given the proposal. Even though no Congressional action was taken during the 86th Congress it appeared that the Prairie National Park proposal was well on its way to becoming a reality.

Then a detailed discussion is given of the rise of organized opposition to the prairie park proposal. Beginning in the spring and summer of 1961 when the Army Corps of Engineers failed

to honor a contract to construct roads along the east shoreline of the Tuttle Creek Reservoir because the proposal for a Prairie National Park was undecided, this opposition reached a peak of activity after Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall made an on-site inspection of the proposed park site in December, 1961. Called the Twin Mound Ranchers, the opponents of the prairie park launched a campaign of letter writing, speeches, and advertisements that were aimed at local, state, and national officials. The Prairie National Park proposal as a political issue, on-site Senate hearings, and the Washington hearings that culminated in the Congressional defeat of the park proposal are also discussed. Consideration is also given to attempts in the early 1970s that have been made to revive this issue.

The problems relating to the controversies faced by the National Park Service during its formative years are best described in Our National Park Policy - A Critical History by John Ise. Contemporary newspapers provided basic source material for the Prairie National Park proposal itself. The Manhattan Mercury, Topeka Daily Capital, and Westmoreland Recorder were most useful. Of special significance were the personal files of Mrs. Glen Dodge and William Colvin.