

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 Schoepel 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