

## **FROM BROME, BEANS, AND BOVINE, TO BLUESTEM, BLAZINGSTAR AND BISON**

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The need to rebuild and conserve examples of historic tallgrass prairie and savanna ecosystems is urgent, and yet our understanding of how to do this is confounded by lack of information, understanding, and by the mere fact that our small remnants and reconstructions are essentially and irrevocably different than the ancient systems we seek to emulate. At any scale, landscape context, invasive species, and political issues make development of a system replete with conservative species and critical processes challenging. Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge is 15 years old, and is providing evidence of results of decisions made and of circumstances that existed in the short history of this 8,654 acre project in central Iowa. Research provides useful insights that sometimes seem contradictory, into management techniques and future challenges. But some of the challenges of conserving semblances of native Midwestern ecosystems transcend the ability to cipher with mere science. Ultimately, the survival of prairie and savanna systems depends on language and on a shifting cultural paradigm.