

**HOW IMPORTANT IS PRAIRIE CONSERVATION IN THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER VALLEY?: THE RESULTS OF A SURVEY OF NATURAL RESOURCE AGENCY EMPLOYEES AND CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION MEMBERS**

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*Abstract:* Before the arrival of Europeans, prairie and savannah habitats were key features of the Upper Mississippi River valley in southeastern Minnesota and southwestern Wisconsin. Fire suppression, agriculture, and residential development have replaced all but a fraction of what was previously prairie. What priority does prairie conservation have in this region among conservation organizations? What priority do prairies have for users of public lands? I chose a purposive sample of government employees in natural resource agencies, and members of conservation organizations, and administered a brief questionnaire to answer these questions. Preliminary results suggest that prairie conservation is a focus among natural resource agencies in this area, variable among private conservation organizations, and a lower priority for users of public lands.