

Remove Livestock from Missouri's Last Remaining High Quality Prairies

1 WHEREAS, 232,000 square miles of tallgrass prairie once covered the Midwest. Few natural
2 communities have fared worse over the last 200 years as only 4 percent of the Nation's presettlement
3 tallgrass prairie remains. Of this Missouri's historic tallgrass prairie once covered 15 million acres of
4 the state. Tragically, only some 8,000 acres of moderate to high quality fragments survive in small
5 isolated parcels at a maximum only several hundred acres in size;

6 AND WHEREAS, Missouri's high quality remnants are characterized by a centuries old accumulation
7 Of over 500 vascular plant species that is associated with undisturbed ancient prairie soils. Added to
8 This plan diversity is a complex array of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, mosses, fungi,
9 invertebrates and bacteria living above and below the soil. Their uniqueness is further distinguished in
10 that what remains of Missouri's high quality prairies is divided into 12 distinct natural community types;

11 AND WHEREAS, these remaining high quality remnant prairies are not only wondrous and
12 indescribably complex systems resulting from countless thousands of organisms, but this complexity
13 also makes them fragile. Once damaged, their former integrity is seldom retained even on the scale of
14 decades as attested by tens of thousands of acres of permanently degraded and destroyed former prairie;

15 AND WHEREAS, because of the widespread destruction of Missouri's tallgrass prairie for the benefit
16 of producing livestock, hay, feed and crops for human consumption, public agencies and private
17 conservation organizations and individuals joined efforts to acquire and preserve the remaining high
18 quality Missouri prairies. These concerned entities include the Missouri Prairie Foundation, The Nature
19 Conservancy, Kathryn Ordway, Ralph Lucas, Pat Jones, Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri
20 Department of Natural Resources, the National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service and others;

21 AND WHEREAS, as for 30 years, the Missouri Department of Conservation has administered
22 Missouri's Natural Heritage Program that collects data on Missouri's best remaining high quality natural

23 communities and sites for species of conservation concern. Biologists and natural areas professionals
24 have inventoried Missouri prairies identifying the best quality examples based on their high plant
25 diversity and distinctiveness. Of the 45,500 acres of high quality prairie remaining in Missouri, only
26 8,000 acres are distinguished in the Missouri Natural Areas Program. Natural Areas are defined as
27 “biological communities or geological sites that preserve and are managed to perpetuate the natural
28 character, diversity, and ecological process of Missouri’s native landscapes.” A natural community is
29 presumably representative of the pre-European settlement vegetation of the site;

30 AND WHEREAS, the Missouri Department of Conservation has introduced cattle onto several prairie
31 Natural Areas under the premise that it can use variations in patch burning to create suitable structure for
32 a suite of declining grassland bird species. Individuals and members of private conservation
33 organizations include the Missouri Prairie Foundation, Missouri Native Plant Society, Webster Groves
34 Nature Study Society and the St. Louis Audubon Society upon visits to heavily grazed prairie Natural
35 Areas became alarmed at their overgrazed appearance;

36 AND WHEREAS MDC staff have made the erroneous assumption that optimum grassland bird
37 management is also optimum prairie management. Unfortunately, the ancient floristic diversity (and its
38 associate wildlife) and its biological importance appear unappreciated in defense of applying grazing for
39 purposes of providing habitat for a relatively few bird species. This has resulted in highly polarized and
40 emotional outcries;

41 AND WHEREAS organizations and individuals have voiced their opposition to the Director of the
42 Missouri Department of Conservation to grazing Natural Areas and high quality prairies, including The
43 Missouri Prairie Foundation, Missouri Native Plant Society, St. Louis Audubon Society, and Webster
44 Groves Natural Study Society;

45 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Conservation Federation of Missouri assembled at
46 the Lodge of Four Seasons, Lake Ozark, MO, this 27th day of February, 2011 expressed its support that
47 domestic livestock grazing not occur on Natural Areas and other high quality prairies in Missouri.