

**Conservation Federation of Missouri
2015 Resolutions**

Committee: Grasslands
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Grazing Native Grass to Improve Ecosystem Function

WHEREAS, research in prescribed grazing of native grasslands has shown to benefit grassland birds and other ecosystem components and functions; and

WHEREAS, grazing has been underutilized as a management tool on native grasslands; and

WHEREAS, inappropriately applied grazing has been shown to be detrimental; however, scientific study has shown when properly applied and managed, grazing not only facilitates ecosystem function, it can restore function and improve species diversity in degraded prairie; and

WHEREAS, the variability in the way grazing can be applied is not often recognized by researchers or casual observers; and

WHEREAS, native grasses and forbs have evolved with grazing pressure, and can respond to that pressure effectively; and

WHEREAS, Collins, et al. conducting long term research on native prairie at Konza Prairie near Manhattan, Kansas found “*total species richness on grazed and burned watersheds was significantly greater than on annually burned sites and the unmanipulated watersheds.*” They also reported that forb richness was highest on grazed watersheds; the richness of C₃ grasses and forbs was nearly double that of watersheds that were burned but not grazed and the richness of C₄ species was higher on grazed, burned sites than on control sites; and

WHEREAS, Hickman et al. reported, “*Native plant species diversity, species richness, and growth form diversity were significantly higher in grazed compared to ungrazed prairie, and diversity was greatest at the highest stocking density. This enhancement of plant species diversity under grazing was not a result of increased frequency of weed/exotic species;*” and

WHEREAS, native grasslands, whether remnant or restored, become overly thick and unusable to most species of wildlife without sustained management to reduce grass dominance and create open space in those stands for forbs and some bare ground; and

WHEREAS, prescribed grazing has a positive effect on native plant diversity and structure, and therefore wildlife; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Conservation Federation of Missouri assembled at the Capitol Plaza Hotel, Jefferson City, MO, this 22nd day of March, 2015, recommends that land management agencies and NGO’s in Missouri that manage native grasslands continue and expand prescribed grazing, where feasible and appropriate, and in conjunction with other management tools, to improve the

diversity and wildlife value of those grasslands. A monitoring program should also be implemented to document the effects that grazing has on these native grasslands.

References

Collins, S.L., A.K. Knapp, J.M. Briggs, J.M. Blair, and E.M Steinauer. 1998. Modulation of Diversity by Grazing and Mowing in Tallgrass Prairie. *Science*, Volume 280: 745-747.

Hickman, K.R., D.C. Hartnett, R.C. Cochran, and C. Owensby. 2004. Grazing Management Effects on Plant Species Diversity in Tallgrass Prairie. *J. Range. Manage.* 57: 58-65.

The Prairie Ecologist. Grazing in Prairies – Part 1. www.prairieecologist.com