

Prairie Restoration Efforts

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The Roots of Iowa: UNI Leads Prairie Restoration Efforts

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With its rolling row crop systems dominating the landscape, many people don't often think of Iowa as having prairie vegetation. In fact, there was a time when native prairie grasses and wildflowers once

covered 85 percent of the state of Iowa. But sadly, less than .1 of one percent remains today.



That's where the UNI Tallgrass Prairie Center comes in.

In Linn County, there is a collaborative effort to restore 1,000 acres of public land to diverse prairie habitat for monarchs and other beneficial pollinators. At the Annual Linn County Landowner Forum, nonprofit organizations, including the Tallgrass Prairie Center, offer advice and resources to landowners wishing to join the restorative initiative. Through Tallgrass Prairie Center research, Staci Mueller and her staff share best practices for establishing and maintaining prairie. #EngagedUNI

"When landowners have a successful installation, they are more apt to continue to maintain their restoration projects, and may be inspired to plant more native vegetation on their land" states Staci Mueller, the Outreach Coordinator at Tallgrass Prairie Center of UNI.

Although Iowa is an agricultural state with rolling fields that fill the landscape, prairie restoration is extremely beneficial in a number of ways. As fields are tilled up each spring, concerns arise over clean water, flooding, healthy soils, and the natural habitat surrounding them.

"It's important to restore native prairie to the landscape for the multiple benefits that prairie provides. Deep rooted prairie plants help anchor the soil and control erosion, slow surface run-off and increase water infiltration, as well as provide critical habitat for pollinators and other wildlife" says Staci. Not only does nature benefit from prairie restoration, but communities do as well. As prairie grasses improve soil structure, they allow more water to infiltrate into the ground which in turn, increases flood resilience.



As Iowa and the rest of the midwest continue to feed the world, it is imperative to think long-term when it comes to

the health of the soil. Research shows that by converting 10 percent of a crop-field to diverse, native perennial vegetation, farmers and landowners can reduce sediment movement off their field by 95 percent and total phosphorus and nitrogen lost through runoff by 90 and 85 percent, respectively.

The restoration and education of Iowa's prairie to its natural state is not an easy one. But, the staff at the Tallgrass Prairie Center continue to see success and progress as they restore Iowa to its previous vegetative state. From private landowner backyards to 1,000 acres in a community, Iowa's native prairie serves a functional and captivating addition to the landscape.

Find more information on Iowa's native prairie restoration and other programs and projects at the [Tallgrass Prairie Center](#) website.

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