



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Tallgrass Prairie
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News Release

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\$1 Million Grant from Fred C. & Mary R. Koch Foundation Boosts The Nature Conservancy's Kansas Prairie Legacy Campaign *Grant is one of the largest conservation awards in Kansas history.*

Topeka, Kan. – The Fred C. & Mary R. Koch Foundation today presented a \$1 million grant to The Nature Conservancy in Kansas to help complete its acquisition of the nearly 11,000-acre Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Chase County.

The Koch Foundation grant is one of the largest private donations for conservation in Kansas history, and the signature donation in The Nature Conservancy's \$11 million fund-raising effort to preserve important ecosystems in Kansas. The flagship project in The *Kansas Prairie Legacy Campaign* is for the acquisition and enhancement of the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. The tallgrass prairie, which historically spanned the eastern third of the Great Plains, is one of the most altered major ecosystems in North America. Less than 4 percent of the historic total remains, most found in the Flint Hills of Kansas.

The Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve will showcase the beauty of the Flint Hills, ensuring the continuing heritage of the Kansas tallgrass prairie for future generations to discover and enjoy," said Liz Koch, president of the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation. "We're proud to support The Nature Conservancy's work on this important project to protect and enhance this environmental treasure."

"We're so very fortunate Kansans will see the benefits of this generous gift from the Koch Foundation for generations to come," said Governor Kathleen Sebelius.

Alan Pollom, state director of the Conservancy's Kansas Chapter, said "We are honored to use the Foundation's generous gift to help permanently protect one of the best examples of unfragmented tallgrass prairies found in the Flint Hills region. The generosity of the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation is an important commitment to environmental stewardship and conservation in Kansas."

The Koch Foundation gift will be used to advance the mission of the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve and to give the Conservancy an opportunity to enhance the quality of life in Kansas. The Conservancy expects to ensure the economic viability of the site that will attract visitors from the around the world, promote private property rights and independent management, and demonstrate a commitment to environmental stewardship.

The Kansas Prairie Legacy Campaign is the largest private campaign for conservation in state history. Additional exemplary lead gifts to the campaign include the Capitol Federal Foundation (Topeka), the Forrest C. Lattner Foundation (Florida), AT&T (Topeka), Weststar Energy Inc. (Topeka), W.S. and E. C. Jones Testamentary Trust (Emporia), K. T. Wiedemann Foundation (Wichita), Great Plains Energy, Inc. (Kansas City), and current and former Trustees of The Nature Conservancy's Kansas Chapter.

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“I am happy to announce that the Kansas Prairie Legacy Campaign has raised more than \$6.7 million -- all private contributions -- toward the campaign’s \$11 million goal;” said Pollom. “The campaign also includes initiatives throughout the state including the shortgrass prairies at Smoky Valley Ranch in western Kansas, Cheyenne Bottoms wetlands near Great Bend, and the Flint Hills Initiative, a community-based program working with ranchers and landowners.”

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The Nature Conservancy is a private, international, non-profit organization established in 1951 to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 117 million acres in the United States and 27 countries around the world. The Nature Conservancy Kansas Chapter, a chapter of the global organization, has helped conserve more than 60,000 acres of natural land throughout the state since 1989. Visit us on the web at nature.org/Kansas.

Established in 1953, the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation focuses on Kansas-based non-profit organizations that enhance the quality of life in Kansas. The Foundation directs its support toward organizations involved with the arts and art education, environmental stewardship, human services, and education.

Fred and Mary Koch, the donors for whom the foundation is named, shared a passion for education and a love of the outdoors. Fred Koch (1900 – 1967), graduated from MIT in 1922 and began building the footings for Koch Industries, Inc. in 1940 with his involvement in the founding of Wood River Oil and Refining Co., Inc. Mary Koch (1907 – 1990), a 1929 graduate of Wellesley College, was widely recognized and known as an artist and for her contributions to the arts. The foundation continues to ensure that the cultural, educational, outdoor, and artistic passions of Mr. and Mrs. Koch continue to enhance the quality of life for Kansas today.

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is a public/private partnership with the National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, and the Kansas Park Trust. Located two miles north of Strong City on Kansas State Highway 177 (the Flint Hills National Scenic Byway), the preserve’s historic ranch headquarters is open daily from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. For more information or to make group reservations, visit the preserve’s website at www.nps.gov/tapr, e-mail tapr_interpretation@nps.gov, or call the preserve at (620) 273-8494.

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