Comparing and Connecting Grassland Conservation Efforts: Urban Prairies and Landscape-scale Restoration

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My background

- Urban Prairies: Fort Worth Nature Center
- Large-scale: American Prairie Reserve
- Ecotourism!
- But also... La Selva Biological Station, Costa Rica
Why bring it together now?

- 20.6% gain 2000-2010 vs. U.S. 9.7%
Urban restoration of the future will no longer be strictly abandoned lots or remnants.

We are already seeing innovative projects.
A Texas Prairie Update: Urban highlights

- Deer Park Prairie!
- BRIT’s prairie = a new era for DFW restoration
- High-profile support: GWB Library, etc.
- Municipal departments
Sprawl and Leapfrogging Growth

- As urban centers grow, some are planning ahead and protecting and restoring grasslands for future generations.
- Plano, TX: Oak Point Park
- Austin, TX: Mueller development
- Revised Building codes
‘Green Roofs’

- Urban prairie restoration gets sophisticated!
- Well designed roofs are creating a positive public image for the feasibility of using natives.

BRIT in Ft. Worth
Image: Chris Cooper
Some losses: Ft Worth Prairie

North Texas continues to lose habitat

..The lasting impact of the 7 year FW Prairie Park effort
A recent challenge
Urban Restoration: what we have learned so far

- Land management goals can be achieved regardless of size
- Goes hand in hand with water conservation
- Great educational opportunities for ALL ages
- Grasses + forbs
- Soil analysis, erosion control
Urban Streams

- A focus for restoration
- Prairie species often included in riparian projects
Urban prairies in TX are critical for population connectivity and migration.
Large-scale Restoration

- Began with controversial proposals
- Healthy grassland ecosystems = large, intact
- Megafauna and predators
- A new resource for research
- Public access
National Projects

- Glacial Ridge NWR, MN: reconstructing a prairie from scratch
American Prairie Reserve, MT: a privately funded initiative on a huge scale
Flint/Osage Hills: 2010- 1.1 million acres of FWS conservation easements authorized
Texas Projects on a Large Scale

- State Bison Herd: CCSP
- Lesser Prairie Chicken

North Texas Quail Corridor

- 500,000 acres of landowner participation
- Emphasis on conservation-minded ranching
The corridor also protects rare Ft. Worth prairie
What can both ends of grassland conservation learn from recent projects?

- Understand limitations
- Accept that some disturbance will occur
- Several years to maturity
- Keystone species are important: ecosystem engineers
- Keep an eye on invasives!!!
- Ecotype consideration
- Effects of ‘rewilding’
° Maintain positive relationships with neighbors
° Encourage visitation!
° Educate
° Provide economic opportunity
The Future of Texas Restoration

- Climate change
- Agriculture trends
- Energy development
- Even world events (economy, border security)
Thank you for supporting Texas prairie restoration!