Meet Dustin Graham, New Graduate Student, Biology at UNI/Tallgrass Prairie Center

Dustin completed his undergraduate degree (Biology and Religion, double major) at Northwestern College, Orange City, IA in 2008. Dustin's graduate thesis project will be a component of the Prairie Power Project (described more fully inside this newsletter).

As he begins his graduate program, Dustin summarized, "I am studying the use of diverse plantings of natives as a feedstock for bioenergy production. We are exploring the utilization of native mixes to provide a significant energy source and ecosystem services while being more profitable to the farmer than a monoculture." Dustin's first field season for data collection will be this summer and fall.

The 23rd North American Prairie Conference (NAPC) will be held August 6-10, 2012, at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, MB. The conference hosts are looking forward to showcasing the great strides made in recent years in prairie conservation, restoration, management and landscaping. Using the theme, Celebrating Our Prairie Heritage, they plan to explore their prairie past, the current state of knowledge and consider the future. Furthermore, they intend for all participants to have a good time in the process. Please log onto http://www.napc2012.org/ for addition conference information.

Building upon the tradition started by Peter Schramm in 1968 with the first conference on prairies and prairie restoration, the NAPC has developed a tradition of excellence in native prairie research, conservation and restoration of one of the world's most productive yet most endangered ecosystems. The biennial conferences and their participants have spawned great interest, enthusiasm and efforts to better understand, appreciate, manage and conserve this vital part of North America's natural history.

This conference provides a real opportunity to expand our prairie boundaries as it is only the second time this major international prairie meeting has been held in Canada. The last conference in Canada was at Windsor, ON in 1992. I am excited about the great opportunity to learn more about the northern prairies and compare vegetation differences. For example, big bluestem reaches its northmost extension a short distance northwest of Winnipeg.

Some pre-planning for the trip is needed as a passport for entry into Canada and return to the United States is required. Iowa has often provided the largest number of participants to recent conferences. I hope we will once again have a large contingent of Iowans in Winnipeg. According to Map Quest, driving from Des Moines is 700 mi in 11 hrs, from Cedar Falls 675 mi in 10 hrs, from Sioux City 540 mi in 8 hrs, and from Mason City 595 mi in 9 hrs.

Potential Bus Charter to Winnipeg for Conference

To reduce travel costs, the Tallgrass Prairie Center is willing to coordinate chartering a bus from Iowa to the conference. The trip details are tentative, but need to start being formulated. For a one-day trip, we could depart Cedar Falls at 6 a.m. with pick-up stops in Mason City and some place on I-94 north of Sioux City arriving at University of Manitoba prior to the opening reception at 7 p.m. An additional stop could be added at the junction of 20 & I-35 if needed. We will need to know soon if a sufficient number of people are interested in the bus option. If we fill one 47 passenger charter bus, the cost should be about $125/person.

Since the charter bus possibility was announced at the Iowa Prairie Network in late January, we have received only 3 commitments to ride.

If interested or questions, email daryl.smith@uni.edu, call 319-273-2238 or write Daryl Smith, Tallgrass Prairie Center, UNI, Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0294.

Iowa Prairie Network inps/index.php to see events currently on the calendar. If you know of additional events that could be included, contact Dianne Blankenship (bennaid@hotmail.com).


The Tallgrass Prairie Center restores native vegetation for the benefit of society and environment through research, education, and technology.

Interested in planting a prairie? Restoring a remnant savanna, prairie, or wetland? www.plantiowanatives.com can help you find the information, resources, and services to make it happen. Links to information on native plants, seed/plant vendors, landscaping tips, landowner incentive programs, educational resources and organizations. Find professional service providers for everything from site preparation and seeding/installation to restoration and management, including prescribed (Rx) fire! Check it out...And Plant Iowa Natives!

Tallgrass Prairie Center Restoring a National Treasure
Transportation Enhancements: The future of this little known program may be in doubt

by Kirk Henderson

Transportation Enhancement (TE) activities are federally funded projects that enhance the transportation experience by improving the cultural, historic, aesthetic and environmental aspects of our transportation system. Eligible projects include pedestrian and bicycle trails, acquisition of scenic or historic sites and easements, landscaping and beautification, historic preservation, removal of outdoor advertising and archeological planning and research and environmental mitigation of runoff pollution and provision of wildfire connectivity.

The TE program was created in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). It was included in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) authorized in 1998 and continues in the current multi-year transportation authorization: Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) passed in 2005. SAFETEA-LU expired in 2009. Since then the TE program has been funded through extensions of SAFETEA-LU.

For 20 years these transportation funding bills have required (mandated) states to spend 10% of the money, roughly 1.5% of the Federal-aid Highway Program, on a variety of transportation enhancement projects. The TE program administered by Iowa Department of Transportation supports projects in three categories: Trails, Historic Preservation, and Scenic and Natural Resources. The TE program has been successful. Hundreds of Iowa trail projects have been constructed with money from this program. TE funds have also helped protect land along the loess hills scenic byway in Woodbury County; a loess hills prairie remnant in Council Bluffs, a scenic overlook property near the Highway 20 bridge above the Iowa River and a thousand acres between Yellow River State Forest and Effigy Mounds National Monument.

This year marks the 15th year a portion of Iowa TE funds have been used to purchase prairie seed for county roadside plantings. In a few weeks 40 counties will travel to the Roadside Office at the Tallgrass Prairie Center at UNI.