

CLYMER MEADOW SITE CONSERVATION PLAN

June 2001



A Conservation Vision for Clymer Meadow

Prior to European settlement, 12 million acres of the Texas Blackland Prairie stretched from the Red River to San Antonio. Today, less than 5,000 acres of these grasslands remain, making the Blackland Prairie one of the most imperiled large ecosystems in North America. The premier opportunity to conserve the Blackland Prairie at a landscape scale is in north central Texas in Hunt and Collin Counties.

The Nature Conservancy of Texas, in partnership with the Connemara Conservancy, The American Farmland Trust, the Heard Museum and the Cacheagua Ranch will implement a landscape scale protection and revegetation program to conserve the site's native Blackland Prairie and the associated riparian forests and wetlands. The Nature Conservancy and its partners will collaborate with local stakeholders to foster grass-based agriculture, with the ultimate goal of creating a self-sustaining quiltwork of Texas Blackland Prairie, native pastures and hay meadows, and thriving human communities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Texas Blackland Prairie is part of a tallgrass continuum that once extended from southern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. Before European settlement about 12 million acres of Texas Blackland Prairie stretched from the Red River to San Antonio (Figure 1). This prairie supported many early Texas settlements and is an integral part of our rich biological and human heritage. Today, only about 5,000 scattered acres of Texas Blackland Prairie remain.

The Blackland Prairie cannot sustain itself well in a fragmented state. Many of the natural processes that keep a prairie healthy cannot occur on a disjointed landscape, and some prairie species cannot maintain their numbers in patchy habitats. Increasing development and other changes in land use may lead to further loss of this special prairie habitat. These factors have led to the designation of the Texas Blackland Prairie as one of North America's most imperiled ecosystems

The 17, 586-acre Clymer Meadow site in North Texas has, like much of the Blackland Prairie, been transformed from an uninterrupted mosaic of grasslands, woodlands and wetlands to a landscape of disconnected patches. Nonetheless, this site contains some of the largest or most functionally intact Blackland Prairie remnants in Texas, making it a premier location for conserving this historic habitat. The potential for reconnecting grasslands, forests and wetlands is unmatched in the Blackland Prairie. The variety of endemic prairie birds, invertebrates, and plants on the site also provides a potent conservation opportunity.

As part of our efforts at this high-priority site, The Nature Conservancy of Texas has protected almost 1,100 acres within the Clymer Meadow Preserve and another 40 within the County Line Preserve about 4 miles south. Collin County operates 436-acre Parkhill Prairie Preserve about 3 miles south of Clymer Meadow Preserve.

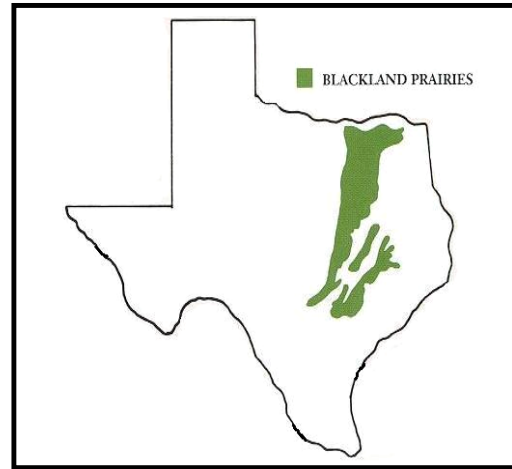


Figure 1. Historic range of Texas Blackland Prairie

The Nature Conservancy has maintained large-scale disturbance regimes on its Clymer Meadow Preserve with a fire program and the reintroduction of seasonal bison grazing. The Nature Conservancy has begun cooperative seed production program with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service to facilitate revegetation within the preserve and the larger landscape. Finally, The Nature Conservancy is embarking on an extensive riparian enhancement project at Clymer Meadow Preserve. This project will be the first of several that will help reconnect and revegetate woodland and prairie corridors and upland habitat. Future projects will involve willing landowners outside the preserve who want to conserve or enhance their streamsides and grasslands.

The Nature Conservancy of Texas, in partnership with Connemara Conservancy, American Farmland Trust, Heard Museum and Cacheagua Ranch, will implement a landscape scale conservation program across this site. The Nature Conservancy and its partners will seek opportunities to meld Blackland Prairie conservation with economic enterprises that benefit the local economy and promote a sustainable network of prairie lands, native pastures and hay meadows, and thriving human communities.