

## **Friends of Nachusa Grasslands 2017 Annual Meeting Minutes July 29, 2017**

**Present:** Bernie Buchholz, Mike Carr, David Crites, Cindy Crosby, Dick Gambrel, Betty Higby, Dee Hudson, Bob Inger, Jack Kiburz, Bill Kleiman, Susan Kleiman, Charles Larry, Tan Fui Lian, Tim Ngo, Joe Richardson, Mike Saxton, Tim Sherck, Carol Soderholm, Paul Soderholm, Emmylou Studier, and Daniel Thompson.

**Location and Lunch:** The meeting took place at Kickapoo/Mud Creek Nature Conservancy, 1919 N Limekiln Rd, Oregon, Illinois. Thank you to Kent and Kathy Lawrence for inviting us to their air conditioned, energy-efficient facility.

Lunch was brought in from Subway in Oregon at 12:30 p.m.

**Opening:** President Bernie Buchholz called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. and asked everyone present to introduce themselves and give a few words on their roles with Friends of Nachusa Grasslands (Friends).

Bernie gave a brief history and overview of Friends, noting that we are a nonprofit, tax-exempt entity created in 2008 by volunteers, dedicated to supporting Nachusa Grasslands, independent of The Nature Conservancy. Our Friends mission is to fund endowments; conduct and encourage stewardship; and support education and scientific activity at Nachusa Grasslands. In perpetuity, annual proceeds from the endowments will help defray the cost of the operations at the preserve, regardless of who owns the property.

Bernie also reminded us that the Friends Bylaws establish that we are a strong Board-led organization. The voting members elect the Board of Directors, and then the Board makes all the decisions affecting the group, by a majority vote after listening to the views expressed by the members.

**Quorum:** With about half of our voting members present, a quorum (10% of the 44 potential voting members) was established.

**2016 Annual Meeting Minutes:** Following one addition to the minutes from the July 31, 2016, Annual Meeting, the minutes were approved. The addition was to add, under the Donor Acknowledgment section, that the Torkel Korling *The Prairie – Swell and Swale* book is mailed to first-time donors.

**Board of Directors Election:** The membership unanimously elected Kirk Hallowell to another two-year term.

Mike Carr and Betty Higby continue to serve the two-year terms to which they were elected in 2016.

**Election of Officers by Board of Directors:** The Board elected the following officers – for one-year terms – President: Bernie Buchholz; Vice President: Mike Saxton; Vice President: Cindy Crosby; Treasurer: David Crites; and Secretary: Mary Meier.

**Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Treasurer's Report 2016-2017:** Treasurer David Crites presented a revenue / disbursements / expenditures report covering July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017, as well as the proposed budget for July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018.

David pointed out key details and highlights of the Treasurer's report.

Total revenue increased 14% over the prior year, due to (1) an increase in cash donations, (2) our investment through CFNIL, and (3) our having met the CFNIL \$150,000 challenge, resulting in their awarding us an additional \$50,000.

The cash donation estimate for this coming year has been increased to \$180,000, which is a significant increase from last year's budget, but is still considered conservative, given that we continue to grow at 10 to 15% a year – an amazing accomplishment!

The "Development" category includes expenses related to fundraising, donor acknowledgments, publications, and social events, such as the Prairie Potluck and the Annual Meeting meal.

Friends expenses remain at only 3% of our revenue for Development, which is very low for a nonprofit organization. Our low expenses are largely the result of the fact that all of our administrative tasks are performed by volunteers. Banking and Government Fees, Insurance, and T-shirt expense combined make up another 1.7%, meaning that ***95.3% of our revenue goes to the initiatives that directly fund our mission: our endowments, science grants and stewardship.***

Science grants will increase from last year's \$32,000 to \$40,000 this year, assuming we match a \$10,000 grant that we have been offered.

The budget was amended to show Science Grants at \$40,000. Appended to the end of these Minutes is the final budget approved by the Board of Directors.

**Other topics that were presented and discussed are listed and outlined in the following section.**

**Cash Flow Chart:** To help members and supporters better understand the sources and utilization of Friends income and the role of the Board of Directors in directing the money to the appropriate fund, David provided copies of the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Cash Flow Model, which is appended to the end of the Minutes.

**Endowments:** Friends has two Endowments, both with permanent principal.

The Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment was set up in 2009 through an agreement with The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

The Friends Endowment for Nachusa Grasslands, held and managed by the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (CFNIL), was established in 2014 at the request of donors who prefer local control of their gifts.

We cannot withdraw any of the endowment funds (other than annual distributions) or transfer the balances to other endowment managers, regardless of the wishes of our Board of Directors or other members. Annual distributions primarily benefit Nachusa Grasslands by partially funding operations and making scientific research grants.

As of June 30, 2017, the preliminary reported total of our two endowment funds is \$1,269,729. Our goal for the combined endowments is \$3,000,000, which will yield approximately \$150,000 per year to support stewardship at Nachusa.

In addition to donating to Friends, individuals can give directly to the Endowments. These funds do not pass through the Friends organization and are not included as income. This year, \$14,178 was contributed to the Endowments in direct contributions.

**Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment:** The balance in the Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment (TNC Endowment) was \$654,729 as of June 30, 2017. Distributions are used by TNC to fund Nachusa operations.

**Friends Endowment for Nachusa Grasslands:** The balance in the Friends Endowment for Nachusa Grasslands (CFNIL Endowment) was \$615,000 as of June 30, 2017.

Distributions from CFNIL are paid to the Friends and used as determined by the Friends' Board of Directors.

On August 1, 2016, Friends applied for the Carroll Starr Endowment Challenge, with a \$150,000 goal and the possibility of a \$50,000 match; we met the Challenge and earned the \$50,000 match.

**Gifts, CRP, and Endowment Cash Flow Designations:** Because the TNC Endowment is already expected to grow with significant donations, and because the CFNIL Endowment has generated dramatically higher returns and its distributions are controlled by Friends (unlike TNC distributions), the Board of Directors approved the following rules for handling cash flow for the 2017-2018 fiscal year:

- (1) The 2017-2018 distribution of undesignated funds, after donor gift designations are honored and after expenses are paid, will be directed to CFNIL. All CRP receipts will also go to the CFNIL Endowment.
- (2) The 2017-2018 CFNIL Endowment distribution will be paid to TNC for operations at NG.

**Stewardship:** Kirk Hallowell and Jeff Cologna are preparing a report on Stewardship Development. This will cover thoughts on volunteer opportunities and on recruiting and developing new volunteers.

#### **Citizen Science:**

**Dragonfly Monitoring:** Cindy Crosby reported that this project began in 2013, when she started training dragonfly monitors. She continues to spend time with each new recruit added. These folks monitor the dragonfly distribution over time; they have identified six new species this year alone!

**Stream Monitoring:** Bernie reported on the stream monitoring done in 2017. Clear Creek, Johnny Creek, and Wade Creek were all monitored. This coming year, Babbling Brook will be added. The monitoring includes keeping track of habitat characteristics, identifying the macroinvertebrates found in the creeks, and sending the samples to the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center in Grafton, Illinois, for validation. The program is a national program coordinated in Illinois in part by the Illinois Natural

History Survey at the University of Illinois. The results help us to monitor each creek's water quality over time.

**Development:**

**Members and Giving:**

Donor Households – 263 (240 in 2016-2017)

Total Cash Donations – \$204,552 (\$187,442 in 2016-2017)

Average Donation per Household – \$832 (\$780 last year – includes direct gifts to the Endowments)

**Donor Tiers:**

Restoration Benefactors – \$5,000 or more: 11 (13 last year)

Conservation Champions – \$1,500 to \$4,999: 16 (11 last year)

Supporters – \$1 to \$1,499: 236 (226 last year)

Prairie Perennials: 123 (was 124 last year)

Donors who have given to the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands in consecutive fiscal years (July 1 through June 30) at the same or a higher level

New Donors: 72 (55 last year).

Recurring Donors: 16, through PayPal or employer programs (15 last year)

**Annual Solicitation Results:** In response to our November 2016 solicitation letter and remitter envelopes included with the Annual Report, along with a follow-up letter and new trifold mailing in May 2017, we received approximately \$188,344 in donations.

**Heritage Heroes Legacy Project:** Heritage Heroes is a Friends initiative led by Kirk Hallowell with assistance from Bernie Buchholz. The project was started in early 2015 to encourage planned giving among Friends donors.

To date, 14 couples or individuals have named or are committed to naming Friends in their estate plans or as a beneficiary. These donors, unless they have requested to be anonymous, will all be recognized in our Annual Report. A Heritage Heroes mailing to selected Friends donors was sent this past spring.

**NeonCRM Donor Management System:** In September 2015, Friends subscribed to NeonCRM, an online donor management system designed for small to mid-sized nonprofits, owned by Z2 Systems, Inc. With NeonCRM, we receive, record, and acknowledge donations, create financial and donor reports, and communicate with our supporters.

Our Neon software and our new website were both mentioned by our 7/29/17 attendees as being "game changers." Additionally, we now have a direct donate button on our website, which makes it very quick and easy to donate. We also have employer match programs.

**Communication – Selected methods that were discussed at the meeting**

**Annual Reports:** Our 2015-2016 Friends Annual Report was called “A Prairie Journal.” It began with November and took us through each season on the prairie, with photos, brief insights, and “To-Do Lists” from Nachusa Grasslands folks for each of the 12 months. As we have come to expect, it was both personal and professional, giving our donors a peek into the day-to-day challenges, achievements, and quiet satisfactions that we experience as part of being involved in this historic effort. Many thanks to all who contributed and special thanks to Cindy Crosby, our editor, and to Cindy Kiple, our designer.

Cindy Crosby will again serve as our Annual Report editor. Our 2016 – 2017 Friends Annual Report will be called “A Prairie Vocabulary” and will focus in its 24 pages on “the words we use about Nachusa Grasslands and its conservation and conservation history.” Cindy Kiple will return as our designer. Writings, photographs, and artwork are being contributed by Nachusa Grasslands stewards and other volunteers for each of the alphabetical words that will be featured for relevant general and background information.

**Trifold:** The Trifold that Cindy Crosby and Bernie Buchholz developed in 2015 for Friends, which was designed to last for two years, will be updated to include information about TNC’s new Nachusa Grasslands Visitor Center. This attractive brochure is much less expensive to produce than is our Annual Report, so please use these as handouts, including the enclosed remitter envelope, for visitors who show an interest in learning more about Nachusa Grasslands and/or Friends.

**Twitter:** Cindy Crosby manages the Nachusa Grasslands Twitter page (<https://twitter.com/nachusa>; @Nachusa). She reported that we now have about 500 followers, including a large number of researchers and other people in science, who often prefer using Twitter over Facebook and other options. We successfully used Twitter for our fundraising this past spring.

**Instagram:** Cindy also spoke of adding Instagram as another means to attract younger folks, who seem to prefer it over other social media options. To be successful, we need to provide some volume in this medium, posting at least a couple of times per week. She hopes to get this underway sometime this fall.

**Website:** Dee Hudson presented a quick update of the Friends’ mobile-friendly website, [www.nachusagrasslands.org](http://www.nachusagrasslands.org), which was launched on December 1, 2015

The Website Committee consists of Dee Hudson, Mary Meier, Jeff Cologna, and Charles Larry, who were all complimented on the great job they do providing both historical and fresh insights, as well as interesting, relevant, educational, and entertaining features and photos for all of us and our website visitors.

Dee reported that we have had 105,400 views in the first three months of 2017 alone, 20,253 of them being new viewers. The top pages accessed were “Contact Us,” our Blog (most viewed there being Leah Kleiman’s blog on the Crew; second most view was Paul Swanson’s blog on Small Things), “Directions and Maps,” and “Bison.” The top search word has been “dragonflies.”

New features include “What’s in Bloom?” and as of August 1, a new dragonfly webpage. A future addition planned is a Family and Kids Corner.

Charles Larry was given special recognition for his phenomenal photo contributions, one of which will again grace the cover of our annual report, another that was used when Bernie needed a photo for Thank You note cards being developed, and for many, many others that Charles regularly donates to fill specific needs for our ongoing outreach (and enjoyment!).

**Blog:** Our blog began in April 2016. It is attracting a lot of new viewers. We need additional writers and topics. One suggestion that Dee had was for us to have a series featuring our stewards – What are they doing? Why? – with the intent of perhaps encouraging others to join us in our efforts.

**Facebook:** Dee reported that the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Nachusa>) now has about 4,700 followers.

Mary Meier, Kirk Hallowell, Dee Hudson, and Charles Larry update the page frequently with photos, news about upcoming events, and links to items of interest. Many thanks.

## Science Grant Program

Mike Saxton reported that our 2017 Science Symposium will be held at the Nachusa Grasslands Barn (instead of at the Franklin Creek Grist Mill as in the past), on October 21, 2017. Last year we had about 70 people attend the Symposium, which means that we have outgrown the Grist Mill.

This year we have 12 researchers who are being funded by Friends. Each of these researchers are expected to report on their work on October 21<sup>st</sup>. Summaries of their projects are available on our website.

As mentioned in Cindy’s discussion of Social Media options that we have been exploring, Mike expanded on our use of Twitter, as well as Facebook posts and testimonials, for Science Challenge fundraising this year, from June 14 to 30. This included a video of drone images and photos that people could click on. Mike also tried Facebook’s option that, for a \$10 fee, allows us to reach more people. In fact, it appeared to double the number of our viewers. This successful initiative resulted in \$6,900 being pledged by 32 people, 21 of them first-time donors! These donations came from all over the U.S., and ranged from \$10 to \$1,500, many of them coming from our former researchers.

We have been offered a Tawani Foundation grant for \$30,000, which will allow us to earn \$10,000 per year for three years by matching the \$10,000 grant dollars each of those years. As referenced in the 2017-2018 budget discussion, this, plus the social media challenge results described above, have made it possible for us to increase the budget for science grants from \$32,000 this past year to \$40,000 for 2017-2018. We are looking for sponsors to cover Symposium expenses that come to about \$500.

Bill Kleiman mentioned that we have about a dozen scientists at the Grasslands in addition to the Friends-funded scientists, and questioned if there were a way, logistically, to include them in the Science Symposium presentations. Last year these additional scientists were

invited to do poster presentations. It was determined that having presentations from each of them, in addition to the Friends-funded scientists' presentations, would require moving to a new format (perhaps having a couple of presentations happening in each time slot, from which people would choose which to attend). This would be a large planning effort and there is no longer enough time to undertake it this year. Conversations will ensue on whether we wish to pursue something like this for 2018.

## **Administrative Items and New Business**

**Conflict of Interest Policy:** As required by our Bylaws, the Directors and Officers acknowledged that they had all read and were in compliance with the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Conflict of Interest Policy.

**2017 Prairie Potluck Review:** Bernie thanked Friends and our sponsors, and also Susan, Laurie and Cindy B. for their work in overseeing the meal, for another successful Prairie Potluck (PPL). It was a more casual social event this year, without a specific program. Unfortunately, it was a stormy, rainy day, which may have contributed to our attendance of about 70 this year versus twice that many last year (note: last year's event also included our 30-year anniversary commemoration with many former volunteers having been invited to join us and share their stories).

Bernie initiated a discussion on whether it made sense to go to a bi-annual event for the PPL. The group's feedback was to continue on an annual basis for this event, but to create a committee to discuss some of the parameters that came up in the discussion, e.g. is this/should this be an opportunity to bring guests or is it intended to be one of the privileges of already being involved, i.e. it is intended as a get-together for our *current* volunteers and all who have donated within the past two years.

Our 2018 Prairie Potluck will be held on Saturday, June 16. Bernie will put together a committee of three to determine the nature of the PPL event for next year.

**Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):** The Federal government reimburses landowners for reserving tillable acreage for wildlife habitat and soil conservation. Friends currently leases 412 acres of CRP land from TNC for this purpose and is responsible for monitoring and managing the land. For the last fiscal year, the payments from the USDA totaled \$50,000, and we expect to receive the same amount this year. Bernie reported that management activities were conducted as required by our contract, e.g. prescribed fire, spraying of Canada thistle, etc. There are hundreds of volunteer hours involved in managing our CRP site.

**Friends T-shirt Initiative:** Betty reported that during our annual sale in September 2016, we sold 375 shirts, 290 of these at AOTP @ \$10 each. Our \$3,750 revenue all went directly to Friends, as TNC had donated the remaining 185 shirts from the prior year when they had sponsored the project, and Panoptic Solutions donated funds for the 251 new shirts that we purchased for last year's AOTP event.

For 2017, we proposed ordering 444 shirts (this includes two years of youth shirts, in order to get the best pricing for those). Our cost for these will be \$2,305.70 (averaging \$5.19 per shirt) or, if we opt to put the Friends logo on the sleeve of the adult shirts @ \$.50, \$2477.70. We have two potential partial sponsors for the 2017 shirts, but neither

has made their decision yet. If either steps forward later to help sponsor this initiative, that money will be considered a donation and will offset Friends' cost for the shirts.

The proposed design for the adult shirts and for the youth sizes was shared. There was consensus to add the Friends logo to the shirts and a vote was taken as to whether it should be put on the sleeve or on the back (for which there is no additional charge). Finally, there was discussion on the price to charge for the shirts. There will be further discussions in the next months to clarify our strategy for the role of the shirts in supporting our mission, which will then be used in subsequent years to guide our pricing. David also mentioned that as we make these decisions, we need to be cognizant of potential legal liability. In that light, he recommended that we offer the shirts only in relation to our AOTP event, i.e. in the month of September each year.

The decision was made to

- offer the shirts again this year,
- using the colors and two designs for the front of the Adult and the Youth shirts that were proposed,
- with the Friends logo on the back of each shirt, and
- with Friends providing the funding, with partial sponsorship possible, but not assured.
- Susan and Betty will update the T-shirt Initiative Strategy and Process to reflect the upcoming input on Friends mission support.

### **TNC-Nachusa Grasslands Updates by Bill Kleiman**

#### **We need to be clear on the distinction between our TNC and Friends organizations.**

Bill pointed out that Nachusa has donors in both. It is a good relationship, e.g., TNC's Michelle Carr refers to us as "our good friends at Nachusa Grasslands."

**Visitor Center:** There have been a number of delays in the construction. The structure will be nearly done by AOTP, but not entirely. We will not be using it for that event. We will set up immediately west of it. The commitment now is to have it completed by early October. TNC has a grand opening scheduled for 10/11/17 to thank major donors.

**Bison Herd:** The bison are well and bison mania continues. We continue to use the bison interest to help people to connect to the prairie landscape.

**At AOTP** this year, there will be even less wait time for bison tours, with four or five wagons being used simultaneously.

**Other Visitor Outreach:** There are five new large trailhead signs. These are provided for people wanting to walk the prairie and woodlands and are designed to be self-directed and unstaffed. At certain times, however, TNC may provide a docent at the Visitor Center, to greet visitors and to answer questions.

**2018 Annual Meeting:** The next Friends Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, July 28, 2018, at Kickapoo Mud Creek Nature Preserve.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m. for the Social Hour.

**Group Photo:** Thank you to Dee Hudson for taking the photograph of the Friends below.

Respectfully Submitted,

Betty Higby, Acting Secretary  
August 7, 2017

Updated by Mary Meier, Secretary  
August 16, 2017

### **Friends of Nachusa Grasslands 2016-2017 Annual Meeting Attendees**



Photo by Dee Hudson

## Treasurer’s Report – 2017 Actual and 2018 Budget

### Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Treasurer's Report 2016-2017

Budget and Actual Results:	2016-2017 Actual	Percent of Actual	2016-2017 Budget	Variance	Proposed 2017-2018 Budget	Percent of Budget
Beginning Balance	25,392.74		25,392.74		21,629.82	
<b>Revenue</b>						
Cash Donations	204,551.41	77%	150,000.00	54,551.41	180,000.00	72%
CRP Annual Payment	50,000.00	18%	50,000.00	0.00	50,000.00	20%
CFNIL Endowment Income	5,232.83	2%	2,500.00	2,732.83	15,078.96	3%
Grant Income				0.00	10,000.00	4%
Amazon Smile Income	109.74	<1%	75.00	34.74	100.00	<1%
T-Shirt Revenue	5,135.15	2%			3,000.00	1%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>265,029.13</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>202,575.00</b>	<b>57,318.98</b>	<b>258,178.96</b>	<b>100%</b>
Direct Gifts to Endowments	14,178.00					
In Kind Donations	249.00					
CFNIL Matching Grant	50,000.00					
<b>Total Support from all Sources</b>	<b>329,456.13</b>					
<b>Disbursements</b>						
<b>In Direct Support of Our Mission Statement</b>						
Gifts to TNC Endowment	45,000.00	17%	50,000.00	-5,000.00	40,000.00	15%
CFNIL Nachusa Endowment	170,000.00	63%	125,000.00	45,000.00	150,000.00	62%
Science Grants	32,871.39	12%	32,000.00	871.39	40,000.00	13%
Nachusa Operations via TNC	5,232.83	2%	2,500.00	2,732.83	15,078.96	3%
Stewardship	1,851.69	<1%	2,500.00	-648.31	2,500.00	1%
Grants to other Organizations	1,242.00	<1%	2,500.00	-1,258.00	2,500.00	<1%
Subtotal	256,197.91	<b>95.3%</b>	214,500.00	41,697.91	250,078.96	<b>95.2%</b>
<b>Expenses</b>						
Banking Fees	525.63	<1%	400.00	125.63	600.00	<1%
Government Fees	70.00	<1%	28.00	42.00	70.00	<1%
Insurance	3,422.00	1%	3,800.00	-378.00	3,800.00	2%
Development	7,193.86	3%	7,000.00	193.86	8,000.00	3%
T-Shirt Expense	1,382.65	<1%			2,300.00	<1%
Subtotal	12,594.14	4.7%	11,228.00	-16.51	14,770.00	4.8%
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>268,792.05</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>225,728.00</b>	<b>41,681.40</b>	<b>264,848.96</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Ending Cash Balance</b>	<b>21,629.82</b>		<b>2,239.74</b>	<b>19,390.08</b>	<b>14,959.82</b>	

## Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Cash Flow Model

