

## Friends of Nachusa Grasslands 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes July 31, 2021; Updated September 14, 2021

### Present:

Alan Meier, Bernie Buchholz, Betty Higby, Charles Larry, Dave Brewer, Dee Hudson, Elizabeth Bach, Emmylou Studier, Heather Baker, Heather Herakovich, Joe Richardson, Kathy Lawrence, Kent Lawrence, Marilyn Carr, Mark Jordan, Mary Meier, Mary Vieregg, Mike Carr, Mike Saxton, Paul Soderholm, and Stew Pagenstecher

**Zoom Platform:** The meeting took place via Zoom, an online video and audio sharing service.

**Exhibits:** Links to the exhibits shared during the meeting are posted on the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands 2021 Annual Meeting web page (note that these and other hyperlinks don't always work on the PDF uploaded to the Friends website – request a personal copy if you want one):

<https://www.nachusagrasslands.org/friends-annual-meeting-2021.html>

- [2020-2021 Treasurer's Report](#)
- [2020-2021 Endowment Balances and Distributions](#)
- [Recommendation to the Board – Revenue and Distributions Designations](#)
- [Cash Flow Model](#)
- [2020-2021 Donors and Donations](#)
- [2021 Board Candidate](#)
- [Auditor's Report Financial Statement 2019-2020](#)
- [SAS Audit Letter](#)
- [Hamill Family Foundation Challenge Update](#)
- [Social Media Report – Team Members and Website Statistics](#)
- [Social Media Report – Facebook and MailChimp Prairie-Updates](#)
- [Social Media Report – Instagram, Twitter, Blog, and Friday Science](#)
- [Potential Scientific Research Topics at Nachusa Grasslands](#)
- [Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Donor Communication Strategy](#)
- [Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Conflict of Interest Policy](#)
- [Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Donor Confidentiality Policy](#)
- [Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Whistleblower Policy](#)
- [How to Join the Zoom Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Annual Meeting](#)

**Opening:** President Bernie Buchholz called the meeting to order at about 2:30 p.m., when all participants had successfully logged on.

Bernie first described the difference between Friends of Nachusa Grasslands (Friends) and Nachusa Grasslands/The Nature Conservancy (TNC). TNC owns and operates Nachusa Grasslands. Friends is a separate 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation committed to supporting Nachusa Grasslands. Many Friends members make financial gifts to both entities, recognizing that both have an important mission. Donations to TNC can be designated for the benefit of Nachusa Grasslands, if desired.

Bernie also stated 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.

Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Voting Member Description from Bylaws: Any person may become a voting member who has either (i) been a volunteer at the Preserve for the full calendar year prior to the Annual Meeting, has contributed at least forty (40) hours during that year and has paid the annual dues; or (ii) been a volunteer at the Preserve for at least three (3) years of the preceding ten (10) years with a minimum contribution of forty (40) hours in each of those years and has paid the annual dues.

The members have decided that a donation of any amount qualifies as dues.

**Quorum:** A quorum (10% of the 38 potential voting members) was established.

**2020 Annual Meeting Minutes:** The 2020 minutes were approved as presented.

**Board of Directors Election:** The membership elected Charles Larry to a two-year term and Description of his involvement at Nachusa is provided in the “2021 Board Candidates” document on the Annual Meeting web page.

Heather Baker was thanked for serving as a Friends Director for the past year. Bernie listed the many ways that she contributes to Friends and Nachusa efforts over the years.

Mike Carr and Heather Herakovich will continue as board members for the next year.

**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: Mary Vieregg; Treasurer: Mark Jordan; and Secretary: Mary Meier.

**Introductions:** Meeting participants introduced themselves and described their Nachusa roles.

**Cash Flow Model:** 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 funds, the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Cash Flow Model was discussed. The model has been updated to include the new Friends Endowment for Nachusa Science and Land Protection Fund.

**Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Treasurer's Report 2020-2021:**

Mark Jordan presented a revenue / disbursements / expenditures report covering July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, as well as the proposed budget for July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022.

Mark noted that Friends' acquisition of a QuickBooks subscription has greatly helped with accurate and efficient record-keeping and report production. Categories were set up by our

auditing firm. Mike S. affirmed our purchase of both QuickBooks and the NeonCRM donor management system as major benefits for our organization and volunteers.

Mark pointed out key details and highlights of the Treasurer's report, which is appended to the end of these minutes. An amended version was provided after the meeting, as the original one showed some negative numbers where positive ones should have been.

### **2020-2021 Revenue and Disbursements:**

We started the year with \$38,907.61 and ended with \$37,919.00 in our checking account.

Total unaudited revenue from all sources was \$775,360.09, including cash donations, CRP payments, endowment income, grants, Amazon Smile proceeds, and t-shirt revenue.

Disbursements of \$752,749.82 were made to the Friends Endowment for Nachusa Grasslands managed by the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, the Friends Endowment for Nachusa Science, managed by the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, the Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment, managed by The Nature Conservancy, Land Protection Fund, science grants, symposium, and microscope, Nachusa operations via TNC, stewardship, other organizations, and t-shirt expenses.

Expenses of \$23,592.88 included government fees, auditing fees, insurance, and development.

The development category includes expenses related to fundraising, donor acknowledgments, and various publications.

Total expenses are very low at only 3% of our revenue due largely to the fact that all of our administrative tasks are performed by volunteers. Therefore, 97% of our revenue goes to the initiatives that directly fund our mission: our endowments, science grants, and stewardship activities. Mary M. said that she has included this information on various donation-related web pages and encouraged everyone to share that very impressive statistic with others.

### **2021-2022 Proposed Budget:**

Mark reviewed the proposed budget, which is included in the Treasurer's Report.

Income of \$720,300.00 and expenditures of \$695,250.00 are projected.

The budget was approved by the Board of Directors as amended, pending the correction of a negative number to a positive one regarding our expense percentages.

Bernie thanked Mark for his efforts in keeping all of our finances in order.

**Grants Received:** Friends worked on several grant projects last year:

***Illinois Clean Energy Foundation (ICE):*** In 2020-2021, we received a total of \$25,000 for our most recent Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation's Community Stewardship Challenge Grant Program. The current project is located at Stone Barn Savanna and is being coordinated by Mike Carr and Mark Jordan.

***TAWANI Foundation:*** In 2017 and 2018, Friends conducted a social media fundraising campaign spearheaded by Mike Saxton for a 1:1 \$30,000 Tawani Foundation Challenge Grant for scientific research funding. We received the third and final \$10,000 installment in July 2020.

***Hamill Family Foundation:*** Friends received \$200,000 in grants from the Hamill Family Foundation (HFF), which were discussed later in the meeting.

***Etnyre Foundation:*** In 2021, Friends was also awarded \$6,700 from the Etnyre Foundations for the purchase of beaver management and Blanding's turtle equipment. Also, in May 2020, received \$3,500 to support the Evidence-based Restoration Lab at Northern Illinois University's research on small mammals, grassland birds, and beetles, focusing on the impact of bison grazing and changes in plant composition, which was used during the past fiscal year.

**Endowment Balances and Distributions:** Friends has three Endowments, all with permanent principal. Each of the endowments have very similar investment strategies. Annual payouts are 4 to 5% of each endowment balance, based on historical multi-year balances, so they will continue to grow as the principal increases.

The Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment was set up in 2009 through an agreement with The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The current balance is \$896,688, and the 2020-2021 fiscal year distribution was \$28,196.

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 have received three \$50,000 grants from CFNIL in past years, which significantly increased our total returns. The current balance is \$2,426,002, and the 2020-2021 fiscal year distribution was \$49,216. This amount should increase to about \$90,000 for 2021-2022.

The Friends Endowment for Nachusa Science, held and managed by CFNIL, was established in 2020, with a \$100,000 gift from Keith Anderson in honor of his parents. The balance as of June 30, 2021, was \$106,465.

**Gifts, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and Endowment Cash Flow Designations:**

**Cash Flow:** Friends' revenues include donor gifts, grants, Conservation Reserve (CRP) payments, and distributions from our two CFNIL Endowments. Donor designations are always honored. The following Endowments and Fund make distributions:

- Friends Endowment for Nachusa Grasslands (held by CFNIL) makes an annual distribution to Friends.
- Friends Endowment for Nachusa Science (held by CFNIL) will make an annual distribution to Friends, starting in 2021.
- Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment (held by TNC) makes an annual distribution directly to TNC, without Friends' involvement, for operations at Nachusa.
- Friends Fund for Land Protection (held by Friends) will make occasional distributions to TNC toward land acquisitions.

Because (1) our two CFNIL endowments generate dramatically higher returns than the TNC endowment, and (2) the CFNIL distributions are controlled by Friends, the Board adopted the following policy in June 2021:

- After donor designations are honored and expenses are paid, all remaining gifts and grants will be directed to either the CFNIL endowments or the Land Protection Fund. All CRP receipts will also go to the CFNIL endowments.
- We intend that revenue will be allocated to the two CFNIL endowments and the Land Protection Fund such that progress toward the goals for those accounts will advance in a roughly proportional manner from year to year.
- Current year Science Grants will be funded as an expense before distributions to CFNIL endowments and the Land Protection Fund occur.
- The annual endowment distribution from the Friends Endowment for Nachusa Grasslands (CFNIL) will be paid to TNC for operations at Nachusa Grasslands. The distribution from the Friends Endowment for Nachusa Science (CFNIL) will be paid to Friends to fund science grants.

**Audit:** In the State of Illinois, a certified audit is required if a nonprofit has gross contributions that exceed \$300,000. Therefore, Friends has engaged Wipfli LLP, CPAs and Consultants, of Rockford, Illinois, to perform our annual audits. Wipfli also prepared our 2020 tax return.

The audit for the year ending June 30, 2020, had very positive results, except for concerns about our internal controls, mainly segregation of duties, that were noted by the auditors in a letter that accompanied the Financial Statement. Although this issue is common with small volunteer organizations, based on recommendations from the auditors, Mark has requested that a volunteer serve as a Financial Internal Oversight Person. This individual would enhance transparency and accountability by periodically reviewing our bank and QuickBooks records. Contact: Mark if you are interested in this position.

**Citizen Science:** Mary Vieregg leads the Stream Monitoring team, Cindy Crosby leads the Dragonfly Monitoring team, and Susan Kleiman and Paul Swanson monitor frogs at several sites on the preserve. Our new Butterfly Monitor is Becky Davis. All of these efforts contribute to our scientific understanding of Nachusa's ecosystem.

**Stream Monitoring:** The team monitored four streams in May and June 2021: Wade Creek, Babbling Brook, Johnny Creek, and Clear Creek. Three more members, Linda Kuhns, Jan Grainger and Tim Ngo, attended Illinois RiverWatch training and are now certified, joining Mary Vieregg, Cindy Buchholz, and Mary Meier. Matt Friberg is also very knowledgeable and helped out with several sessions. We bought a new microscope with Friends funds to help us identify species. It will be stored in the new science building. New members are welcome – RiverWatch training is not required, but it is very informative.

**Dragonfly Monitoring:** Cindy Crosby submitted the following report: This season, we continue our dragonfly monitoring program which began in 2013 with one monitor (Cindy!). Eight years into the program, we begin to have enough comparison data to start thinking more deeply about our Odonate populations at Nachusa. With the help of Dr. Elizabeth Bach, we hope to explore this data and understand its implications for our work at Nachusa.

We have seven monitors for 2021 on site: new monitors Dave Brewer and Stew Pagenstecher; and returning monitors Joyce Gibbons, Bill Kruk, Joe Richardson, Dee Hudson, and Cindy Crosby. As of July 28, the seven monitors have logged 30 routes walked, with 20 identified species and 420 individuals. Noteworthy are four new species seen: two new damselflies, the Southern Spreadwing (*Lestes australis*) and the Amber-winged Spreadwing (*Lestes eurinus*) and two new dragonfly species, the Four-Spotted Skimmer (*Libellula quadrimaculata*) and the Swamp Darner (*Epiaschna heros*). Go Team Dragonfly! The seven monitors will continue their work through October.

All staff, stewards and volunteers: Please watch for migration happenings around the second week of August through mid-September. If you see dragonfly migration swarms (usually numbering individuals in the 100s), please contact Cindy C. immediately through her website: [www.cindycrosby.com](http://www.cindycrosby.com) so we can quickly act on your observation and get out there to count numbers! Thanks to everyone for their support of the dragonfly stewardship program at Nachusa Grasslands.

**Frog Monitoring:** Susan Kleiman submitted the following report after the meeting: Calling Frog Surveys are continuing this year. There are two monitors (myself and Paul Swanson) covering ten spots on the preserve. We could still use one more monitor to cover 3-5 other places on the preserve. It is a commitment of three evenings spread between late February and early July.

We continue to encounter many numbers of American Toads, Spring Peepers, Chorus Frogs, Cope's Gray Treefrogs, and Green Frogs, with lesser numbers of Northern Leopard Frogs, Pickerel Frogs, and Bullfrogs.

Here is a recording I made this June during a monitoring stop at the Prairie Potholes water control structure. You can hear an American Toad (a high, long, trill), Cope's Gray treefrogs (rough trills), Green Frogs (sound like loose banjo strings 'plunk- plunk'), a few Bullfrogs (a deep 'chug-a-rum") and crickets.

[https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=8b8bc3445a&attid=0.1&permmsgid=msg-f:1707007474706862085&th=17b082410ed6d005&view=att&disp=safe&realattid=f\\_kr6vdqsy0](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=8b8bc3445a&attid=0.1&permmsgid=msg-f:1707007474706862085&th=17b082410ed6d005&view=att&disp=safe&realattid=f_kr6vdqsy0).

**Butterfly Monitoring:** Becky Davis began monitoring butterflies in 2021. She counts species on a specific route, the Visitor Center path. Check out Becky's August 2021 blog post on the Friends website for her first impressions of this task:  
<https://www.nachusagrasslands.org/nachusa-blog/butterfly-monitoring>.

**Citizen Scientist Web Page:** An overview of monitoring opportunities including an interest form was recently added to the Friends website. See  
<https://www.nachusagrasslands.org/about-citizen-scientists.html>.

### **Volunteer Development:**

**Autumn on the Prairie:** Dee reported that holding the 2021 Autumn on the Prairie had been approved by TNC in June, and she reviewed various volunteer opportunities; however, in August, the decision was made to cancel the festival due to the rapid spread of the Covid Delta variant leading up to the event. Therefore, Dee's AOTP report has not been included in these minutes.

**Lifescape Community Services:** Dee is working with this Lee County organization to encourage senior citizens to volunteer at Nachusa. She is developing a description of various opportunities and expectations. Dee is also giving a presentation in late September 2021 to the Oregon Lions Club and will focus on volunteer opportunities.

**Volunteer Workdays:** Mary M. reported that Thursday and Saturday workdays continue to be offered from May to February. Registration via SignUpGenius is still required. Volunteer participation has decreased a bit since 2020, perhaps because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the new liability waiver, or the extreme summer heat. Ideas for increasing volunteerism are welcome. Steward leaders can sign up via SignUpGenius as well.

**Guided Hikes:** In the spring of 2021, Bill and Susan Kleiman and Dee led very popular hikes of the preserve and included invitations to volunteer in their tours. Mary encouraged others to lead tours, and Bernie mentioned always mentioning volunteerism in interactions with the public. Unfortunately, TNC later decided that no tours can take place this fall, but hopefully we can conduct them again next year.

### **Hamill Family Foundation (HFF) Challenges:**

#### **New Volunteers/New Donors – 2019-2020:**

- Goal: A combination of 150 new donors, donations from donors who last gave three years ago, and new volunteers from November 1, 2019, to October 31, 2020
- Total of 164 achieved in the summer of 2020
- Amount: \$100,000 received January 2021

#### **Revenue Increase 2020-2021:**

- Goal: Increase of \$100,000 over average revenues in the preceding five years (\$326,357) from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, excluding any donations from HFF
- Amount: \$100,000 payable in January 2022
- Basically, we would receive the grant if our Fiscal Year 2020-2021 income was at least \$426,357
- Our primary appeal was part of our Annual Report mailing in November 2020 followed up by our February 2021 newsletter.
- Total 2020-2021 Income as of January 8, 2021, was \$438,771 (Donations: \$339,554; CFNIL Distribution: \$49,216; CRP Payment: \$50,000).
- As this amount was 102% of our goal, Friends can expect to receive a \$100,000 challenge grant in January 2022.

**Total Volunteer Hours – 2022:**

- Goal: 8,000 or more total volunteer hours to be logged from January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022, including Friends Board and Officers organizational activities.
- Amount: \$100,000 payable in January 2023
- Starting January 1, 2022, stewards and other regular volunteers will need to record and report their hours. Friends has to devise a system for doing so.
- Any Nachusa-related volunteer hours count, not just stewardship in the field.
- We need to figure out how to compile volunteer hour records from various sources, with one person being responsible for determining the final count.
- Ideas discussed include:
  - Workday volunteer, tour leader, and day of AOTP hours can be exported from SignUpGenius.
  - Mary M. has developed a Google form that could be used as needed: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd2EunB6VqVJg8skLMKajxkXkaauGasEXeh5RtwQnEEHxZ5Q/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd2EunB6VqVJg8skLMKajxkXkaauGasEXeh5RtwQnEEHxZ5Q/viewform?usp=sf_link).
  - Paul asked if the hours he spends on his unit can be included. Bernie will find out.
  - Some stewards already keep records of their hours.
  - Fire crew members and hunters also spend time at the preserve, so they should be surveyed as well.
  - The paper logs that people sign when they enter the barn or take out a vehicle could include total hours spent on stewardship.
  - Stew and Dee have already done some additional research on software options, (Volgistics – <https://www.volgistics.com> and Track It Forward – <https://www.trackitforward.com/features>).
- So far, Mike S., Stew, Heather H., and Mary M. have agreed to confer on various software and paper systems, but Mary M. has stated that she does not want to be the coordinator.
- Contact Friends ([nachusagrasslands@gmail.com](mailto:nachusagrasslands@gmail.com)) if you have suggestions or would like to be involved in coming up with a plan.

HFF has also committed to giving Friends additional \$100,000 outright grants for three years, starting with January 2020 (the first and second installments have already been received). Friends is very grateful for the foundation's generous support of our mission.

**New Financial Objectives:** In 2021, the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Board of Directors adopted the following financial objectives:

- **Operating Endowments** – The Friends Endowment for Nachusa Grasslands managed by the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (CFNIL) and the Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment managed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC):
  - Increase the combined balance to \$5 million from \$3 million.
  - A \$5 million endowment will generate \$200,000+ annually for Nachusa operations.
- **Science Endowment** – The Friends Endowment for Nachusa Science managed by CFNIL:
  - Increase to \$1M from \$100,000 in about five years.
  - A \$1 million endowment will generate \$40,000 annually for science grants
- **Science Grants:**
  - Increase to \$75,000/year from current \$66,000/year.
  - Annual funding from the general fund will be supplemented by the Science Endowment.
- **Land Protection Fund:**
  - Friends' participation in land protection is intended to ensure that sites are acquired at the quickest possible pace and, thus, support the timely realization of the project's geographic goals.
  - Increase to \$50,000/year from zero.
  - Upon request by The Nature Conservancy, Friends hopes to annually provide funds to TNC for 5% of land acquisition costs up to \$50,000 (assumes 5% of 100 acres @ \$10,000/acre).
  - This savings account is currently passively managed so the funds can be accessed when needed. As the balance grows, we may consider investing in certificates of deposit for a better return.

Paul asked about setting up stretch goals (funding and/or timing), especially regarding land protection. Bernie replied that the Board can be flexible on meeting these goals, and Mike S. mentioned that the new land fund objective is starting small, but it can grow as needed. Mike C. reminded the group that Friends will be providing seed money for land purchases by TNC, not actually buying property. The November Friends annual report cover letter will include an appeal regarding land protection.

## Annual Fundraising Results

### **Total 2020-2021 Donations to Friends Recorded in NeonCRM: \$772,854**

• Undesignated	\$442,263
• Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment (TNC)	\$6,179
• Friends Endowment for Nachusa Grasslands (CFNIL)	\$78,648
• Friends Endowment for Nachusa Grasslands Direct (CFNIL)	\$96,874
• Friends Endowment for Nachusa Science (CFNIL)	\$100,315
• Friends Fund for Science	\$47,930

- Friends Land Protection Fund \$645

Note that these amounts differ from what is on the Treasurer's Report, due to differences in fees deducted and donations sent directly to CFNIL by donors who prefer that strategy.

Increase in Donations from 2019-2020: \$361,084 (+114%)

***Donation Tender Types:***

- Check/Cash Donations: 407 – \$746,858
- Credit Card/E-Check/Wire Donations: 306 (many recurring) – \$25,996

***Donors:***

- Total Donor Households: 2020-2021 – 348 [+22% from 2019-2020]
- New Donors: 2020-2021 – 86 [same as 2019-2020]
- Forty new donors supported Friends during the Bison Babies Campaign from June 1, 2020, to July 6, 2020, and 11 donors have kept on giving.

***Donor Tiers:***

- Restoration Benefactors – \$5,000 or more: 24
- Conservation Champions – \$1,500 to \$4,999: 13
- Supporters – \$1 to \$1,499: 311

***Prairie Perennials*** (Donors who have given to the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands in consecutive years [July 1 through June 30] at the same or a higher level): 154

***Recurring Donors:*** 37 (up from 25 in 2019-2020)

***Voting Members:*** 38 Nachusa volunteers donated to Friends during the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

**2021 Science Fundraising Campaign:** The mailing went out on July 10, and as of July 31, we had received 30 donations totaling about \$10,500. The online social media campaign featuring the same information as in the mailer has yielded minimal results, perhaps because no rewards (like last year's bison photos) were offered.

**Heritage Heroes Legacy Project:** Heritage Heroes is a Friends initiative that encourages planned giving among Friends donors. We expect that revenue from bequests will help us reach our financial goals, as various entities have reported that some can be very substantial. To date, 19 couples or individuals have named or are committed to naming Friends in their estate plans or as a beneficiary of life insurance or retirement accounts. We have a goal of adding at least one Heritage Hero each year. Bernie requested that members stay attuned to possible individuals who might be interested in learning more about this way to support Friends.

**Communications:**

**A *Prairie Calling* Newsletter:** Friends began sending quarterly newsletters in early 2020. Dee is the designer, Bernie is the editor-in-chief, and James Higby is the editor. Publications during this recent year were “Prairie Freeloaders? Parasitic Plants” by crew leader Anna Scheidel, “Oak Savanna” by Bernie, and “Picturing the Prairie: A Vision of Restoration” by artist Philip Juras. Another one about moths by the late Wayne Schennum will be mailed in September. By providing in-depth information and photographs related to various aspects of Nachusa, we stay in touch with our donors, volunteers, crew members, and researchers. See <https://www.nachusagrasslands.org/digital-prairie-newsletter.html> for links to PDF versions of the newsletters.

Response has been very positive – Mike S. complimented the high-quality content. Kent remarked that the newsletters are phenomenal, and he, along with Dee, offered to investigate whether the publications could qualify for any awards.

**Annual Report:** Our 2020–2021 Friends Annual Report will focus on “Connections.” Writings, photographs, and artwork are being contributed by Nachusa Grasslands volunteers and supporters. More photo submissions are welcome. Mike S. is writing the cover letter, which will ask for support of our Land Protection Fund.

**Thank You Notes:** Emmylou reported that she and Marilyn send handwritten thank you notes to all of our donors (once each summer to recurring donors). This past year, 386 notes were mailed. The cards have photos on the front and the Friends’ contact information and mission statement on the back. Turnaround time from when Mary M. sends a formal donation acknowledgment is now about 2 days.

Betty and Dee commended Emmylou and Marilyn for their amazing timeliness and dedication to the project.

**Appreciation Books for New Donors:** Marilyn also mails *The Prairie – Swell and Swale* book by Torkel Korling to first-time donors who have given over \$25. This year, she has mailed 41 books. Note that we don’t send them to people who give memorials, as they are usually one-time donors.

Mary mentioned that one reason we had fewer new donors receiving books this year may be that we didn’t offer a gift during our annual social media campaign. Mike S. responded that we can consider doing so in the future.

**Social Media Team:** The Social Media Team consists of Dee Hudson, Mary Meier, Joy McKinney, Heather Herakovich, Erin Rowland, Eric Kingery, and Chantelle Edmunds. Eric and Chantelle are new to the group. Charles Larry doesn’t attend our meetings, but he continues to contribute marvelous photographs to our social media platforms. Our team has developed annual social media goals and will work on website goals later this year. We welcome new members, especially ones interested in helping out with our Twitter, Instagram, and Blog posts.

**Website ([www.nachusagrasslands.org](http://www.nachusagrasslands.org)):** Mary M. noted that the Friends’ website receives quite a bit of traffic and is continually under development. In the past year, we had about

41,000 page views by 17,000 unique visitors (an increase of about 5,000 compared to last year). Several pages have recently been added or revised, and suggestions for new pages are welcome. The most popular pages are Home, Bison, Directions, and Hiking.

**Facebook:** Mary M. reported that the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Nachusa>) has about 6,900 followers, reaching about 15,000 users each month, as people share various posts. Mary M., Dee, and Charles update the page frequently with beautiful photos, workday news, blog posts, and links to other items of interest. We are always careful to project a good impression of what happens at Nachusa and highlight Friends involvement as appropriate.

Charles is the administrator for the Photography at Nachusa Grasslands Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/356617574475489/?ref=bookmarks>). He has about 1,400 followers who post a variety of photos of flowers, birds, and bison.

**Prairie-Updates** (<https://www.nachusagrasslands.org/prairiendashupdate-email.html>): The Prairie-Update email newsletter has about 1,000 subscribers. Mary M. is the editor. She sent 8 newsletters from July 2020 to May 2021.

**Instagram** (Nachusa; <https://instagram.com/nachusa?igshid=ag74ny20ovk>): Dee reported that Instagram has a total of 1,646 followers. We have switched to a business Instagram account so that Friends now has analytics data for Instagram. See the report linked to the annual meeting web page for details on our followers and the most popular posts.

**Blog** (<https://www.nachusagrasslands.org/nachusa-blog.html>): This year 12 blogs were posted, written by 10 different authors. We included author headshots and short bios as well as Friends website links to the donor and workday pages. Dee is the blog coordinator, and James Higby is the editor. Varied topics included bird migration, winter animal tracking, winter mammals, science publications, grassland bird research, a new steward, Nachusa's shrubs, sandhill cranes, bumble bees, ecosystem restoration, GIS and spatial analysis, and the year in photos.

The most popular post, for the second year in a row, was written last fall by Charles Larry. It was titled "Nachusa's Sandhill Cranes," and it talked about the first officially documented sandhill colts born at the preserve. Charles sent the blog link to the International Crane Foundation, and the blog was then shared with many people so that 1,400 readers "liked" his post.

A Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Blog Coordinator is needed. Dee has developed a comprehensive blog-writing guide (<https://bit.ly/3rSOvNI>) and is seeking someone to take over overseeing blog solicitation, writing, and posting on the website, Facebook, and Twitter. Contact her to express your interest.

**Friday Science Posts:** Friends of Nachusa Grasslands began science posts in September 2019, and they have been a great way to draw attention to all the scientific research grants that Friends funds. They do not occur every Friday, but whenever there's some interesting science to showcase. The posts are created by a collaborative effort between the scientist, Elizabeth, and Dee.

**Twitter (@Nachusa; <https://twitter.com/nachusa>):** Since the last annual meeting, 253 tweets were made and Twitter has gained another 193 followers, for a total of 1,482. With Heather H.'s help, we've added much more Twitter content this year. Dee and Heather would also appreciate assistance with Twitter posts.

**Bison Cam:** Paul asked about the possibility of mounting a camera on a spot where the bison like to congregate in order to generate interest. Mike S. mentioned that it would be difficult to locate a satisfactory spot, since the herd roams around 1,500 acres. Heather H. remarked that Midewin has a similar set up, and we could inquire as to whether it's had satisfactory results. Mike C. asked if a camera could be attached to a bison, and Elizabeth replied that such a project could be very difficult and dangerous.

## Science Grant Program

**Science Awards:** Mary V. shared that the reports from all but one of the 2020 researchers are linked to their project titles on <https://www.nachusagrasslands.org/science-grants-2020.html>. Dr. Laura Adamovicz was given an extension, as she was on maternity leave earlier this year.

The reports are all very well written and fascinating – Mary V. especially recommended the one by Bethanne Bruninga-Socolar on “Monitoring Nachusa’s Wild Bees,” which includes links to other works by technicians Chan Dolan and Josh Klosterman. Also, Rich King’s report on Blanding’s Turtles is very interesting and informative.

In 2021, Friends funded 13 researchers with a total of \$62,335 in grants. The first round of about \$48,000 covered a wide range of topics, including fire impacts, a beetle survey, and the intestinal microbiology of bison. Then in early 2021, Greg Wahl gave Friends a donation for scientific research focusing on arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi, so the committee, with Elizabeth’s help, solicited a new batch of applications and awarded a \$14,525 grant to Reb Bryant to study whether or not the inoculation of specific native arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) into the soil of greenhouse grown plants can facilitate the plant abundance of “hard-to-establish” plant species in prairie restorations. If successful, this work may provide a “library” of AMF cultures that can be used to increase biodiversity in future restorations. For details on these projects, see <https://www.nachusagrasslands.org/science-grants-2021.html>.

Mary V. thanked the members of the Science Committee, including Bernie, Jan Grainger, Cindy Crosby, Mike S., Bill Kleiman, and Elizabeth for their efforts in reviewing and discussing the applications. The decision-making process can be very challenging and time consuming for all involved. Additional committee members are welcome and should contact Mary V. if interested.

The 2022 maximum award amount will be \$66,000. Guidelines and applications were uploaded to the Friends’ website (<https://www.nachusagrasslands.org/science-grants-2022.html>) and emailed to prospective researchers and their advisors in mid-August.

Mary V. encouraged attendees to review the list of potential research projects posted on <https://www.nachusagrasslands.org/potential-research-topics.html> and make additional suggestions, so they can be included in future grant applications. Email suggestions to [nachusafriendsscience@gmail.com](mailto:nachusafriendsscience@gmail.com).

Mike S. noted that the Nachusa Grasslands research program is very well-known in the scientific community, and he also expressed thanks for Mary V.'s continuing dedication to this effort.

**Science Symposium:** Elizabeth Bach coordinated this year's annual Science Symposium. It was held on April 24, 2021, via Zoom. Pros and cons of meeting virtually were addressed, and they will be taken into consideration when planning future events. About 89 people registered, which is similar to previous in-person meetings. Technology was challenging, and Elizabeth appreciated all the assistance she received. The symposium website had about 800 views and has been shared with TNC donors and various volunteer coordinators. The next symposium is scheduled for April 23, 2022, and will hopefully include an in-person option. Planning will begin in late 2021, so additional feedback on this year's event as well as suggestions for next year's are welcome.

**Researchers at Nachusa:** This year Elizabeth approved 37 research permits, a record number. Eleven researchers were new to the preserve, so the program is growing and becoming more well-known.

#### **Administrative Items and New Business:**

**Policies:** 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. Friends also has a Donor Confidentiality Policy, which the Directors and Officers have reviewed.

In 2021, Friends developed two new policies with the help of Heather H.: a Whistleblower Policy and a Document Retention Policy. It came to our attention that our tax returns have line items for these two documents, which we were lacking. Now that we can affirm that we have these policies, our Charity Navigator score should increase to 100%.

Kirk Hallowell is serving as our Compliance Officer for the Whistleblower Policy, so anyone who has concerns about illegal or unethical actions by anyone associated with Friends should confer with Kirk.

Mary V. asked about the type of records that should be retained, including science grant applications. Heather H. replied that the policy mostly deals with financial documents, and they don't have to be destroyed after a certain period of time. Elizabeth noted that other organizations for which she has reviewed science grants discarded the documents after award decisions are made, mainly to maintain confidentiality.

**Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):** The Federal government reimburses landowners for reserving tillable acreage for wildlife habitat and soil conservation. Friends currently

leases 279.4 acres in four CRP contracts (139 acres of totally restored prairie; 94.6 acres of partially restored prairie, all at least overseeded with combine mix; and 45.7 acres of unrestored CRP land) from TNC for this purpose and is responsible for monitoring and managing the land.

Mike C. administers the CRP program. He reported that all the areas have been swept for noxious weeds and woody shrubs, so we are in compliance with management requirements. In 2022, some of our contracts will expire, and Bill has been working with Mike to make sure we can add TNC-owned land so that Friends can receive the full \$50,000 maximum allowed from the USDA.

**Friends T-Shirt Initiative:** Heather B. coordinates our t-shirt program. Her design features a rusty-patched bumblebee on the front and our Friends logo on the back of each shirt. The shirts are stored in the Barn loft and can be purchased on an honor system.

**Art Show Committee:** Heather B. is researching the possibility of having an off-site Nachusa Grasslands art show to showcase the beauty of the preserve and tell our story through art. Dee Hudson and Nicole Carr (Mike's daughter) have volunteered to help plan the event. Contact Heather to become involved or offer suggestions.

**Prospective Board and Officer Candidates:** Friends welcomes volunteers for the Board and Officer positions. If you want to investigate those roles without committing, we can arrange to have you shadow the existing individuals to help you learn about the level and nature of those commitments. Contact Bernie if interested.

#### **TNC-Nachusa Grasslands Updates by Elizabeth:**

**Building Construction:** The new Morton Building construction is almost complete. Vehicles and seed processing equipment has been moved into the new space. The scientists' room is also a welcome addition. WiFi is now available in the Morton Building, so volunteers can contact a staff member for the password if needed.

**HQ Renovation:** Modifications to the Headquarters Barn, including expanding gathering areas and remodeling the offices, are also in the planning stages.

**2022 Annual Meeting:** The next Friends Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, July 30, 2022.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 5 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Meier, Secretary  
September 14, 2021

Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Treasurer's Report July 2021

Budget and Actual Results:	2020-2021 Actual (Unaudited)	Percent of Actual	2020-2021 Budget	Variance	Proposed 2021-2022 Budget	Percent of Budget
<b>Beginning Balance</b>	<b>38,907.61</b>		43,744.61		<b>37,919.00</b>	
<b>Revenue</b>						
<b>Cash Donations</b>	543,639.03	70.0	325,000.00	218,639.03	400,000.00	56.0
<b>CRP Annual Payments</b>	50,000.00	6.4	50,000.00	0.00	50,000.00	6.9
<b>CFNIL Endowment Distribution</b>	49,216.31	6.3	42,000.00	7,216.31	60,000.00	8.3
<b>Grant Income</b>	131,900.00	17.0	210,000.00	-78,100.00	210,000.00	29.0
<b>Amazon Smile Income</b>	57.75	<1.0	100.00	-42.75	100.00	<1.0
<b>T-Shirt Income</b>	547.00	<1.0	200.00	347.00	200.00	<1.0
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>775,360.09</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>627,300.00</b>	<b>148,060.09</b>	<b>720,300.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Disbursements</b>						
<b>In Direct Support of Our Mission Statement</b>						
<b>Gifts to TNC Nachusa Endowment</b>	57,071.91	7.4	15,000.00	42,071.91	25,000.00	3.5
<b>Gifts to CFNIL Nachusa Endowment</b>	480,000.00	61.8	520,000.00	-40,000.00	350,250.00	48.6
<b>Gift to CNFIL Science Endowment</b>	100,000.00	12.9	0.00	NA	150,000.00	20.8
<b>Fund for Land Protection</b>	15,000.00	1.9	0.00	NA	50,000.00	6.9
<b>Science Grants, Symposium, Microscope</b>	62,185.00	8.0	49,000.00	13,185.00	70,000.00	9.7
<b>Nachusa Operations via TNC</b>	31,835.25	4.1	42,000.00	-10,164.72	42,000.00	5.8
<b>Stewardship</b>	2,002.66	<1.0	3,000.00	-997.34	3,000.00	<1.0
<b>Grants to Other Organizations</b>	4,000.00	<1.0	3,000.00	1,000.00	3,000.00	<1.0
<b>T-Shirt Expenses</b>	0	0.0	2,500.00	-2,500.00	1,000.00	<1.0
<b>Other</b>	655.00	<1.0	0.00	655.00	1,000.00	<1.0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>752,749.82</b>	<b>97.0</b>	<b>634,500.00</b>	<b>118,249.82</b>	<b>695,250.00</b>	<b>96.5</b>
<b>Expenses</b>						
<b>Banking Fees</b>	61.00	<1.0	80.00	-19.00	100.00	<1.0
<b>Government Fees</b>	15.00	<1.0	70.00	-55.00	50.00	<1.0
<b>Auditing Fees</b>	7005.00	<1.0	3,750.00	3,255.00	7500.00	1.1
<b>Insurance</b>	2330.00	<1.0	2,200.00	130.00	2,400.00	<1.0
<b>Development</b>	14,181.88	1.8	10,000.00	4,181.88	15,000.00	2.1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>23,592.88</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>16,100.00</b>	<b>7469.88</b>	<b>25,050.00</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>776,342.70</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>650,600.00</b>	<b>125,742.70</b>	<b>720,300.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Ending Cash Balance</b>	<b>37,919.00</b>		20,444.61		37,919.00	