



## Prescribed Fire Resource Kit for Grassland Parks in the Heartland

### Tallgrass and fire

Tallgrass prairie is an endangered ecosystem in the Midwestern U.S. Formerly grasslands stretched from the west coast to the east and from Mexico to Canada. The Central Grasslands region or Eastern Great Plains comprises the Heartland of America and the largest portion of the tallgrass prairie. Prior to European settlement, a vast sea of prairie with scattered savannahs and woodlands intermixed to cover the landscape.

Prairies and savannas in the Heartland are maintained by an interaction of disturbances such as fire, grazing/browsing, drought, wind, and ice storms. Lightning strikes and human sources can cause wildland fires. Human sources include prescribed fire, which is used for ecological benefits and hazard fuel control.

### A compendium of information for fire management planning<sup>1</sup>

The fire ecology program of the Heartland Inventory and Monitoring Network primarily assists parks that have restored or reconstructed prairies and savannas. The



Network developed a Prescribed Fire Resource Kit to provide information for prescribed fire planning. The kit gives summary information on ignition sources, fire history, heterogeneity in plant communities, and exotic and woody plant



species control. Influential research papers on these topics and a set of annotated references and websites allow the reader to research the subject in greater depth. Ultimately, the resources in this document will assist with preparation for writing measurable fire management objectives.

### Fire ecology in the Heartland

Management staff within the Heartland often encounter similar management challenges and the fire ecology program serves as an information sharing link between these parks. The fire ecology program provides feedback to resource managers on the use of fire in achieving management goals, as well as providing input on the development of fire related program goals. Analysis of fire as a management tool can also help us understand observed patterns seen in long-term monitoring of prairie communities.

### How to use this kit:

- Find information about the historical role of fire
- Use references and links to further your understanding of fire and plant communities
- Learn about plant community dynamics
- Use species descriptions and links to plan the control of modern-day plant community problems
- Develop a science-based Fire Management Plan or Prescribed Fire Plan using the toolkit as a resource

<sup>1</sup> Leis, S. A. 2008. *Prescribed fire resource kit for grassland parks in the Central Grasslands, U.S.: information resources for prescribed fire planning*. Natural Resource Report NPS/HTLN/NRR—2008/027. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado.