

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN PRAIRIE RECONSTRUCTIONS

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Abstract: Prairie reconstruction is the only approach available for achieving significant gains in prairie acreage in the Midwest. Many different entities (private, NGO, conservation, federal, state, county, etc.) are commonly engaged in prairie reconstruction, which collectively creates considerable potential for prairie restoration at the landscape scale. The process of reconstruction, essentially an exercise in disturbance and successional processes, has become such a standard practice in conservation that a whole new discipline in ecology has developed. However, quality reconstruction is not an easy task, and numerous challenges exist that require careful ecological deliberation. Among these challenges are genetic considerations, the composition of species seed mixes, achieving natural pattern and dispersion, agricultural homogeneity and exotic species introduction. This paper will provide a discussion of these challenges and some of their possible solutions.