

## Protecting our prairie

As someone involved in the restoration and management of native prairie, I certainly appreciate The Star's recent editorial on the plight of our prairies (8/23, Opinion, "Our endangered tallgrass prairie").

However, the editorial states that 2,200 acres of prairie surround Smithville Lake. There is, in fact, none. Clay County Parks has planted many areas around the lake with prairie grasses and wildflowers. It's great work, but it's not prairie. A major distinction should be made between a place planted to prairie species vs. the real thing. Once a true prairie is plowed or destroyed, it is gone for good.

There are several places locally where people can see the real thing: Kansas City's Jerry Smith Park, Powell Gardens, the Prairie Center in Olathe and Johnson County Park's Kill Creek Park. Another small remnant exists at Shawnee Mission Park but is being severely over-browsed by deer.

I recommend that those interested in visiting true prairie contact the Conservation Department and request the publication "Public Prairies of Missouri" and get out and see a prairie firsthand. For more information, visit the Missouri Prairie Foundation ([www.moprairie.org](http://www.moprairie.org)) and in Kansas, the Grassland Heritage Foundation ([www.grasslandheritage.org](http://www.grasslandheritage.org)).

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