

Features of the Rockefeller Tract

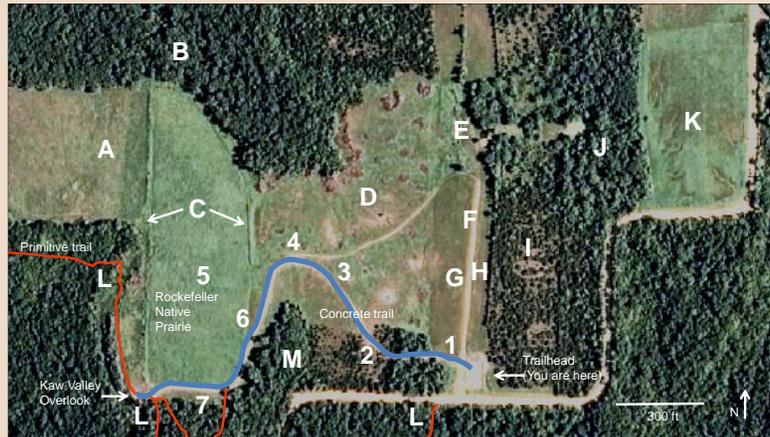
Timeline for the Rockefeller Tract

- Before 1500**
Multiple indigenous cultural groups live in the region.
- ca. 1500 – 1829**
The Kansa live in the area, which is dominated by native tallgrass prairie.
- 1829 – 1867**
The area is part of the Delaware Indian Reservation.
- 1868 – 1956**
Settlement by Euro-Americans; most native prairie is transformed into farmland.
- 1956**
KU professors E. Raymond Hall and Henry S. Fitch receive funding from John D. Rockefeller Jr. to purchase this 160-acre farm for the purpose of conserving a small native prairie and testing methods of prairie management.
- 1957 – 2006**
KU begins a long-term prairie experiment, along with research and teaching programs.

2005 – present
Land adjacent to the Rockefeller Prairie is purchased. New directions are set for the 1957 experiment, including expanded prairie restoration and enhanced public outreach.



The 10-acre Rockefeller Native Prairie supports more than 200 plant species and is one of the best examples in this region of this imperiled natural community.



Along the path

Until 1956, the 160-acre Rockefeller Experimental Tract was a farm typical of those in the region, with a varied land use history. The map above shows features along the 2,000-foot concrete trail to the Kaw River Valley Overlook. Signs at other points along the trail provide information on the historical forces and ongoing ecological processes that have shaped the landscape.

Points of interest

1. Original 1957 experiment (annual mowing)
2. Red cedar ecology
3. Prairie restoration
4. Fire and native plant communities
5. Rockefeller Native Prairie
6. Historical soil erosion feature
7. Forest succession

Managed tracts and other features

- A. Restoration area seeded to prairie grasses in 1987
- B. Native oak-hickory forest
- C. Former fence line boundary
- D. Restoration area seeded to prairie grasses in 1957
- E. Historic farmstead site
- F. Old farm lane
- G. Hayed tract
- H. Mowed tract
- I. Historically grazed tract
- J. Untreated tract
- K. Burned tract
- L. Primitive trails
- M. Successional forest

Recent history: Habitat fragmentation

The landscape before you looks very different than it did 150 years ago. Prior to settlement by people of European origin, 95 percent of Douglas and Jefferson counties was tallgrass prairie, with forests confined to areas along streams and isolated groves on steep ravines. Today less than 1 percent of this habitat remains in eastern Kansas. Trees and shrubs have expanded to form woodlands.

Our present landscape is fragmented (divided) into smaller, dissimilar types, including types that were not present in earlier times. While we cannot expect to completely restore the native landscape, maintaining larger contiguous pieces of native prairie, forest and other communities is critical for the survival of many plants and animals.



Computer visualizations of the area north of Lawrence show how the area has changed over more than 150 years. At the time of Euro-American settlement in 1856, prairie was the dominant vegetation. Trees occurred in gallery forests along the Kansas River and its tributaries and in small isolated upland groves. Some roads and farm fields were present. Today, both historical prairie and forest habitats have been broken into smaller and dissimilar habitat types.