

21st CENTURY PRAIRIES: THREATS AND SOLUTIONS
INTRODUCTION INTO PERMANENTLY PROTECTING PRAIRIES

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No one problem facing Iowa's native prairies stands alone. Invasive species, woody encroachment, management, adjacent land use and land conversion all carry equal risk to the future of native and reconstructed prairies. Conversion of native prairies to intensively grazed pastures, row-crop agriculture, tree plantings, residential development and commercial development continue to be real threats. While the goal of preserving the ecological integrity of native prairies is of paramount importance, the prevention of incompatible land-use and/or conversion should be an equally important and parallel goal. Permanent protection is the one of the most important methods of ensuring the existence of prairie in the future. The strongest defense a prairie has against conversion and/or incompatible land use is outright ownership by a conservation organization. There are many organizations capable of and willing to own prairie remnants. However, the cost of acquisition and management is the bottom line for most conservation organizations. Of the other options available, Conservation Easements, deed restrictions and mutual covenants are also good defenses to consider. Nested within permanent protection must be permanent stewardship. Protection without good land management will inevitably lead to the demise of the very resource being protected. Conversely, without permanent protection all of the stewardship in the world could be for nothing. The oral presentation will focus on legal protection methods, including conservation easements, in addition to providing long-term management needs.