

Tallgrass Prairie

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve
Cottonwood Falls, Kansas



Weddings at the Preserve

A Special Use Permit is required for all weddings held at the preserve. The Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse and immediate area is authorized for wedding ceremonies due to its historic nature as a community meeting place. Historically box- suppers, school functions, and community socials were held at the schoolhouse, therefore it is plausible that a wedding ceremony may have occurred at this location. Keeping in line with its historical use, this area of the preserve is the authorized area for weddings falling within the requirements listed below.

The Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse is available for weddings from May 1 – October 31, 10 a.m. to dusk. Weddings may be scheduled up to six months in advance, with a required advanced time- frame of 60 days prior to your ceremony. The building and area will not be authorized during times of scheduled education activities (currently April), scheduled tours, normal operating hours, prescribed fire, or during adverse weather conditions. The building is open to the public on weekends in May, June, September, and October from 12 p.m. - 4 p.m. Weddings will not be authorized during these times. The building is not heated or air- conditioned and has no electricity. Please call ahead for scheduled activities.

Restrictions and Event Management

A visit to the park is highly recommended prior to finalizing your plans. The schoolhouse measures 30 by 24 feet. Egress limits visitor capacity to a maximum of 26. The school is wheelchair accessible through the use of a removable ramp, but it is best to evaluate your needs in advance. If you are not familiar with the area, it is advisable to make a planning trip in advance.

Permits for formal wedding receptions are not authorized, due to their complex nature. Receptions are better accommodated off- site.

The Special Use Permit for your wedding does not allow your ceremony to restrict other park visitors from the schoolhouse area. Wedding permits will not be issued for heavy use periods- - Memorial Day weekend, the Fourth of July and weekend, and Labor Day weekend.

Cost recovery for staff will be incurred for an event monitor of these activities.

Regulations

- All areas of the preserve are important components of the tallgrass prairie resources, as well as important habitat for a host of plants and animals. The trails attract visitor use, which result in considerable environmental impact. To minimize such impacts and to maintain the scenic and

ecological integrity of the tallgrass prairie, no special activities such as weddings, formal meetings, or parties are permitted without studying the potential for adverse environmental impact in advance. Need for any further study or compliance will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

- Riparian zones (stream and river banks) are sensitive areas and may not be used.
- Weddings are not allowed in the ranch headquarters area due to their complex nature.
- The release of butterflies, birds, balloons, etc. is prohibited.
- Birdseed, rice, confetti, or other items may not be thrown within the preserve as this provides an unnatural food source for preserve wildlife.
- Picking of wildflowers or other natural or cultural objects is not permitted.
- All decorations must be authorized via permit to assure that no historic fabric will be damaged or disturbed.
- No decorations may be draped or affixed to any portion of the schoolhouse at any time. All decorations must be self-supporting. Holes, spikes, or change to any surface will not be authorized.
- Outdoor release of helium-filled balloons within the National Park System is prohibited. These balloons inevitably fall back to earth where they create hazardous conditions for marine wildlife and also create additional litter problems.
- No event or directional signs are allowed as they are a distraction and safety hazard.
- Parking will not be restricted to the wedding party and must remain open to all.
- Picnic areas and parking may not be reserved and are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The permittee is responsible for the cleanup of the site and all trash. All permittee garbage is to be removed from the preserve by the permittee.
- Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve strictly enforces all laws relating to alcohol. In order to protect the historic structure and to prevent rodent infestation, food and beverages are not permitted in the schoolhouse.
- Permits for wedding receptions are not authorized, due to their complex nature. Wedding receptions shall be held at a location outside the preserve boundary.
- The capacity of the schoolhouse is 26 people. The building interior is furnished as a 19th century functioning one-room schoolhouse, therefore seating capacity is limited. Seats, except for the recitation bench and teachers desk, may be used by the audience, but weight factors apply. The desks were historically used by children and not the full weight of an adult. Desk surfaces are not authorized to be used as seating.

- Outside- source chairs, tables or other furniture must be approved in advance, as the schoolhouse contains historic flooring. School desks may be moved to the interior walls of the building, but must be written as a condition of the permit. Staff will move the desks and seats, as they are historic objects.
- Pets, with the exception of working guide animals, are not allowed in any building and may not be tied to any structure at the preserve. Pet rules apply to all park visitors. Please inform your guests prior to your wedding.
- The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR- 36, 2.12) addresses audio disturbances and prohibits the following: radio, television sets, tape deck or musical instruments, in a manner that exceeds a noise level of 60 decibels measured on the A- weighted scale at 50 feet. No amplified music or public address systems are allowed over 60 decibels.
- All vehicles, including motorcycles and bicycles, must be parked in designated areas only: no off- road traffic. Car- pooling to the area is recommended.
- Special conveyances, including but not limited to helicopters and hot air balloons are prohibited. Use of a horse- drawn conveyance must be authorized via permit.
- Rock wall materials may not be removed or used for any purpose and shall not be disturbed.
- No sitting on or disturbance of the rock walls at any time.
- No noxious weeds.