



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Tallgrass Prairie
National Preserve

2480 B Ks. Hwy 177
Strong City, KS 66869

620-273-8494 phone
620-273-8066 fax

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve News Release

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Heather Brown, (620) 273-6034 x 241

Smokey Bear and the National Smokey Bear Collection Exhibit Comes to the Preserve



Smokey Bear turned 70 years old this year on August 9th. Highlighting the anniversary, the National Smokey Bear Collection Exhibit is traveling across the country on a nationwide tour and has arrived at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. The national traveling exhibit artwork is being shared among the preserve, Fort Larned National Historic Site, and Fort Scott National Historic Site with different activities and display dates at each venue. Visit these websites at www.nps.gov/fols and www.nps.gov/fosc for further details.

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is hosting seven of the nineteen replicas of Rudolph “Rudy” Wendelin’s Smokey Bear paintings and will be on display in the Visitor Center. The exhibit opens Saturday, August 23rd and extends through Sunday, September 28th at the preserve. A birthday celebration for Smokey Bear will be held on Saturday, August 30th at 1 p.m. in the Visitor

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Center breezeway. Visitors are invited to enjoy birthday cake, sign a giant birthday card, and sing happy birthday to a large 8 foot tall Smokey Bear doll, wishing Smokey a happy 70th birthday. Children’s activities include coloring pages to take home, activity books, and lessons learning about preventing accidental fires, but also about the benefits of prescribed fire to support a healthy prairie. Upon completion of the activities, kids earn an official Smokey Bear sticker, certificate, and other souvenirs. The large Smokey Bear will be available in the Visitor Center breezeway for photo opportunities all weekend long.

Smokey Bear was created during World War II to publicize the need to protect a critical natural resource – wood. To combat the incidence of human-caused forest fires, the U. S. Forest Service established the Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention (CFFP) in 1942. The CFFP adopted Smokey as its official symbol two years later in 1944. Smokey Bear’s famous slogan, “Only you can prevent forest fires,” was added in 1947 by the Wartime Advertising Council, known today as the Ad Council. Prominent among the Smokey Bear artists was Rudy Wendelin, whose rendering of Smokey helped humanize and soften the character, making him more appealing to children, to whom much of the fire prevention campaign was directed. Smokey’s message today has changed to, “Only you can prevent wildfires.”

The Smokey Bear Collection at the National Agricultural Library consists of posters, proofs, mechanicals, original artwork, motion pictures, sound recordings, and memorabilia. The nineteen original Wendelin Smokey Bear paintings and their replicas are part of this collection. The original paintings will be on display at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, VA.

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is located two miles north of Strong City on Kansas State Highway 177 (the Flint Hills National Scenic Byway) and is a unique public/private partnership between the National Park Service and The Nature Conservancy. For more information, visit the preserve’s Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/NPS.TallgrassPrairie> , website at www.nps.gov/tapr, email tapr_interpretation@nps.gov, or call the preserve at (620) 273-8494. To learn more about The Nature Conservancy in Kansas, visit the Conservancy’s website at www.nature.org/Kansas or Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/TNCKansas> .

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