



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Tallgrass Prairie
National Preserve

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Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve News Release

For Immediate Release

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Two Cabinet Secretaries and a Christmas Carol of Governors Gather to Break Ground for New Facilities at the Preserve



On Friday, November 12, 2010, Sec. of Health and Human Services and Former KS Governor Kathleen Sebelius, Sec. of the Interior Ken Salazar, Midwest Regional Director Ernie Quintana and a long “Shovel Brigade” list broke ground on the long awaited Visitor Center and Administrative Office Buildings at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. Among the Shovel Brigade and keynote speakers were the past, present, and future Kansas Governors Kathleen Sebelius, Mike Hayden, Mark Parkinson, and Sam Brownback, who is both Governor- Elect of Kansas and U.S. Senator.

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The event began with local Chase County Elementary Students discussing their participation in the *Building Common Ground Through the Quilts of Many Hands* quilt project with the Cabinet Secretaries and others. Students and officials then made their way to the footprint of the new Visitor Center and Administrative Office buildings where a tent of over 250 people awaited their arrival. The ceremony began with students leading the crowd in the singing of the National Anthem, followed by the reading of student speeches as to how Little Bluestem should be the official state grass of Kansas. These speeches were the basis on which the state of Kansas established a state grass designation in 2010. Remarks were then presented by Midwest Regional Director Ernie Quintana, Sec. of Interior Ken Salazar, Sec. Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, Governor Mark Parkinson, and Governor- Elect Sam Brownback. Sec. of KS Dept. Wildlife and Parks Mike Hayden then read a letter from former U.S. Senator Nancy Kassebaum- Baker, who was unable to attend the ceremony. Kassebaum- Baker is credited for the negotiations that achieved the establishment of the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. Sec. Hayden then read a long list of individuals that had a hand in creating the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve and helping the Visitor Center and Admin. Office buildings come to fruition. The spirited and cheerful mood of the day could not be dampened by the downpour of much needed rain, as the Shovel Brigade officially broke ground beneath the large protective tents. Alan Pollom, Director of the Kansas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy concluded the ceremony and invited everyone to attend the 14th birthday celebration held in the historic limestone barn. Birthday cupcakes, hot cocoa, and coffee were served amid live historic music played by National Park Service staff. A fun time was had by all.

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is located two miles north of Strong City on Kansas State Highway 177 (the Flint Hills National Scenic Byway). For more information or to make group reservations, visit the preserve's website at www.nps.gov/tapr, email tapr_interpretation@nps.gov, or call the preserve at (620) 273- 8494. Superintendent Wendy Lauritzen can be reached at the Cottonwood Falls office headquarters at 620- 273- 6034.

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