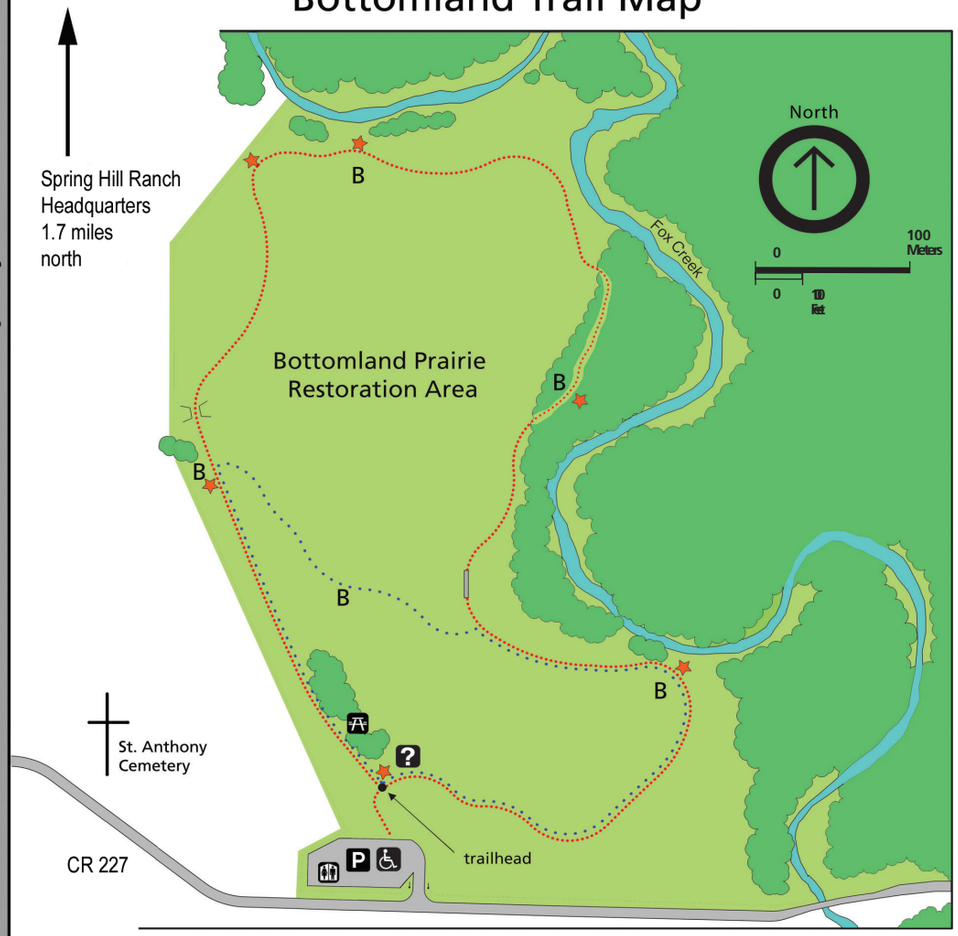
K-177 Flint Hills National Scenic Byway

Bottomland Trail Map



Bottomland Trail Area located 1.7 miles south of Spring Hill Ranch Headquarters on K-177. Turn left (east) on CR 227, travel 0.3 miles to parking area.

US Highway 50 located south of Bottomland Trail Area.

Trail Legend

- Main Trail - 3/4 Mile Length
- Short Trail - 1/2 Mile Length
- Wayside Exhibit / Overlook
- B Bench Location

Bottomland Trail Area open year-round.

For assistance, call 620-273-8494

For your safety and for the protection of the area, please no smoking, stay on designated trails when hiking, and respect the preserve boundary.

- Self-guiding trail
- Visitor information
- Restrooms
- Pets on leash
- Accessible accommodations provided
- Parking
- Picnic area
- No motorized access
- No horseback riding
- No bicycle access
- No rollerskating, rollerblading, or skateboarding

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

... the prairies we panned for agricultural gold were not wasteland turned to productivity only by the industrious hand of man. They were vital communities of plants and animals, nations both wondrous and wild, nations now all but gone. As we celebrate what we have gained shall we not also mourn what has been lost?

Mary Taylor Young, *Land of Grass and Sky: A Naturalist's Prairie Journey*

Images of hikers enjoying the Bottomland Trail

Support for the development of the Bottomland Trail has been provided, in part, by the Cloud Family Foundation, the Aaron Family Foundation, the National Park Trust, and the National Park Service.

For More Information

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is a public/private partnership between the National Park Service (the primary land manager) and The Nature Conservancy (the primary land owner). The preserve offers a variety of activities, including ranch house tours, hiking trails, prairie bus tours, and more. The historic Spring Hill Ranch house and barn are open daily 9:00 am to 4:30 p.m., except Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1. All hiking trails and all outdoor areas are open 24 hours. No camping is permitted. To learn more, please contact the preserve at:

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve
P.O. Box 585, 226 Broadway
Cottonwood Falls, KS 66845
Phone: 620-273-8494
Email: TAPR_Interpretation@nps.gov
Web: www.nps.gov/tapr

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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve
Strong City, Kansas

Bottomland Trail - Hiking Guide and Map

The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

Welcome to the Bottomland Trail

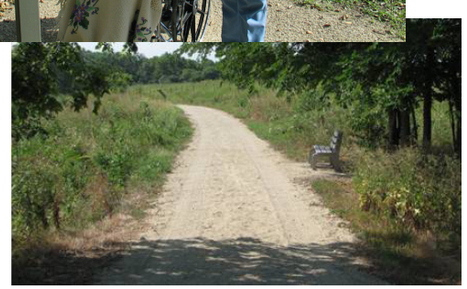
Tallgrass prairie restoration is an important, but lengthy process, with progress measured in the decades. Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve has embraced these challenges in an effort to return a portion of a rare and nearly extinct part of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem back to its native state, the bottomland prairie. In this process, the preserve has created two hiking trails (0.5 and 0.75 miles each) more accessible to wheelchairs and similar assistive devices.

Introduction

Less than four percent of tallgrass prairie remains in North America, with the majority of this remaining area being upland tallgrass prairie. The bottomland tallgrass prairie community is truly a rare relic. This ecosystem differs in size and composition from its upland tallgrass prairie neighbor due to deeper, richer soils, flatter geography, and better access to water.

Enhanced accessibility

The two loop trails that make up the Bottomland Trail (see map on back) provide increased accessibility to individuals using wheelchairs or other assistive devices, allowing a wider range of people to experience and enjoy the unique aspects of this rare ecosystem and its restoration.



Restoring the Bottomland Prairie

Much of the original bottomland plant community has disappeared over the last 120 years. Crops, like corn, wheat, and smooth brome, took advantage of the rich, deep soil, while stockyards, rail spurs, and ranch roads made good use of the flat terrain. These changes in the ecosystem allowed non-native and invasive plants to increase. The preserve works to restore this bottomland area to its original state through activities such as invasive plant removal, periodic burning, and reseeding projects.

The Living Color: Wildflowers & Wildlife

Bottomland prairie is the fertile home to numerous species of plants and animals. Trees and grass provide habitat for wildlife, while Fox Creek holds a variety of fish and invertebrates. Grasses and wildflowers can attain their maximum growth in the bottmland, reaching seven to eight feet high during late summer and fall. Trees, like black walnut and hackberry, flourish in the bottomland, favoring the moisture of the soil along Fox Creek. Look for some of these common plants and animals pictured below and to the right.

Credit:MikeHaddock

Indiangrass

Credit:MikeHaddock

Switchgrass

Credit:MikeHaddock

Big bluestem

Credit:MikeHaddock

Common sunflower

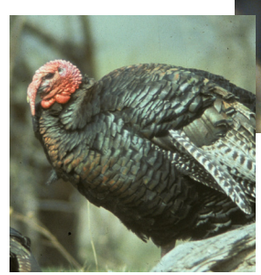
Credit:MikeHaddock

Buffalo gourd

Eastern gama grass

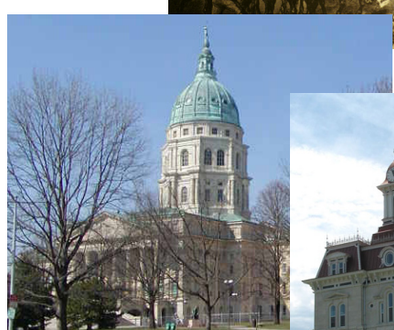
Coyote

Eastern Bluebird



Wild Turkey

Railroads, Stockyards, & Limestone Quarries

The elevated ranch road that makes up the western section of this trail is a remnant of a railroad spur that cut into the bottomland area. Local rail spurs ended the need for long cattle drives to main rail stations like Abilene and Wichita. The stockyard next to the spur was used as a loading and unloading point for sending and receiving cattle. The stockyards were also used as water and feed rest stops for other “traveling” cattle, only the cattle didn’t get the choice of first class or coach.

Limestone, the abundant rock that guarded the upland prairie soil from the plow, also provided settlers with a convenient source of building material, featured prominently in the Kansas State Capitol building in Topeka and the Chase County Courthouse in Cottonwood Falls. The thick, tree-covered area across the county road from the parking lot hides a limestone quarry site from the late 1800s.