

Attention – Special Committee on the 30 X 30 Initiative

Please accept my font size as I have very low vision. My full contact information can be found at the bottom of this letter.

Dear Special Committee and Interested Parties,

I am a farmer and my family has owned property in Vernon County, Missouri for 80+ years. It contains native pecan groves and native wetland prairie.

We have been advised by several groups that our prairie contains a large percentage of the largest single unplowed tract of remaining wetland prairie in Missouri. We have managed our land in a most judicious manner.

Sometime after “the beginning”, it was initially transformed from a large melting and arctic swamp that was a vast and changing area of mud, ice and giant Sloths, Missouri Camels and all manner of prehistoric animal life. About 11,000 years ago in Western Missouri as the earth gradually warmed, it allowed the area 90 miles South of the Missouri River to become suitable for plants capable of preventing erosion, the formation of more solid land masses and the initial genetic forms of our Native Wetland Prairie Grass. This species is has evolved into a species and ecosystem of grasses and plants living in synergy with each other into what we refer to as Cordgrass, Rip Gut or

Ripppy. The botanical name Cordgrass and the synergistic collection of species is called *Spartina pectinate*.

It is very sad and intriguing to our family that we did EVERYTHING we could following historical norms and best practices we could initiate to preserve it inviolate...And still fail.

The USDA/SCS discovered that it needed to be saved from humans...They offered us a large sum of money for a 30 year contract not to destroy it, and we grabbed it. We would have done the same thing without payment as we would never, ever hurt our prairie.

As time went on and bureaucratic oversight increased we started having additional covenants applied to the management of our beloved prairie.

We could only mow one third of it every year on a rotating 3 year rotation...We could only mow it by calenda dates not when it was dry. That made it made impossible to harvest most of the time. The third of our prairie we could mow, just happens to be the part that is wet. We could burn it in the fall but when it cannot be mowed it was usually 12-15 inches deep in wet, gooey. muddy hay left from the summer floods and that

resulting mess was so wet you could not burn it with a blow torch. We know...We tried.

The result from all of this additional governmental assistance was a destroyed prairie. What it took 11,000 years to create, it took 20 years for our government overseers to destroy with their advanced forms of management.

It became so bad we could not save it. We complained for 6 years and the solution was finally to turn 80 acres of our beloved prairie into a wetland lake for geese and ducks...And we are not avid duck hunters. So much for 80 acres if our never plowed, never sprayed, never fertilized 11,000 year old native prairie. This native organic prairie was used to feed our daughters organically fed pure bred cattle herd.

Now, to add insult and disaster to injury, our native pecan grove growing adjacent to and in harmony with our native prairie has been 70% destroyed by additional governmental programs that encourage mismanagement of wetland areas or just allow damaging practices to occur.

I think you have an overview of what governmental care and practices can do to landowners that are

dedicated nearly to a religious degree to preserve our property.

I can write a novel about these issues but quite frankly a visit to our property would enlighten anyone that thinks management by a committee of people and swarms of field agents driven by practices and ideals other than allowing us to preserve our property will not improve it...Only damage it and the cost to restore it is incalculable.

I will challenge anyone to show me how that there is any reason why the enormous acreage of land encompassed by the 30 X 30 program, most of which is in pristine condition would need to be taken over and managed by an advocacy group of arm's length representatives. Who can ever take care of anything better than the loving owners of their prairie?

I have aerial photos of our property since 1958 showing the continuous excellent preservation of our property until the last 30 years. I have detailed samples and information on all the soil types and plant species we care for, the wildlife habitat we sustain and the heart and soul we use to take care of our little part of our earth. You cannot buy or emulate that type of love, only

the ownership of a caring and dedicated American farmer.

You are welcome to visit us at any time. I think it will be enlightening to many.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Jim Bell

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Bell Bacon Farms

112270 East James Road

Richards, Missouri 64778

417.684.1973