

## PROJECT NARRATIVE

**Project Title:** *Grassland Interview*— Grassland Ecosystem Drawing Workshops

### Project Overview and Needs Addressed

*Grassland Interview* focuses on two critical aspects of the grassland life-cycle: controlled burns and dormancy. Though both are essential to conservation of grasslands, burns are often controversial to the general public and dormant grasslands are sometimes perceived as aesthetically undesirable. Grasslands provide essential ecosystem services, such as groundwater recharge, water quality improvement, pollinator habitat, and carbon sequestration. But worldwide, the outlook for conservation of grasslands is bleak: just 45% remain, and only a little over 4% of these are in a protected status. Katie Kingery-Page and her collaborator at K-State, Erin Wiersma, seek to bring the significance of grassland to a variety of public audiences through their ongoing initiative, *Grassland Interview*.

### Engaged Activities

Our engagement with grassland has products of different kinds: works on paper, experimental video, audio recordings of interviews with ecologists, and community based-workshops. **The Project engages people of the region to build the project through learning about and drawing of grassland plants by high school students.** Kingery-Page provides ecological expertise and educational content and manages engagement activities. Wiersma brings her unique creative work as an artist to the project through video and works on paper. With their community partners, Wiersma and Kingery-Page co-lead Grassland Ecosystem Drawing Workshops with high-school aged youth.

### *Grassland Ecosystem Drawing Workshops*

The Project is driven by a central question: How do we authentically bring arts and sciences together to promote understanding of grasslands? *Grassland Interview* is an intergenerational approach which includes high school youth as makers experiencing the life cycle of a grassland in Kansas City, Kansas and Manhattan, Kansas.

*Kansas City:* We will offer two half-day workshops for an audience of biology students at USD 500's JC Harmon High School, Architecture, Construction and Engineering Academy. Each workshop will have space for approximately 40 youth, ages fourteen to sixteen. Using plant material harvested from the high school's on-site micro prairie and wetland, we will introduce students to ecosystem services provided by the plants (stormwater infiltration and cleansing, pollinator and other faunal habitat, and carbon sequestration for example). We will lead students in a series of drawing exercises to closely observe and emotively express the plant morphology.

In January 2019, we worked with David Bennett of JC Harmon High School to integrate a pilot workshop into freshman student curricula as a one-day research/writing/biology/team-building/art and drawing experience. The pilot workshop had four basic parts:

- 1) ecosystem services lecture (Kingery-Page)
- 2) plant collection and ID (Kingery-Page and Bennett)
- 3) emotive, embodied drawing (Wiersma)
- 4) detailed plant observational drawings (Kingery-Page)

The workshop was a successful pilot resulting in a display of student drawings and will lead to many refinements for our future workshops.

*Manhattan:* We'll host two half-day workshops for an audience of painting and drawing students of USD 383's Manhattan High School in Manhattan, Kansas. Each workshop will be developed in collaboration with Manhattan high school art teacher Rachel Fontenot and will have space for approximately 20 students, aged fifteen to eighteen. Using plant material harvested from the FHDC's onsite grassland native plants garden, we will introduce students to ecosystem services provided by the plants through a series of drawing exercises.



*Images of pilot workshop conducted with David Bennett's students at JC Harmon High School, 22 January, 2019*

### **Accomplishment Benchmarks**

**Exhibit of the JC Harmon (USD 500) high school students' drawings** will be assembled as collective, wall-sized work, shown at the Kansas City Design Center in **January, 2020**. A public opening for the show will celebrate the high school students in a setting where they can meet and interact with professionals in design careers.

We will bring the Project to audiences of the Flint Hills Discovery Center (FHDC; Manhattan, Kansas) through a premiere event including a small-scale exhibition of works on paper, interview audio, and screening of experimental video. **Exhibit of the Manhattan High School (USD 383) students' drawings** will be assembled as collective, wall-sized work, during the FHDC Meet the Makers event in **March, 2020**.

**These two benchmarks will mark the celebration of one year of Grassland Interview workshops for youth, in their own communities, where they can take pride and ownership of workshop outcomes.** Kingery-Page and Wiersma intend to continue engaged work with regional high school audiences and broader, intergenerational audiences. This first year of workshops allows them to refine their hybrid art and science approach to revealing the significance of grasslands with community partners.

Please see the Project Timeline on the following page.

## Project Timeline: 1 July 2019-1 July 2020 [planning occurs July-August 2019]

### Timeline: Public Facing Events and Workshops

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#### September 2019

##### Grassland Ecosystem Drawing Workshop 1

JC Harmon High School, Argentine, Kansas City, Kansas

Half-day workshop for an audience of 20 biology students at USD 500's JC Harmon High School, Architecture, Construction and Engineering Academy.

#### November 2019

##### Grassland Ecosystem Drawing Workshop 2

JC Harmon High School, Argentine, Kansas City, Kansas

Half-day workshop for an audience of 20 biology students at USD 500's JC Harmon High School, Architecture, Construction and Engineering Academy.

#### January 2020

**Exhibit of the high school students' drawings** will be assembled as collective, wall-sized work, shown at the Kansas City Design Center and celebrated through a public opening.

#### Early February 2020

##### Grassland Ecosystem Drawing Workshop 3

Manhattan High School Students, on-site at Flint Hills Discovery Center, Manhattan, Kansas half-day workshop for an audience of 20 painting and drawing students from USD 383's Manhattan High School.

#### Late February 2020

##### Grassland Ecosystem Drawing Workshop 4

Manhattan High School Students, on-site at Flint Hills Discovery Center, Manhattan, Kansas half-day workshop for an audience of 20 painting and drawing students from USD 383's Manhattan High School.

#### March 2020

Grassland Interview Premiere Public Event, Flint Hills Discovery Center, Manhattan, Kansas

Exhibition of works on paper, interview audio, and screening of video in the FHDC theater. The Premiere is schedule during the most visited time at the Flint Hills Discovery Center (FHDC), a 10-day event known as Meet the Makers.

##### Public Outreach on site at Flint Hills Discovery Center

- **Roundtable discussion** with Wiersma and participating ecologists and land managers.
- **Two half-day workshops** for an audience of students at USD383's Manhattan High School. Each workshop will have space for approximately 20 youth.

**Exhibit at Flint Hills Discovery Center of collective drawings** by Manhattan High School students.

#### May 2020

**Exhibit at Konza Prairie Biological Research Station** (universally accessible Research Barn venue) of Wiersma's drawings accompanied by sound domes projecting interview audio.

#### June 2020

**Analysis of all assessment, preparation of final project evaluation.**

## Collaborative Partners and Roles

### ***Collaborative Partners (K-State):***

Katie Kingery-Page (LARCP) and Erin Wiersma (Art) are Co-Primary Investigators. They are responsible for planning (with partners) Grassland Ecosystem Drawing Workshops within the larger project, obtaining all supplies and materials, holding the workshops for regional youth, and mounting two exhibits to celebrate the student drawing outcomes.

### ***Collaborative Partners (Community):***

David Bennett, lead biology faculty of JC Harmon High School, Kansas City Kansas Public Schools, and Rachel Fontenot, lead art faculty for painting and drawing, Manhattan High School, Kansas, are responsible for planning (with K-State partners) a series of workshops to benefit their students learning. Bennett and Fontenot will develop anticipated learning outcomes and guide Kingery-Page and Wiersma in matching the workshop content to their curricular needs. In addition, Bennett and Fontenot will attend their respective students' workshops.

Stephen Bridenstine, Curator of Education, Flint Hills Discovery Center (FHDC), Manhattan, Kansas is responsible for providing space for the *Grassland Interview* exhibit at FHDC, which will include the Manhattan High School students' drawings. Bridenstine will also provide space at FHDC for the Manhattan workshops. He and his staff will provide in-kind donation of publicity for the exhibit.

## Potential Impact for all Collaborative Parties

***Kingery-Page and Wiersma (K-State partners):*** While the prairie is substance of both Wiersma and Kingery-Page's independent work, each engages the prairie in different ways and mediums. Drawing with the bio-char of the burnt prairie has been a bodily and direct means of making works on paper for Wiersma in the vast prairie space. Kingery-Page, as a landscape architect, has focused upon bringing the qualities of prairie into urban areas, through designed meadows. Kingery-Page's work with communities has employed interview as a method of gathering data and revealing values about place. Both Kingery-Page and Wiersma are motivated by the fragility of grasslands and their tremendous (but hidden) significance to carbon balance and clean water world-wide. The community drawing workshops of the *Grassland Interview* project will allow both faculty members to bring the mission of their work (building awareness and understanding of grasslands) to regional youth.

***Bennett, JC Harmon High School Biology faculty (Argentine neighborhood of Kansas City, Kansas):*** Bennett has invested several years in creating schoolyard learning spaces of mesic and wetland prairie vegetation at JC Harmon High School. He and his faculty team employ a problems-based curriculum to teach a variety of subject areas in the high school. Grassland Ecosystem Drawing Workshops planned with Bennett's students allow him to bring Kingery-Page and Wiersma's expertise to his existing biology curriculum for the benefit of student learning (please see Bennett's letter of support).

***Rachel Fontenot, Manhattan High School Art faculty (Manhattan, Kansas):*** Fontenot and her colleagues have built a competitive and well-respected arts program for the youth of USD 383. Fontenot is keen to connect her students with opportunities to practice drawing in context of place and regional landscapes. The Grassland Ecosystem Drawing Workshops planned with Fontenot's students help her reach this vision while also bringing informal ecosystem learning to Manhattan High School students.

***Stephen Bridenstine, Curator of Education, Flint Hills Discovery Center (FHDC; Manhattan, Kansas):*** Bridenstine and his colleagues offer informal learning about the tallgrass prairie to a broad public audience. The FHDC benefits by fulfilling its mission to bring ecosystem knowledge to the public, in particular the teen youth audience of Manhattan High School (please see Bridenstine's letter of support).