



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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'Blitz the Prairie' June 22 at Big Stone Lake State Park

ORTONVILLE, Minn. -- Are you a prairie enthusiast ready to share your knowledge and passion with others? Looking for a fun family day that also supports public lands? Want an opportunity to discover a new dragonfly species in western Minnesota? Interested in learning about the connection between conservation grazing and healthy ecosystems? Join naturalists, farmers, and other local residents for a tallgrass prairie "BioBlitz" Saturday, June 22. The event's headquarters will be at Big Stone Lake State Park near Ortonville (35889 Meadowbrook State Park Road), with surveys occurring at a nearby prairie. Besides guided prairie surveys led by local experts, Clean Up the River Environment (CURE), Land Stewardship Project (LSP), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR)—this event will feature presentations, a silent auction, and opportunities to camp. It begins at 5 a.m. with a birding tour, and registration is from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., but people can join the event anytime during the day. There will be an evening potluck meal featuring local, grass-fed beef burgers. The event has a \$25 (individual) and \$50 (family) suggested donation to help cover the costs of the day. For a full schedule and to register, contact CURE's Peg Furshong at 320-269-2984 or LSP's Robin Moore at 320-269-2105. Online registration and more information are also available at www.cureriver.org/2019-bioblitz.

A BioBlitz is an intense period of biological surveying that attempts to record as many living species possible in a designated area. Groups of scientists, naturalists, and volunteers conduct this survey over a specific period of time. This BioBlitz will focus on learning about our local prairies and understanding the biological wealth that we have in our western Minnesota communities, as well as sharing our excitement and passion for grassland resources. The goal is to create a species list for the prairie parcels at this event, with the challenge of finding as much diversity as possible. Participants will catalog their findings on the citizen science website iNaturalist.org, where the project name will be Tallgrass Prairie BioBlitz 2019.

This year, BioBlitz participants will be surveying a tallgrass prairie located ten miles east of the park, which is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and MN DNR in partnership with local livestock farmers. LSP's Robin Moore said that this area of Big Stone County—the region

Big Stone Lake State Park sits in—is a particularly good place to conduct a BioBlitz, given that it has a mix of farmed acres and public land. This BioBlitz will provide the opportunity for ecological experts and the general public to get a sense of the vital role well-managed grazing livestock play in maintaining public lands and native prairies.

“We know that healthy farming communities make rural living better on many levels, but we don't usually connect the importance of diverse, sustainable farming operations that have livestock with the care and management of public lands and native prairie,” said Moore. “Not only are grazing animals good for native prairie, but they are key in some plant, insect, and animal life cycles, as well as an important tool for managing invasive species and sequestering carbon in the soil. This BioBlitz will provide people a chance to make a direct connection between a healthy ecosystem and well-managed farming systems, as well as contribute to the science needed to document these connections.”

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CURE is a progressive rural organization made up of people who care about the well-being of their neighbors, the health of the land and water, and the legacy we leave for future generations. As an organization long rooted in the movement for rural social justice CURE's program areas have evolved to include not only watershed ecosystems but also the greater health of the rural communities they embrace. To learn more about all of CURE's projects visit www.cureriver.org.

The Land Stewardship Project (LSP) is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1982 to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture and to develop healthy communities. LSP is dedicated to creating transformational change in our food and farming system. LSP's work has a broad and deep impact, from new farmer training and local organizing to federal policy and community-based food systems development. At the core of all our work are the values of stewardship, justice, and democracy.