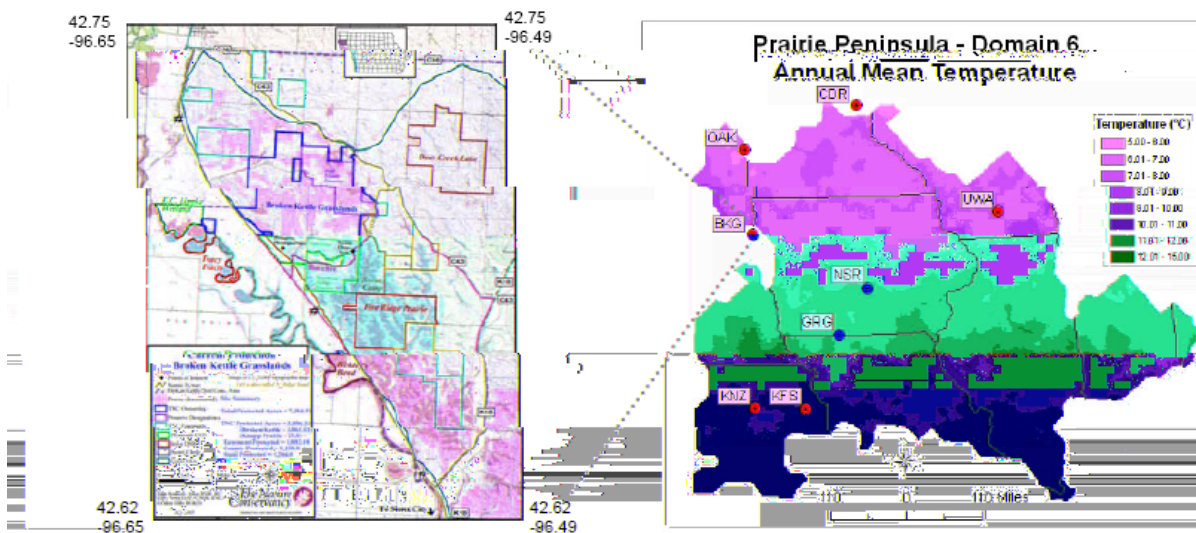


## Broken Kettle Grasslands: Prairie Peninsula Domain (Gradient Site)

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### Location within Domain:



**History:** The Nature Conservancy acquired the first parcel at Broken Kettle Grasslands Preserve in 1992 and currently owns 1,820 ha. The property has been managed with prescribed fire and livestock grazing, with plans to replace cattle with native grazers (bison). Various research projects have been conducted on the preserve and on surrounding conservation lands including population and habitat studies of prairie rattlesnakes (*Crotalus viridis*), grassland birds and butterflies and studies on management of leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*). The larger conservation site (approximately 9,915 ha) includes the Conservancy's preserve as well as other lands under conservation – both county and state management as well as private land permanently protected with conservation easements.

**Key Characteristics:** Located within the Loess Hills region, a regionally important landform of extensive and deep loess deposits (20-60m) creating a highly dissected landscape that includes the largest tract of contiguous native prairie in the state. Existing vegetation is predominately grasslands including a mix of native prairie (Central Tallgrass Big Bluestem Loess Prairie and Loess Hills Little Bluestem Dry Prairie) and non-native cool-season pastures. Broken Kettle Grassland Preserve is at the core of a state-designated Bird Conservation Area and provides habitat for numerous species characteristic of grasslands throughout the western Great Plains. Fire management and livestock grazing programs are key strategies for conserving the native prairie. The Nature Conservancy works at the site in partnership with the local County Conservation Board, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Iowa State University has initiated research related to fire, grazing and grassland biota, including birds and butterflies.

**Existing Infrastructure:** On-site weather station in place since 2004; data on grassland bird and butterfly habitat use, exotic species management (leafy spurge) available.

**Facilities:** On-site structures include limited housing for seasonal staff, building for equipment storage, repair and maintenance and office space. Improved internet connection is planned for 2007. Preserve has year round road access.