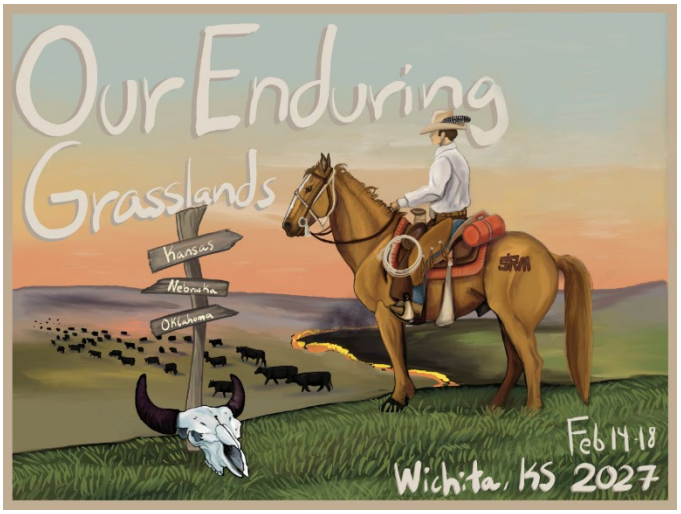


2027 SRM Annual Meeting: Social and Technical Tours

Gyp Hills

Sunday, February 14th
8am-5pm
Fee: $70
Join us on a full day journey through the scenic Gypsum Hills/Red Hills of south central Kansas and north-western Oklahoma. We'll travel west along Highway 160 by bus, experiencing sweeping views of the region's striking red shale landscape with stops at two premier ranches, the historic Z Bar Ranch, owned by Tuner Enterprises and the Nichols Ranch. This tour will focus on using prescribed fire and other tools to combat woody encroachment, wildfire recovery, and other excellent rangeland management practices.

At Z Bar Ranch, participants will have the rare opportunity to see bison up close and explore the working facilities used to manage and care for the herd. Ranch staff will share insights into day-to-day operations, long standing conservation practices, and the ongoing efforts to preserve the ecological health of the Red Hills with prescribed fire and grazing. We will also take time to discuss the impact and recovery following the 2016 Anderson Creek Wildfire, one of Kansas' largest wildfires that burned around 400,000 acres.

At the Nichols Ranch, participants will see and hear about the work done and practices used to combat encroachment of eastern red cedar and other woody species. There will be the opportunity to view equipment and tools used in prescribed fire and other conservation work throughout the Red Hills. A hot lunch will be provided. Following that we will highlight water infrastructure improvements and brush clearing projects implemented over the past decade—efforts that continue to shape the health and productivity of the landscape.

Included: Transportation, hot lunch

Maxwell Wildlife Refuge
Monday, February 15th
10am-3pm
Fee: $60

Free-roaming bison and elk on tallgrass prairie will be the highlight of the half-day Maxwell Wildlife Refuge tour. We will take trams to get up close to the wildlife on this conservation site. Tours take 45 minutes and guides will provide background on the refuge's cultural, natural, and historic resources. You can find more information about the Refuge here: https://www.maxwellwildliferefuge.com/

Included: Transportation; hot lunch

Flint Hills
Tuesday, February 16th
7:30am-5pm
Fee: $75
The threats facing Flint Hills grasslands are many: woody plant encroachment, invasive species, and incompatible development, to name a few. Please join us on this field tour to see how collaboration among conservation partners is supporting producer-led efforts to maintain and restore healthy tallgrass prairie. We will tour several ranches in the heart of the Flint Hills and discuss topics such as: prescribed fire seasonality, patch-burn grazing, managing against woody plant encroachment, old-world bluestem and sericea lespedeza management, prairie restoration, the role of conservation easements, virtual fencing and more.

Included: Transportation; hot lunch.

Old Cowtown Museum
Tuesday, February 16th
1pm-5pm
$40
The half-day tour is a leisurely afternoon learning about the people of the plains. The first stop is the Mid-America All-Indian Museum where their goal is to share history, culture and stories of the native people. The museum houses more than 3,000 piece collection. Exhibits are changed quarterly and yearly. Before you leave take a short walk to visit one of the most recognizable features of Wichita, a five-ton, 44-foot-tall steel sculpture, "The Keeper of the Plains"

The second stop, an open-air living history museum dedicated to preserving and presenting the history of Wichita, through immersive experiences of life in the late 1800s. Old Cowtown whose Museum is home to over 25,000 historical artifacts and 54 buildings which span 23 acres nestled in Wichita's Museums on the River District.

You can find more information about the Old Cowtown Museum here: https://www.oldcowtown.org/

Included: Transportation, admission to Museum

Hutchinson: Cosmosphere, Carriage Crossing, Strataca
Wednesday, February 17th

8am-5pm
$125
Join us for a full day of adventure and learning! We will travel to the Cosmosphere to explore the space exploration museum, view a movie in a surround dome theater, and engage with the interactive exhibits. Then on to a family-style meal at the Carriage Crossing Restaurant and Bakery in the adjacent Amish community of Yoder, Kansas. We'll round out the day with a visit to Strataca Underground Salt Museum. Descending 650 underground in, tram cars will take us through a network of salt galleries, viewing remnant equipment, exploring geology, and gaining an understanding of solutions for keeping mining safe and functional. Must be 4 or older to go on the mine ride.

Find out more on each location here:
Cosmosphere: https://cosmo.org/
Strataca Underground Salt Museum: https://underkansas.org/

Included: Transportation; admission to Cosmosphere and Strataca; hot lunch