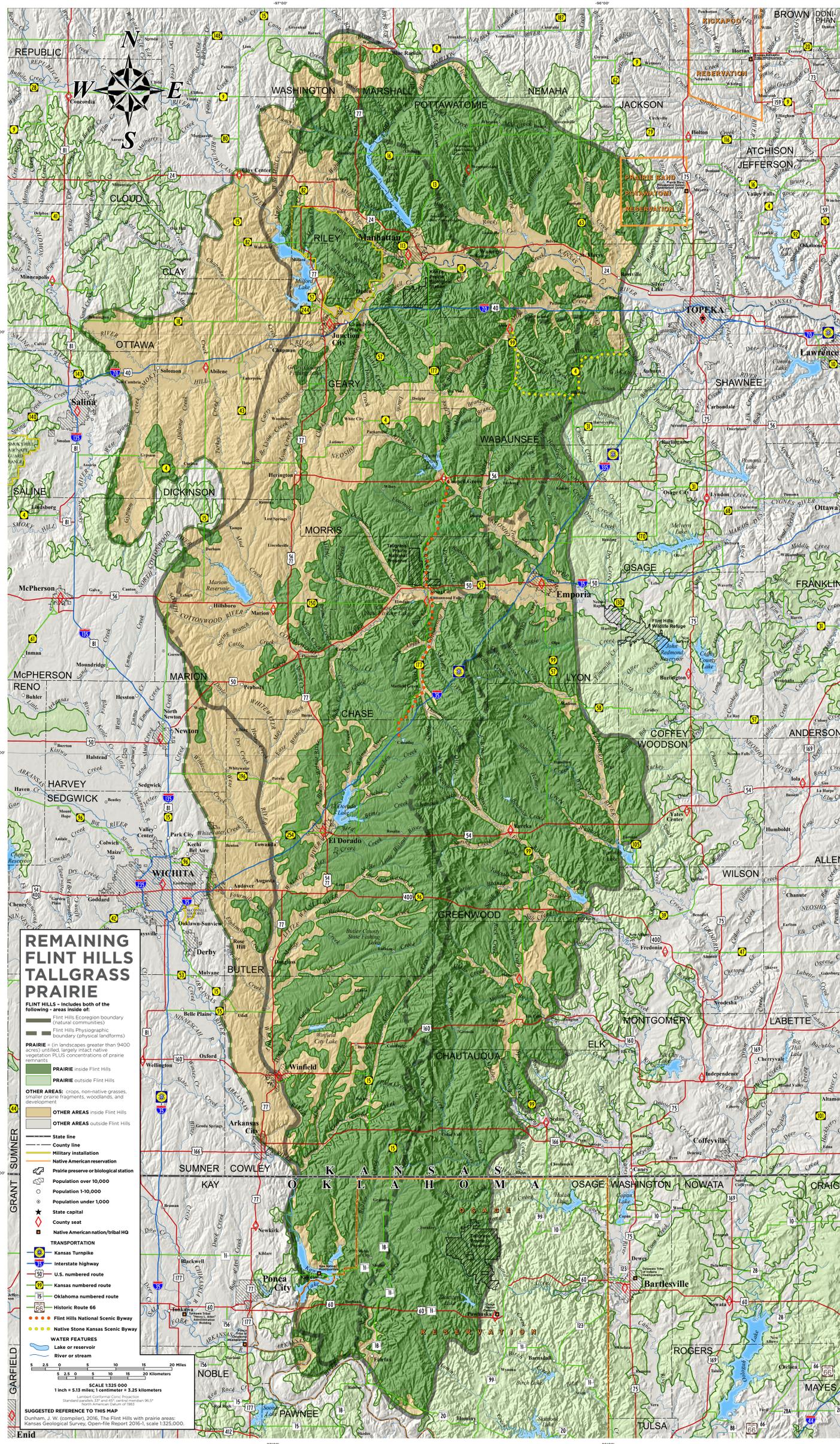


# THE FLINT HILLS



## BISON & NATIVE AMERICANS

Commonly called buffalo, American bison are the largest native animals in North America and once numbered in the tens of millions. Kansas, Osage, and other Indian Peoples obtained food, shelter, tools, and clothing from this magnificent animal with whom they maintained a strong spiritual relationship. Due to high demand for bison robes in the industrialized East and to strategically remove the Indians to make way for white settlement, the bison were exterminated from the area. All factors that changed the Native Americans' way of life.

## TALLGRASS PRAIRIE & FIRE

Periodic "prescribed" burning is necessary to maintain tallgrass prairie. Because vulnerable growth points of warm season grasses are below the soil's surface, they quickly recover from spring burning and moderate grazing. In contrast, the growth points of woody invasive species are high on the plants, so fire retards their growth. Fires ignited by lightning and Native Americans prevented trees and brush from overtaking the prairie. Today, ranchers continue to use fire to improve forage quality and keep trees and shrubs in check - without the use of chemicals.



## COWBOY & COWGIRL CULTURE

The Flint Hills cowboy and cowgirl are hard-working professionals and enduring symbols of the West. Fixing fence, burning pastures, putting out salt, counting cattle, doctoring sick animals, and gathering herds to ship, they often work on horseback in remote places of great beauty and enjoy telling stories of their adventures. Whether land-owning ranchers, custom-grazing pasture-men, or day help, they choose their classic leather boots, belts, chaps, and saddles with great pride.

## CATTLE RANCHING & BEEF PRODUCTION

Unlike most agriculture that replaces natural vegetation with domestic crops requiring fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, Flint Hills beef production depends on conserving the tallgrass prairie ecosystem. Over 500,000 yearling steers and heifers graze April to September coming in weighing 500-700 lbs. and leaving 250-300 lbs. heavier, gaining 2-3 lbs. a day! Along with year-round cow-calf herds, this adds up to over a million head of cattle each year.

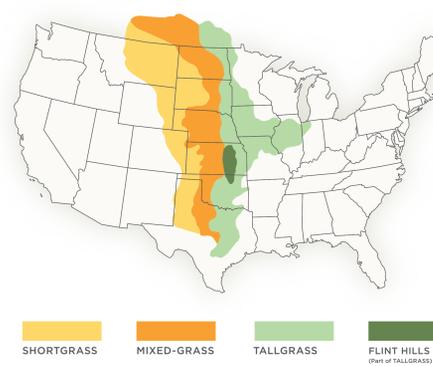
## BEAUTY - ART & RECREATION

The Flint Hills' rare, upsoiled horizons inspire imaginations of artists and writers. Painters flock to the area in all seasons setting up on site (en plein air) to capture its beauty. Photographers shoot landscapes, prairie fires, and portraits of wildflowers and cowboys. While songwriters and poets share the mystical wonder of the hills, other visitors enjoy hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, canoeing, kayaking, bird watching, fishing, hunting, picnicking, camping, sunset-watching, and star-gazing truly dark skies.

## CONSERVATION

Good ranchers are also conservationists - preserving the native prairie, preventing soil erosion, and keeping streams clean. They sustainably manage stocking rates to avoid overgrazing, and also fight invasive species such as *Sericea Lespedeza*. They maintain biodiversity in their grasses, forbs, and legumes, optimizing both plant production and profitability. The native prairie needs no fertilizers or pesticides, and its massive root systems grip the soil, preventing erosion.

## HISTORIC PRAIRIE REGIONS



## The FLINT HILLS are the LAST STAND of the TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

- Tallgrass prairie is the most altered ecosystem in North America
- Only 4% remains of the original tallgrass prairie
- 96% of the tallgrass prairie has been plowed or developed
- 2/3 of remaining tallgrass prairie is in the Flint Hills
- The Flint Hills are the largest expanse of tallgrass prairie left in North America

## EXPLORE THE WEBSITE

for in-depth info on the Flint Hills, the map, and teaching resources:  
[flinthillsdiscovery.org/map](http://flinthillsdiscovery.org/map)

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