

# Come on baby light my **FIRE!**

Many people think of fire as bad, but fire is important for keeping prairie habitat healthy.

## Prairies need frequent fires to:

- remove build-up of dead leaves and non-native plants, allowing prairie plants more nutrients and room to grow
- stimulate growth of grasses and wildflowers
- keep trees and shrubs from coming in and transforming the prairie into forest

There was once more than 2 million acres (more than 2.5 times the area of Dane County) of prairie in Wisconsin. Only 0.5% (about the area of Lake Mendota) remains today.

## People and prairie fires...

- Native Americans set prairie fires to help hunt animals, manage pests, and clear the land.
- Today, professional land managers very carefully use fire under controlled conditions as a tool (called “prescribed fire”) to mimic historic fire patterns and maintain the health of the prairie.

**Check this out...!**



Prescribed burn...

Blackened earth following a fire absorbs the sun's energy and heat the soil sooner in the spring,



2 weeks later...

The deep roots of prairie plants allow them to survive fires that other plants cannot.



4 months later...

