

AI
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that bounce off the ground and return to the plane's sensor. This allows K-State to build a three-dimensional map of the vegetation.

The Konza station is an 8,600-acre tallgrass property near Manhattan used for long-term research.

"We visited the (National Science Foundation) plane that gathers the data and it's really impressive," Ratajczak said. "They do a lot of the hard steps and then we get all this data for free."

K-State scientists built their model using the free coding language R, frequently used by scientists for data analysis. They trained it by giving it many aerial images of each type of vegetation.

The scientists then had the model try to identify further images on its own, and they double-checked whether the model was interpreting the images correctly. The model gave the right answer more than 97% of the time.

The K-State team has focused so far on the Konza



Wildflowers bloom on a grassland near Manhattan, the Konza Prairie Biological Station. Some trees can be seen in the distance. Keeping trees and shrubs at bay is part of prairie conservation. (Eva Horne/Konza Prairie Long-Term Ecological Research)

property. But it hopes to expand the work — mapping out the prevalence of deciduous trees, eastern red cedars and shrubs across the Flint Hills tallgrass region.

This would help them see the full extent of the problem.

For decades, woody plants have been spreading across the Great Plains, to the point that they are transforming grassland into woodland and shrubland. Scientists in Oklahoma have dubbed the phenomenon the Green Glacier.

Common invaders in

the Flint Hills include eastern red cedars, wild plum, roughleaf dogwood and smooth sumac. (These last three are shrubs or thickets.)

Additionally, the realities of modern-day landownership pose a challenge. The continent's remaining grasslands are divided among many different landowners with varying priorities for how to use the land and varying capacities for maintaining it.

Another key change is the increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere since the Industrial

Revolution. This helps woody plants grow faster on prairies, shading out grasses around them and surviving prescribed burns.

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Revolution. This helps woody plants grow faster on prairies, shading out grasses around them and surviving prescribed burns.

Mapping woody plants in great detail could help pinpoint how much forage for cattle and bison is lost each year to this transformation.

Already, scientists have estimated that the Flint Hills would grow about a billion more pounds of grass annually if not for trees and shrubs overtaking so much space.

K-State's use of machine learning could also help researchers better track the relationship between this habitat transformation and declining grassland bird species, such as grasshopper sparrows and eastern meadowlarks.

Those species disappear from areas of grassland once low levels of shrubs and trees have invaded.

Eventually, K-State scientists hope that their advancements in mapping out woody plants with AI will help conserve swaths of grassland currently free of woody plants but likely to face that threat in

coming years.

"One of the things we are thinking about using this for is early detection and intervention," he said.

Nearly one-third of North America was once grassland. More than half of it disappeared for development such as row crops, cities and suburbs. And for tallgrass prairie — the kind of grassland in the Flint Hills — the statistics are even worse. Scientists estimate that less than 5% of the continent's tallgrass remains.

The Flint Hills is the biggest remaining stretch of tallgrass prairie. That's another reason for the urgency to deal with shrubs and trees there.

Some parts of the Flint Hills are already awash in these plants, but other areas still have a chance to proactively hold the hardest-to-control woody species at bay.

"If you can catch encroachment (the spread of woody plants) when it's in the early stages," Ratajczak said, "it's potentially easier to either halt or reverse using prescribed fire."

For more information visit KCUR.org.

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Published in Dodge City Daily Globe Aug 7, 14, 21, 2025

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF FORD COUNTY, KANSAS

ROBERT L. WADDELL, III Plaintiff  
VS.  
ANGELICA OSORIO, and, KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE, Defendants

Case number: FO-2025-CV-000099

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to Chapter 60 of Kansas Statutes Annotated.

NOTICE OF SUIT

To: Angelica M. Osorio, and all other persons who may claim an interest in the 1981 Marlette mobile home with VIN K14A278FD-P 10142, you are hereby notified that a Petition to Quiet Title was filed in the District Court of Ford County by Robert L. Waddell, III and you are required to Answer or otherwise plead to such Petition on or before September

PUBLIC NOTICE

5, 2025, and if you fail to Answer or otherwise respond to said Petition, judgment will be granted as requested therein.

Respectfully submitted by: /s/Van Z. Hampton, #13302 602 N. Second Avenue, Dodge City, KS 67801 620-371-7600 Fax: 620-371-7600 vanhampton@kernslawgroup.com Attorney for Plaintiff 3729690

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