



PARCELS OF PRAIRIE SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

GRADES 9-12

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In “Slow Jam Prairie Strips,” we learned that most of Iowa today is covered by row crops that have a shallow root system and only remain in the ground around 5 months per year. These practices can leave our soil and nutrients vulnerable. Luckily, there is a way to improve soil health and water quality with minimal costs and land use. By integrating strips of perennial prairie plants into corn and soybean fields, we see reduced sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen export, and increased biodiversity.

In this activity students will learn about the numerous benefits of prairie strips. To demonstrate their knowledge, they will design a mock social media campaign centered around increasing the adoption of prairie strips.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Here are some focus questions to get started:

- How much of Iowa was once covered in prairie?
- What are the benefits to the farmer/landowner when planting prairie strips?
- What are the costs to the farmer/landowner when planting prairie strips?
- What features of prairie plants contribute to overall improved soil health and water quality?
- What biodiversity benefits come from planting prairie strips?
- How do prairies provide a multifunctional landscape?
- What other ecosystem services do prairies provide?

MATERIALS

Copies of articles below or notebook computers/tablets with the articles bookmarked for easy access

ACTIVITY

1. After watching “Slow Jam Prairie Strips,” have the students divide into groups of 4-5. Have them read “Small Changes, Big Impacts: Prairie Conservation Strips”:
<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/alternativeag/info/Small%20Changes%20Big%20Impacts.pdf>
2. Watch this short video clip featuring Lisa Schulte Moore, prairie strips expert and researcher:
<https://player.vimeo.com/video/108362624?title=0&byline=0&portrait=0>

If time allows for students to dig a bit deeper, this is a more detailed publication on prairie strips that provides great graphics and information:

http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1047&context=extension_pubs

3. After the students have read the article/s and watched the video, have them work together in their groups to create a mock social media campaign centered around increasing the adoption of prairie strips. The campaign should include at least 10 posts for a social media site of their choosing, and must be engaging.
4. Have the groups create a presentation for the class that summarizes their social media campaign, including campaign overview, goals of the campaign, target audience, 10 posts (with text and/or accompanying images), and a list of organizations that are currently working on prairie initiatives that could be tagged, tweeted at, or otherwise engaged in a social media dialogue.