Grazing Strategies to Strategically Manipulate Fuels
Sandstone Prairies Biologically Unique Landscape

- Small region – approximately 300,000 acres
- Relatively intact matrix of tallgrass prairie and oak woodlands
- Shallow rocky soils
- Cattlemen mostly live in the local area and run cow/calf pairs May – October
- Traditionally moderate stocking rates, but no prescribed fire
• No local culture of prescribed fire, but wildfires are a fairly regular occurrence
• Moderate stocking rates result in a relatively uniform fuel bed
• Wildfire season peaks in March
• Landscape is still brown in March and extreme fire weather conditions are common
Southeast Flagship Initiative

- Worked since 2003 to enhance tallgrass prairie on private land in SE Nebraska
- Completed over 300 projects on nearly 80,000 acres
- Majority of projects involve tree clearing.
- 10,000 acres burned annually
“Small” Changes
• Landowners traditionally told to NOT graze pastures after fires until at least mid summer

• Through our program, we encourage landowners to graze pastures ASAP after fire and to graze hard

• Overall stocking stays the same
Grazing/Prescribed Fire Strategies To Reduce Wildfire Danger

• “Uneven” grazing pressure across landscape creates discontinuous fuel bed
  – made palatable by adoption of prescribed burning
• Prescribed fire (with “mosaic” burning and/or fall burning) removes potential wildfire fuels
• Landowner willingness based on practical advantages
  – fall/mosaic burns are safer
  – can gain an extra month of usable pasture
  – fall burns provide more effective cedar kill
Questions?
The Nature Conservancy
Fire burned approximately 29,842 acres on preserve