



AMERICAN  
**PRAIRIE**  
RESERVE

Celebrating  
the Indomitable  
American Spirit

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## American Prairie Reserve Establishes the Ken Burns American Heritage Prize

*Prize to celebrate the indomitable American spirit*

**BOZEMAN, Mont.** — American Prairie Reserve is proud to announce the creation of the Ken Burns American Heritage Prize. Named in honor of America's most revered visual historian and documentary filmmaker, the Prize will recognize distinguished and visionary artists, authors, conservationists, educators, filmmakers, historians and scientists whose body of work has advanced our collective understanding of the indomitable American spirit. This announcement, which comes during National Park Week and just days before the national rebroadcast of Ken Burns's *The National Parks: America's Best Idea* (PBS, April 25-30), also will inspire people to help build American Prairie Reserve, the modern-day embodiment of our country's uniquely optimistic, boundless and daring resolve to conserve our iconic landscapes.

American Prairie Reserve's mission is to create the largest nature reserve in the continental United States, a spectacular refuge for people and wildlife preserved forever as part of America's heritage. Since its founding in 2001, American Prairie Reserve has grown to nearly 310,000 acres (roughly 500 square miles) in northeastern Montana, on which fences have been removed, natural wildlife habitats restored, a bison herd numbering more than 600 established and native vegetation returned. Migratory paths in Lewis and Clark country along the Missouri River are again attracting wildlife that once roamed freely throughout the West, signaling the progress of the restoration of America's natural wilderness heritage — one that once captured the imagination of explorers the world over.

"As a lifelong student of the American spirit, it's a privilege to lend my name to a Prize honoring individuals whose accomplishments reinvigorate the nation's understanding of all that is possible," Burns says. "And as one who has been irrevocably changed by the majesty of the American West, I am inspired by American Prairie Reserve's historic mission to return a vast swath of Montana to the natural beauty first enjoyed by Native Americans and later noted by Lewis and Clark. The Prize we present together shall acknowledge the spirit of those who preceded us in establishing this Republic.

That same spirit is alive and well today, both in the men and women in many arenas whose work reminds us that our lives serve a greater purpose, as well as on the ground at American Prairie Reserve.”

“American Prairie Reserve is thrilled to partner with Ken Burns at this inflection point in our journey to return a portion of the great American grasslands to their original vibrancy,” says Sean Gerrity, president, American Prairie Reserve. “Together we honor the struggles and successes of those men and women who continue to shape America’s character – all against the backdrop of our natural heritage, which played a huge role in who we are today. Just as Ken’s *National Parks* series demonstrates, this land should be open and accessible to the people forever. That’s our goal.”

“Ken’s remarkable films have explored subjects ranging from America’s National Parks, Lewis & Clark and the Roosevelts, to baseball, jazz and so much more,” adds George Matelich, chairman of American Prairie Reserve’s Board of Directors. “And while the scope of his films is extraordinary, it’s their quality that teaches Americans about our country’s heritage and that inspires American Prairie Reserve to create a national prize honoring Ken.”

The recipient of the Ken Burns American Heritage Prize will be selected annually by the Prize’s National Jury, which is comprised of distinguished leaders who represent communities across the country and share a common appreciation of America’s heritage. The Prize’s inaugural presentation event will be in New York City in the spring of 2017. The evening’s festivities will include remarks by Mr. Burns along with the Prize Recipient, the chair of the National Jury, and American Prairie Reserve president Sean Gerrity.

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### **About American Prairie Reserve**

American Prairie Reserve’s mission is to create the largest nature reserve in the continental United States, a spectacular refuge for people and wildlife preserved forever as part of America’s heritage. When complete, the Reserve will be larger than Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks combined and will support all the animals that historically called the Great Plains home, including buffalo, wolves, bears, elk, deer, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, swift fox, upland birds including the greater sage grouse, birds of prey and all manner of snakes, amphibians and insects. Already open to the public for recreation including camping, hunting, fishing and birding, the Reserve offers visitors a once-in-a-lifetime, horizon-expanding opportunity to reconnect with nature on a truly grand scale. Learn more at [americanprairie.org](http://americanprairie.org) and [kenburnsprize.com](http://kenburnsprize.com).

### **About Ken Burns**

Ken Burns has been making documentary films for almost forty years. Since the Academy Award-nominated *Brooklyn Bridge* in 1981, Ken has gone on to direct and produce some of the most acclaimed historical documentaries ever made, including *The Civil War*; *Baseball*; *Jazz*; *Statue of Liberty*; *Huey Long*; *Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*; *Frank Lloyd Wright*; *Mark Twain*; *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson*; *The War*; *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*; *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*; and, most recently, *Jackie Robinson*. Ken's films have been honored with dozens of major awards, including fourteen Emmy Awards, two Grammy Awards and two Oscar nominations; and in September of 2008, at the News & Documentary Emmy Awards, Ken was honored by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences with a Lifetime Achievement Award.