

Tallgrass film captures sense of peace

■ The documentary took artists and scientists from Kansas State five years to complete.

BY LARA LESBERG

Eagle Washington bureau

WASHINGTON — Fire, sunsets, and shadows are captured in a new documentary on the Kansas prairie.

Native Americans, cowboys, buffalo and horses, too.

But most of all, say many Kansas natives who saw a sneak preview of the documentary in Washington, D.C., Thursday night, the grassland video captures a sense of peace that eludes those in urban and high-tech capitals.

Even more importantly, Kansas State University president Jon Wefald told the crowd, it teaches those who take their local grocery store for granted that their food comes from the land "where all the tall grasses once were and hopefully will one day flourish again."

The crowd gathered at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History warmly received the artists and scientists from K-State and Inland Sea Productions in Kansas City who devoted five years to making "Last Stand of the Tallgrass Prairie."

And the evening overflowed with applause and thank yous to the corporations and organizations that paid for the project, including the National Science Foundation,

Filmmakers showed only 20 minutes of the video, hoping to entice everyone to spread the word and tune in when the full-hour episode premieres on PBS — KPTS, Channel 8, in Wichita — April 20 at 8 p.m.

Environmental Protection Agency, National Endowment for the Arts and Archers Daniels Midland Foundation.

Koch Industries is the lead corporate sponsor, contributing \$150,000 for the film and another \$50,000 for the reception.

Koch also is sponsoring a Kansas preview party, by invitation only, Tuesday evening at Exploration Place in Wichita.

More than 200 K-State alumni now living in the Washington area attended the event, as well as a number of Kansas officials, including U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, U.S. Reps. Jim Ryun, R-Topeka, and Dennis

Moore, D-Lenexa, former Gov. John Carlin and former U.S. Rep. Jim Slattery.

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The prairie, which once covered one-third of the continent, now makes up less than 5 percent and is in danger of vanishing. Losing it could mean losing the chance to study how nature produces food and replenishes the air.

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