

Large bequest goes to nature conservancy

The Nature Conservancy of Kansas received nearly \$1 million from the estate of John and Frances Peterson of Lawrence. John was a native of Logan County.

The money will be used to protect ecologically important lands and waters in Kansas, including areas like 16,800 acres of short grass prairie in Logan County called Smoky Valley Ranch. The property is

just a few miles from where John grew up.

Alan Pollom, state director of the Nature Conservancy at the time the property was acquired, remembers taking the Petersons on a tour of Smoky Valley Ranch. They expressed excitement about the Conservancy's commitment to a place such as Smoky Valley Ranch, said Pollom. They considered the shortgrass prairie landscape biologically significant

and a living repository of geological, paleontological, archaeological, historical and cultural history.

John died in 2009 and Frances in 2012.

"It would be difficult to overstate John and Frances Peterson's fierce loyalty and commitment to the Nature Conservancy's Kansas mission as evidenced by what they did with and for the Conservancy during their lifetimes and through their estates," said

John Solbach III, the executor of their estates.

Smoky Valley Ranch is open to the public at no charge. It offers six miles of hiking trails open year-round. To get to the ranch, take U.S. 40 east from K-25 to the western edge of Monument and go south on Road 350 for approximately 15 miles.

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