

# A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

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## STAFF

Ron Klataske  
Ryan Klataske

I could not have been more wrong.

When I first agreed to serve as chair, I did so out of obligation.

AOK, in the person of Ron Klataske, had in the past stood shoulder-to-shoulder with my husband and me in battles to defend the prairie habitat in the Flint Hills where we live. One of those battles was the wind-wars—to keep industrial wind turbines from being sited in native prairie. Another was the fight against invasive plants—the introduced Old World bluestems that threaten the prairie ecosystem.

So when Ron asked me if I would serve, I felt I could not say no—I felt I owed.

I was then spending most of my time restoring our former crop fields to bottomland prairie—or rather, I was out in the fields while Mother Nature went to work. She brought in a succession of native plants (at least half of which were volunteers, not the seeds I had planted, though she nurtured those, too), accompanied by a surprising succession of insects, spiders, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals.

It was my daily joy to be outside amid the forces of creation!

Hence, I dreaded the consequences of saying yes. What could be more of a come-down than to leave the bloom and buzz of our fields to spend time in dreary buildings in meetings with human beings?

But once involved, I learned that AOK would take me more deeply into restoration, not away from it. Now I am close not just to my own land but to all the properties included in AOK's Sanctuaries Initiative, as well as to those maintained by Audubon chapters. In addition, environmental injustices, which I had previously felt powerless to change—such as the stealing of water from Quivira National Wildlife Refuge—I can now through collective action help to set aright. And just as bottomland restoration has been my constant teacher, so connections with the amazing people in AOK—with their vast knowledge of birds, other wildlife, geology, hydrology, biology, and ecology—are drawing me ever closer to the land.

It turns out, AOK is a multiplier, not a subtractor!

Forget obligation, with its external goads. My actual experience is wholehearted delight.

AOK is restoration squared!

