Airport Authority to Sell
Nine-Mile Prairie to N.U.

Lincoln (AP) — The Lincoln Airport Authority has agreed to sell 229 acres of virgin prairie — known as the Nine-Mile Prairie — to the University of Nebraska, virtually securing its preservation.

"I'm sure future generations will be thankful for the actions of the board today," said Ernest Rousek, Wachiska Audubon Society member who has led the fight to save the land from the plow.

The board is giving the university the option to buy the prairie for $600 an acre by Jan. 1, 1983. The agreement includes restrictions on any commercial or residential development on the site and allows for navigation, drainage and maintenance easements.

The tract, located northwest of the Lincoln Municipal Airport, has been leased to the Audubon Society for $4,600 a year.

For the last 50 years the university has used the prairie for educational, research and public service purposes, and the intent would remain the same, UNL attorney Dick Wood told the board.

Wood said purchase funds would come from private sources, including the N.U. Foundation. Should the money not be raised before Jan. 1, the university would not be able to exercise its option, he said.

In 1979 the board approved a resolution recognizing the uniqueness of the virgin prairie in any future disposition of the land.

Two years ago the Audubon Society offered $61,640 for the prairie, but that bid was rejected by the board. Rousek then went the legislative route, but the authority still shied away from the sale.

Early this year, Rousek began exploring the possibility of transferring title to N.U. to facilitate the purchase.

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