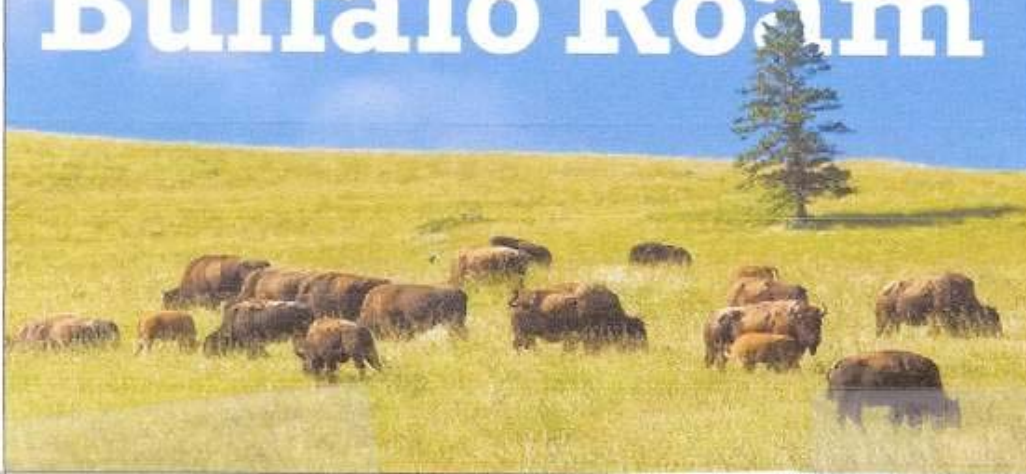


Where the Buffalo Roam



Twenty years ago, Frank Popper '65 and his wife Deborah Popper, Bryn Mawr class of '69, wrote a paper for the land-use journal *Planning* entitled "The Great Plains: From Dust to Dust." They didn't know it at the time, but the article and its ideas would shape the rest of their careers.

"Twenty years later I am amazed at some level, and delighted at another that people are still reading this article," says Frank Popper, now a professor in the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. "If no one had noticed it, Deborah and I would

not have been in the least bit surprised. It was a reasonably good piece of journalism that could just as easily have disappeared. But it didn't."

For years, the idea of a "Buffalo Commons"—a plan to revitalize the Great Plains region by letting it return to its original prairie, complete with buffalo—was derided by

politicians, ranchers, and residents of the Plains. But now, after years of hard work, the idea is finally gaining traction. "A large number of initiatives are currently under way," says Popper. "The project is no longer intellectual—it's in real life."

As the Buffalo Commons gains supporters, the Poppers are gaining attention. They were featured on the front page of *USA Today*, and in January 2008 Westend Productions, a Frankfurt-based film and television company, released a documentary



based on the Poppers' work. The film appeared in simultaneous French- and German-language versions in Europe on ARTE, the German-French public television station, under titles that translate to "The Return of the Buffalo." During the 2008-2009 academic year Frank Popper will be on leave from Rutgers, and will be teaching and writing at the Environmental Studies Program with an appointment in the Civil

and Environmental Engineering Department at Princeton University's Princeton Environmental Institute.

At Haverford, Popper studied psychology. "It taught me how to think," he says. "Most of what I do, most of what I've done for the last 35 years, wasn't taught at Haverford—or anywhere else—at that time. Haverford taught me how to master new material relatively quickly.

"One thing that sticks in my mind about Haverford is its superb teaching," he adds. "I spent graduate school at MIT and Harvard, and never ran across teachers as good."

Dave Merrell '09

