Mingling with Microbes in Prairie Restoration
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What is happening?
• A restoration project is being conducted on several sites in the north and south sounds of Washington due to the decline of prairie ecosystems.
• The project consists of treating seeded prairie plots with either solarization, burning, or herbicide treatments.
• I am focusing on whether microbial activity and nitrogen (N) availability differ among sites and the treatments within the sites.

Why are soil processes so important?
• Nutrient availability, gas exchange, and microbial activity are critical in the growth and succession of plant species.
• Samples from this experiment were inoculated into Biolog EcoPlates™ and N mineralization for each treatment was measured.
• The results provide valuable information on the affect the treatments have on microbial activity and N mineralization, which are important aspects when trying to restore species composition.

Several prairie plots
Biolog EcoPlate with 32 different carbon substrates showing color change in response to microbial activity

Several species within a treatment plot
Photo courtesy of Natalie Schmidt
Inoculating microbial cells into EcoPlate™