

# A Prairie Rendezvous

A joint publication of:



Fall Vol2, N4, 2000

Fall approaches and the plants and animals of east-central Illinois begin to prepare for hibernation. However hot things are still happening. A once in a life time chance to expand Allerton Park and protect open space is before us; exciting conservationists across the state. Your help is need to take advantage of this opportunity.

The fall is also a leadership transition time for several groups. GPFs own summer intern, Ellie Kron, will be helping run The Red Bison, the student run prairie restoration group based at the University of Illinois, now that Frank Hassler has graduated. New board members will be elected to the Grand Prairie Friends' Board of Directors and the Prairie Grove Volunteers will be filling the large vacancy left by Kim Bauer. Our heartfelt gratitude to those who have moved on and to those who are stepping up to continue the work.

- the editors

PS. We still need new names for the summer and fall issues! Send your suggestions to [d-chien@uiuc.edu](mailto:d-chien@uiuc.edu).

## Allerton Park Open Space Opportunity

by: Alf Siewers and Douglas Chien

Allerton Park, one of the prime pieces of public open space in east central Illinois and home to a restoration project, is being buffeted by plans that could bring major changes to its borders. The announced land sales by two eminent public institutions, the University of Illinois and the Art Institute of Chicago, has caused excitement amongst area conservationists and nervousness among others.

The first announced land sale was by the U of I of 1800 acres to the State of Illinois with plans to create a tallgrass prairie preserve directly north of the park. Conservation groups immediately hailed this as a way to expand rare grassland bird habitat, greatly expand recreational and educational opportunities, enhance Allerton Park, and protect against urban sprawl. Such a project would also be in keeping with Robert Allerton's vision for the park that today bears his name.

Almost immediately after the announcement of the U of I sale, the Art Institute of Chicago announced plans to sell 4,800 acres of land, one section of which touches on the park's southeast entrance. Although that land is currently zoned for agricultural use, the parcels being sold range in size from 3 to 240 acres, and the breakup of the trust land could eventually lead to urban encroachment on the park.

The prairie project involves a proposed sale of half the farmland held in trust by the University of Illinois for the park, to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The land, which is currently rented to three farmers, would be restored over a period of several years, during which farming would be phased out. Proceeds from the sale would be invested by the University in trust for the park.

This project would create continuous habitat from the river bank, through the floodplain forest, upland forest and into the open prairie. Visitors would be able to walk and experience, in one location, a full range of ecosystems formerly found in east-central Illinois. This continuous habitat would greatly benefit endangered plant and animal species at Allerton. Furthermore, it would enhance educational and eco-recreational opportunities in the Monticello area, including improving the prospect for a trail network that could eventually link the area to C-U.

(see Allerton, page 7)

A Prairie Rendezvous

PO Box 36 • Urbana, IL 61803-0036

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Editor: Alf Siewers

A Prairie Rendezvous is a joint publication of the Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois (GPF) and the Prairie Grove Volunteers (PGV) for the restoration community of east-central Illinois.

A Prairie Rendezvous is published quarterly. Article submissions should be sent electronically to the editor at d-chien@uiuc.edu

#### Prairie Grove Volunteers

[www.prairienet.org/pgv](http://www.prairienet.org/pgv)

The PGV is part of The Nature Conservancy's Volunteer Stewardship Network. Its stewards help coordinate volunteer workdays at native prairie, savanna, wetland, and woodland remnants. Inquires and tax-deductible donations should be sent to: Prairie Grove Volunteers c/o The Nature Conservancy, 8 S. Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60601

#### Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois

[www.prairienet.org/gpf](http://www.prairienet.org/gpf)

GPF is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to prairie preservation, restoration, and education in east central Illinois. Inquiries and tax-deductible donations should be sent to: Grand Prairie Friends, PO Box 36, Urbana, IL 61803-0036.

A Prairie Rendezvous  
Submission Deadlines:

**Hibernation Issue** (Dec, Jan, Feb)  
**November 15**

**Greenup Issue** (March, April, May)  
**February 15**

**Summer Issue** (June, July, Aug)  
**May 15**

**Fall Issue** (Sept, Oct, Nov)  
**August 15**

**Member submissions encouraged.**

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## Lake of the Woods - Dowell Tract

by: Gail Snowdon

During the past year, GPF and the Champaign County Forest Preserve began a cooperative effort of prairie reconstruction at the property known as Dowell Trails which is located on the west side of Route 47, north of the I-74 Mahomet exit. The Forest Preserve purchased the 276 acre property in 1976 from the Dowell family.

A popular new 3.5 hiking/biking path winds through the site and connects to the Lake of the Wood Park across the street. In addition, a network of mowed trails offers joggers and walkers an opportunity to enjoy the space.

The forest preserve uses controlled burns on the former cropland and pasture to encourage prairie plant growth. Cup plant, ironweed, and goldenrod dot the property, along with hefty stands of wild parsnip and sweet clover. The forest preserve has ongoing restoration efforts in other parts of the acreage.

GPF donated seed to plant about four acres this spring. The seed mix included over 40 species with about 95% forbs. The forest preserve staff sprayed Roundup on the area in the early spring. On May 17, the staff planted the seed using their conservation planter and they provided oats as a cover crop for the young seedlings.

As of mid-August seed of the following species had germinated: monarda, pale yellow and purple coneflower, New England Aster, tall and lance-leave coreopsis, wild senna, gaura, ironweed, liatris, bundleweed, wild quinine, indigo, penstemon, slender and hairy mountain mint, and showy goldenrod.

The planting is located along the bike path for maximum visibility to people who do not normally see prairies. The forest preserve will place interpretive signage about GPF's prairie reconstruction effort. We hope to get people who use the site interested in the prairie and to enroll them in seed collection and weeding of the site.

Roger Kirkwood, Director of Natural Resources says, "This is a welcome addition to this site, and has the potential to become one of the most significant restorations in the area!"

Plans are underway for GPF to donate seed for a November planting with the Forest Preserve again providing the labor, equipment, and chemicals for the job. A seed cleaning night is planned for November 8, 7-9:30 pm at the Illinois Natural History Survey greenhouses. We will gladly accept any prairie seed donations for the site.

Long-term plans are to continue planting small areas, as seed is available. In a few years, the site should produce a seed bank to use for new areas at Dowell Tract. Philip Hult volunteered to be site steward and I offered to assist him.



# Volunteer Workday



# Calendar



'Fridge' Insert - Fall, 2000

## TO BE ANNOUNCED!

**DOWELL TRACK.** We will be having a planing day this fall at this new GPF/CCFPD restoration project in Mahomet. Check out the web site or call Paul Tessene at 244-7984. See accompanying article in this issue.

**THURSDAYS, SEPTEMBER 7, 14, 21, 28. OCTOBER 5, 12, 19, 26**

**WINDSOR ROAD PRAIRIE.** Every Thursday evening from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, or until dusk. Meet on site. Contact Ruth Green 333-7091

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14**

**HORSESHOE BOTTOM NATURE PRESERVE.** Vermilion County. Collecting and planting acorns and setting new signs.

Be prepared for a medium level (and scenic) hike to this nature preserve near the Middle Fork State Fish & Wildlife Area. Bring drinking water, a lunch, and gloves. Meet at APNC at 9:00 AM to carpool. Contact Rick Larimore (h: 337-7006, w: 244-6716) for more information or to sign up.

**SATURDAY OCTOBER 21**

**PAXTON RAILROAD PRAIRIE.** Paxton. Fall seed collecting. 10:00 am to 12:00 noon.

Come help us collect seeds from native wildflowers that will be used for propagation! Bring gloves and paper sacks if you have them. Meet at APNC at 9:00 AM to carpool, or on site at 10:00 am. Contact Connie Carroll (w: 244-7741, h: 352-4731)

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8**

**SEED CLEANING.** 7-9:30 PM at the Illinois Natural History Survey greenhouses. We will gladly accept any prairie seed donations.

**SATURDAYS, SEPTEMBER 16. OCTOBER 7, 21. NOVEMBER 4, 18**

**BUSEY WOODS RESTORATION.** 9 - 11 AM Enjoy a woodlands close to home. Refreshments, guided tour, and wild animal viewing (usually) provided. Meet at APNC at 9:00 am. Call the Nature Center at 384-4062 for more information.

- Wear appropriate attire for working outdoors, (i.e. gloves, boots or comfortable shoes, long sleeves, long pants, durable clothing)
- Bring drinking water and a snack.
- Bring loppers, handsaws, and pruners if you have them.
- Sunscreen and a hat



## Directions:



**APNC - ANITA PURVES NATURE CENTER.** Urbana Park District. 1505 North Broadway, Urbana. Busey Woods is located behind the APNC.

**ILLINOIS NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY GREENHOUSE.** Pennsylvania and 4th in Champaign.

# Member Survey Results

by Joyce Hoffman

More than 50 people responded to the questionnaire mailed with the Grand Prairie Friends membership renewal notices last fall. The Board of Directors designed the survey to learn about the interests of GPF members and find out how well they feel the organization is doing. We appreciate the fact that many members took the time to fill out the survey and provide such thoughtful input about GPF's mission and activities.

The first question asked the member's primary reason for joining. Some circled more than one answer, but the most frequently cited reason (48%) was to financially support prairie preservation efforts. The second most frequently cited choice (21%) was to learn about prairies and 15% of the responses indicated that meeting other people interested in prairies was most important. Only 11 responses (13%) indicated that an interest in working at prairie sites was the primary reason for joining GPF.

Not surprisingly then, when asked if they had volunteered at a work day or other GPF event during the past year, 20 members had done so but 31 had not. Fourteen people indicated that they had attended a work day and eight had participated in seed collecting. Eleven members worked at the Fifth Central Illinois Prairie Conference and eleven were involved with GPF plant sales —

either by cleaning seed, planting seed, transplanting seedlings, or working at the sales. Among the members who had not volunteered, by far the most frequently cited reason was a lack of time. A few members indicated that they live too far away to participate or cited health reasons. A lack of transportation and insufficient

notice about upcoming events did not appear to be problems.

We asked members to rank preservation,

restoration, land acquisition, and education in order of their importance as part of GPF's mission. Preservation was definitely viewed as the most important aspect of our mission (74%). Land acquisition was the top priority of 12% of the respondents, restoration was listed first by 10%, and education was ranked first by only 4%.

Restoration was selected most often (49%) as the second most important aspect of GPF's mission; 22% and 20% of the respondents put land acquisition and education in second place, respectively. While the significance of preservation and restoration to our members was clear from the results, it was harder to determine the relative importance placed on education and land acquisition. Education was ranked third in order of importance more

often than land acquisition (34% and 26%, respectively), but it was also ranked fourth more often than acquisition (53% and 39%, respectively).

In answer to the question about what types of events members would like GPF to sponsor, members gave site tours 24 votes, special speakers 17 votes, socials five votes, and meetings four votes. Some people also suggested workshops, fundraisers, and a garden tour.

Five members who responded to the survey had visited all or nearly all GPF sites. The site mentioned by the most people was Loda Cemetery (26), while 22 people had been to Windsor Road and the Middle Fork Restoration. Other places mentioned by several members were Paxton Railroad (17), Shortline Railroad (17), Prospect Cemetery (14), Windfall (12), Fairchild Cemetery (12), Pellville Cemetery (11), and Bonnie's Prairie (11). The least visited sites were Tomlinson and Welles cemeteries. Twenty-one members named a favorite site; six picked Loda, four Bonnie's Prairie, and three

Windfall.

Members indicated that they liked the format and content of our newsletter since it has been combined with that of the Prairie Grove Volunteers. When asked about topics they would like to see included in the newsletter people

**Preservation was, by far the most important aspect of our mission, according to respondents.**

**Nearly 40% of respondents had volunteered at a GPF activity in the past year.**

*(See Survey, pg 7)*

# Summer Internship Roundup



## A Broader Program

by: Heidi Leuszler

A new internship program was initiated this summer with GPF interns' Andrew Clark and Ellie Kron. Though no official data is in, this new program appears to be quite a success!

In the past, interns focused on stewardship and maintenance, and had little contact with the expertise that exists in the local community. By requesting GPF and PGV members, biologists, site stewards, educators, and active volunteers donate a few hours, our internship program has begun to be more representative of the energetic restoration community that is present in east-central Illinois.

Tapping into this wealth of knowledge, GPF provided opportunities at many levels, to learn about prairie conservation, restoration, and management. For example, we were able to provide the interns with expert botanists who helped them identify prairie plants and weeds. The interns also meet with most site stewards and learned about the site histories. They were also able to receive management directions for each site with hands-on instruction.

County and State biologists met with the interns to teach them about policy formation and conservation management. Many others who are active in prairie conservation, including geologists, farmers, native-plant gardeners, and school teachers,

also met with the interns.

Together, all of these people work hard to donate what they can to the goal of preserving the prairie. What a better way to teach the interns what prairie restoration is all

## Summer Learning

by Ellie Kron

This summer during my internship, I worked to restore the prairies managed by Grand Prairie Friends and also learned a great deal in the process. Not to belittle all the hard work Andy and I did this summer but I think the greatest part of the summer was the time we spent learning more about what is involved in prairie restoration. We learned from the sweet clover and wild parsnip (and even from the chiggers and ticks) but the most enjoyable experiences for me were the ones spent learning from the stewards, botanists, naturalists, educators and everyone else we spoke with. I most enjoyed learning the nuances of each prairie site and its unique history. The more I learned and experienced as the summer progressed, the more I recalled why it is that I want to become involved in environmental education in the future. This summer was great and I appreciate everything Grand Prairie Friends has taught me.

about then teaching them how and why such a diverse group of people come together to preserve the prairie!

If you would like to be involved with next year's program, we would welcome your help, whether you can donate an hour or a month! Please contact Heidi Leuszler at (217) 373-3734 or [hleuszler@parkland.cc.il.us](mailto:hleuszler@parkland.cc.il.us) to find out more about the new program or to get involved!

GPF wishes to thank all those who donated a little bit more of their time, rearranged their work schedules, and provided instruction for the interns. GPF could not have put together a successful internship program without all of you! Thank you very much.

Kimberely Bauer	Dwain Bergren
Kim Cambron	April DeAtley
Jamie Ellis	Ruth Green
Bill Handel	Chris Hauser
Joyce Hoffmann	Jim Hoyt
Kristina Hubert	Dave Ketzner
Roger Kirkwood	Sarah Livesay
Brenda Molano-Flores	Jim Payne
Ken Robertson	Eric Smith
Bob Szafoni	John Taft
Paul Tessene	Bob Vaiden
Rob Weidenmann	Brian Wilm

A large thank you also goes out to Andrew and Ellie for being our guinea pigs with this program, and for doing such a wonderful job this summer!



## GPF Annual Membership Meeting Announcement

Grand Prairie Friends will hold its annual membership meeting at the Anita Purves Nature Center in Urbana at 7 p.m. on Friday, September 22.

Current board members will describe the past year's accomplishments and speakers will discuss recent GPF projects. This will be an excellent opportunity for members to learn more about some of these activities and to propose and discuss ideas for future projects. We plan to feature an update on the proposed expansion of Allerton Park for prairie restoration as well. The election of three new GPF board members also will take place.

The meeting will be followed by a social hour. Beverages will be provided and members are invited to bring a favorite dessert to share. We also will hold what may be the first "Prairie Dessert Contest" in history. Fire up your imagination and create a dessert with prairie theme! Prizes will be awarded for the three best efforts.

Come meet fellow prairie enthusiasts and share ideas on preserving and restoring central Illinois' prairie heritage. The meeting is open to the public so invite your friends who might be interested in becoming a part of the Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois



## PGV and GPF Collaboration Update

On July 25, 2000, board members of Grand Prairie Friends and steering committee members of the Prairie Grove Volunteers met to discuss coordinated efforts. The meeting was sponsored by Jim Payne and organized by Kim Bauer. It was held at Mr. Payne's property, Jasmine Hollow, which is a wooded area along the Sangamon River. While the attendance was low, a few important items were discussed.

### Site Stewards

Many of the site stewards have membership and affiliation with both GPF and PGV, but there has not been much coordination between the groups for recruitment of volunteers or communication with the stewards. An initiative by both groups will hopefully start to remedy this dilemma. A letter was drafted and reviewed at the meeting to be sent out to all stewards. This letter has goals of:

- 1) outlining the differences and similarities between GPF and PGV,
- 2) outlining the responsibilities of each steward, and
- 3) outlining the responsibilities each board has toward the stewards. If you are a site steward, please be looking for this in the mail soon.

### New Member Involvement

A new member packet has been formulated and should be ready for implementation soon. When there is a new person inquiring about volunteering at a workday or where there is a GPF or PGV display, that person will be given a recent newsletter. That newsletter will have a postcard they can send in to receive a new member packet. The packet will include a recent newsletter, the GPF AND PGV pamphlets, a GPF magnet, info on how to subscribe to the ecostewards listserv, and a list of the current board members of each organization. Hopefully we can use this to encourage folks to become active with our organizations.

### Equipment Shed

The last item of interest is the shared equipment shed. Many tools are shared between GPF and PGV and stored in the tool shed at the Natural History Survey. While these tools may be used by any steward for a workday, some ground rules have been set down. New shelves have been built, and tools have been inventoried and organized. There is a sign-out sheet in the shed along with a rules list posted. This should eliminate lost tools and frustrated stewards looking for equipment.

### Planning for the Future

The next joint meeting is tentatively set for November 11, 2000 with a time and venue TBA. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please feel free to e-mail [gpf@prairienet.org](mailto:gpf@prairienet.org).



*(Survey, from pg. 4)*

expressed strong interest in educational resources, GPF news, scientific resources, and recent legislation. Several people suggested specific topics, including news from other prairie groups, plant profiles, information on what species are in bloom at sites, and articles on prairie wildlife. All ideas will be passed along to the editors of A Prairie Rendezvous.

Several members expressed the opinion that GPF was doing a great job. People specifically mentioned the intern program, the shift to a uniform (calendar-year) membership schedule, and working with the University of Illinois student organization as positive factors. Suggestions for improvements included raising more money, expanding our membership, acquiring more land, acquiring land as buffers for existing sites, increasing local media coverage, and calling to remind people about upcoming work days. We were also advised to avoid controversial situations, be careful about using GPF funds for projects that are not specifically for prairie preservation or restoration, and coordinate with similar organizations before scheduling major events.

Thank you to those who took the time to respond. All ideas expressed on the surveys will be given serious consideration by the GPF Board. 

*(Allerton, from pg. 1)*

A November 29<sup>th</sup> auction is scheduled for the Art Institute land, which had been given to the museum by the Allerton family, which also created the park and gave the farmland north of it to the university for its support.

Organizers of the sale of the land south of the park said they expect it could attract 500 people, who would be bidding on 50 parcels ranging from 3 to 240 acres. The land is currently also managed by tenant farmers.

The bank and auction company in charge of the sale south of the park are reportedly talking with the U of I about preserving a strip of old Norwegian spruce trees on the property, along the southeast entrance to Allerton Park.

"We liked the stability of having the Art Institute control that acreage. We are concerned about the habitat transition into the park and the impact of any development in that area," Steve Schomberg, University of Illinois associate chancellor, told the Decatur Herald-Review recently.

At this time the U of I sale has been put on hold. It is expected to commence around July 2001. Consequently, the Art Institute sale has taken on greater importance for area conservationists. About 1410 acres of the total sale are considered the best land for the expansion of Allerton Park and protection of open space. These acres lie adjacent to Allerton and the Sangamon River. Unless protected, the land will likely fall to urban development, hemming in Allerton Park and impacting the Sangamon River.

Those of us concerned about maintaining and enriching the integrity of Allerton Park and its habitats should monitor local news for opportunities to testify at hearings. We should write letters in support of both the prairie project and of preservation and/or ecologically sensitive development of the Art Institute parcels. Letters and/or calls are needed to Governor Ryan, Brent Manning -Director of the Dept. of Natural Resources, and your local legislator.

Grand Prairie Friends participated in the Kids Building Fair sponsored by the Preservation and Conservation Association and the Orpheum Children's Science Museum in downtown Champaign on Saturday, May 20. Beth Wohlgemuth and Joyce Hofmann brought flats of New England aster, bee balm, prairie coreopsis, and black-eyed Susan seedlings that had been planted by volunteers in preparation for the GPF plant sales. They helped children transplant seedlings into paper cups to be taken home for their gardens. The activity was very popular and several people also stopped to look at the GPF display. This was the ninth year for the Fair which is held in honor of National Historic Preservation Week and gives children an opportunity to try their hand at building crafts such as carpentry, painting, and tiling.

Have a Merry, Prairie Holiday!



This year, plan ahead! Send unique cards, invitations & gifts ~ with images of the native prairie.

(A portion of your purchase will be donated to Grand Prairie Friends to offset newsletter costs).

## Upcoming Events

GPF Annual Membership Meeting

Friday, September 22

7 PM

Anita Prurves Nature Center  
Prairie Dessert Contest!

For free catalogue:

The PRAIRIE ARTS, PO Box 6 Hindsdale, IL 60522

(630) 887-8375

[prart@juno.com](mailto:prart@juno.com)

[www.prart.bigstep.com](http://www.prart.bigstep.com)

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Champaign County Forest Preserve District