

A Prairie Rendezvous

A joint publication of:



Hibernation Vol2, N1, 2000

Look closely at this quarters issue. You'll notice the name is a bit off. Gone is the "Winter" issue name and arrived is the "Hibernation" issue of A Prairie Rendezvous. But, if you flip to page two and look at the masthead we still have spring, summer, and fall as issue names. Well, this is where we need your help. Please send in your suggestions for renaming the three remaining issues. A couple guidelines: the name must relate to the season and be botanical/ecological in nature. Other than that...have at it.

Send your suggestions to the editors: Alf Siewers (siewers@uiuc.edu) and Doug Chien (d-chien@uiuc.edu). We'll pick the winners, so look for the new names in the next issue of A Prairie Rendezvous.

Also, we like to encourage the members of the Prairie Grove Volunteer and Grand Prairie Friends to submit articles, art, musings, or poetry.

Finally, if you missed the Fifth Central Illinois Prairie Conference the Conference Proceedings will soon be available. Send \$10 to GPF, PO Box 36, Urbana, IL 61803-0036.

-the editors

Conservation Easements: The flexible tool for land conservation

by: Douglas Chien

The old adage goes something like "you should buy land now, 'cause they ain't making any more." In other words, land is a finite commodity. When it comes to the type of land conservation groups are interested in protecting, those with natural ecological quality, it becomes more than a finite commodity; it becomes a downright scarce commodity.

Traditionally, land conservation groups have used the simple method of outright acquisition to preserve ecologically important land. This method has been used with great success and, in a nation often obsessed with private property rights, is a straight forward and easily understandable route. Unfortunately, funding is often a limiting factor. And, in today's booming economy, land values often appreciate at a rate faster than conservation groups can realistically cope. Finally, many land owners want to preserve their lands but for personal, or historic reasons wish to maintain ownership. The **conservation easement** has emerged in the 1990s as the premiere way to address these and other issues while protecting valuable open space and ecologically important prairies, wetlands, and woodlands.

Conservation easements protect valuable lands while preserving private ownership.

- The popularity of conservation easements is due to its flexibility.
- It can be tailored to the individual needs of each property owner
 - Any property with significant ecological, cultural, educational, or recreational value can be protected
 - An easement can be placed on the entire parcel of property or just a small section
 - The easement may be donated or sold to a conservation group or agency
 - Placing a conservation easement on property often results in federal and local tax benefits for the land owner

While many people outside the land conservation arena might be unfamiliar with what a conservation easement is, it is little different than the ubiquitous utility rights-of-way that impacts the way in which you may use your land. A conservation easement is a legal agreement between the

(see *Easement*, page 5)

A Prairie Rendezvous
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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

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., Suite 900. Chicago, IL 60601

Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois

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

Spring 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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Green Space and Local Government

by Alf Siewers

As part of our ongoing effort to profile environmental movers and shakers in east central Illinois, and how their work relates to our concerns as restorationists, we dropped by the office of Laura Huth now located in the Bennett Building in downtown Urbana.

Huth, the 5th Ward alderman in Urbana, is also founder and executive director of the Illinois Student Environmental Network, a consortium of campus environmental groups in the state, which is her full-time job.

Our talk with her, turned mainly to an increasingly large focus of her civic interests, namely how to handle sprawling development that ultimately can threaten the rural ecosystems that we are trying to nurse back to health.

On this issue, as on others involving ecological vision, Huth, who at 29 remains a young environmentalist on the go, says she has felt that a lack of sustained local activism by environmentalists has slowed efforts to create a more "eco-friendly" city.

In fact, she made a plea for more environmentalists to begin setting an agenda locally by attending local government meetings, phoning their representatives, and networking their organizations so as to have a strong voice on issues such as regional open space. Otherwise, she said, business as usual will continue with environmental issues being given short shrift, despite the "green" concerns of many in the community.

"I'm a fighter and I hope others will join me," said Huth, who hopes that public support will spur proposals in the next year for anti-sprawl "smart growth" planning in Urbana.

(see Huth, pg 6)

New PGV and GPF Personalities

The Prairie Grove Volunteers would like to introduce **Olin Anderson**, the newest member of the PGV Steering Committee. Olin is a third-year Graduate Student in Landscape Architecture, focusing on land and resource management issues. He has an undergraduate degree in Urban and Economic Geography from Northern Illinois University, and worked for Rand McNally and Co., and General American Transportation Corp. As a transportation planner with the Chicago Area Transportation Study, he found that there were many difficult regional growth issues that comprehensive planning could not effectively solve. One of these issues is the preservation and restoration of our Illinois wilderness, which he believes to be best done by well-directed local initiatives.

Grand Prairie Friends is proud to have several new board members. **Jamie Ellis** is a botanist with the Critical Trends Assessment Project at the Illinois Natural History Survey in Champaign. He and his wife Mindy moved to Urbana in June. Prior to that they lived in Michigan where Jamie worked for an environmental consulting firm. He has an M.S. from the School of Natural Resources and Environment at the

(see Personalities, pg 7)

Volunteer Workday



Calendar



'Fridge' Insert - Hibernation 1999-2000

Fall/Winter burns will be scheduled in December for several sites. Burns are needed at these sites to discourage the competing non-native species and encourage growth of native plants. Wear natural-fiber, nonflammable clothing (long pants, long sleeves, boots, and gloves); *no synthetic fabrics*. Call Rick Larimore (w: 244-6716, h: 337-7006) or Paul Tessene (w: 244-7984, h: 344-4303) for more information.

Reminder - Please leave your pets at home. Pets are not allowed on Nature Preserves. Activities such as prescribed burns may endanger pets, even if they are on leashes or otherwise supervised.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8

SEED CLEANING PARTY. Check out all the seed collected over the past year and help prepare it for winter storage and eventual planting. Meet at the Illinois Natural History Survey Annex Greenhouse. Contact Ruth Green (o: 333-7091, rgreen@denr1.igis.uiuc.edu) for more information.

SATURDAYS, DECEMBER 18, JANUARY 15, FEBRUARY 19

BUSEY WOODS RESTORATION. Brush cutting and removing non-native species. Enjoy a woodlands close to home. Meet at APNC at 9:00 am. Contact Kim Bauer (h: 328-0552) for more information.

WEEKDAY EVENINGS, DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY

SEED PREPERATION. Spend a couple hours relaxing while sowing seeds and/or transplanting seedlings. The plants grown are for the GPF plant sales and help in the restoration of sites. Plant sales help support our internship program so success is needed! No prior knowledge needed. Contact Ruth Green if you can help (o: 333-7091, rgreen@denr1.igis.uiuc.edu).

FRIDAY, FEBURARY 4, 2000

GRAND PRAIRIE FRIENDS WINTER MEETING. See the next page.



Directions:



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

ILLINOIS NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY ANNEX GREENHOUSE. 1910 Griffith Drive, Champaign (south of St. Mary's Road and west of First Street, east of Neil Street).

Mark you calendars today! It's coming soon...

January 1: The Rose Bowl

January 30: The Super Bowl

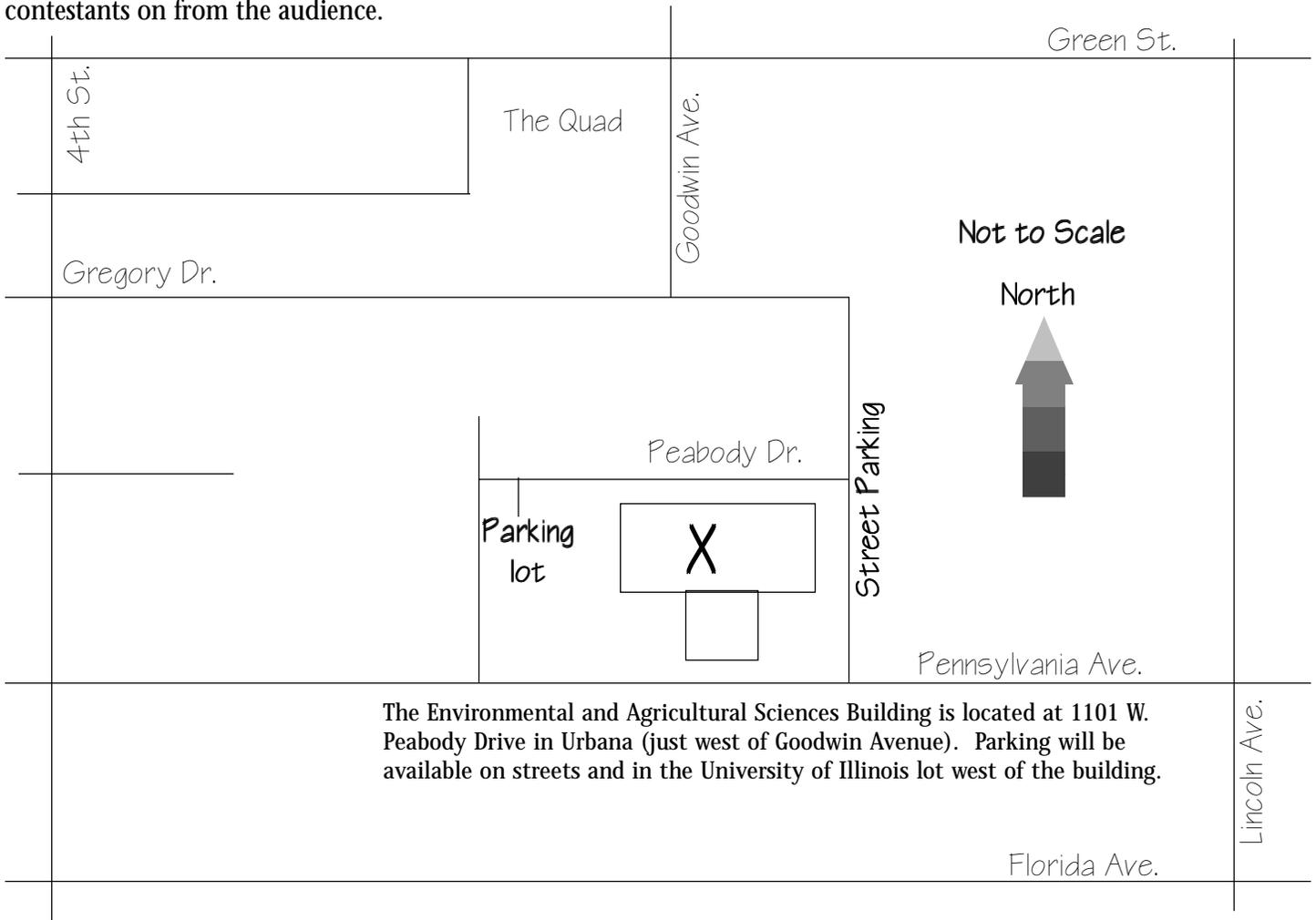
February 4: The Prairie Bowl!



Prairie Bowl? Yes, Grand Prairie Friends will present the first prairie quiz at its winter meeting on Friday, February 4, 2000. This event will take place in the auditorium of the Environmental and Agricultural Sciences Building on the University of Illinois campus beginning at 7 pm. It will be accompanied by a dessert potluck. Coffee, tea, and apple cider will be provided.

The format of Prairie Bowl will be similar to that of the "College Bowl" TV program. Four teams, each composed of four members, will engage in friendly competition to answer a variety of questions about prairie ecology, flora and fauna, history, and preservation. Contestants will be volunteers chosen from the audience. Two semifinal rounds will be held and the winners of each round will meet in the championship. In the best game show tradition the winners will receive a grand prize (probably not a vacation in Cancun) and there will be consolation prizes for the other contestants.

Everyone is welcome to attend this event. Come out and join the fun! Volunteer to be a contestant or cheer the contestants on from the audience.



(Easement continued)

land owner and a conservation group or public agency that governs the manner in which the land is used with respects of the ecological integrity. For example, if a land owner's property contains a sand savanna and she places a conservation easement on the property to protect the savanna forever, then the land still belongs to her. However, she is now forbidden from engaging in activities that would damage or destroy the savanna such as logging, sand removal, plowing, etc. If the land is sold, the new owner is also subject to the conservation easement's restrictions.

It is the responsibility of the conservation easement holder to ensure that no violations happen. This can take the form of yearly site visits or more frequent visits depending on the situation.

While conservation easements can be sold to conservation groups, most will only accept donated easements. Furthermore, since the easement holder is typically a nonprofit group, an endowment is often requested to accompany the easement. This money is then used to monitor the easement in perpetuity for inappropriate uses. In the event of a violation the endowment may be used in the legal defense of the easement and to correct the violation.

If you are a land owner who's land contains ecologically important areas such as prairie, wetland, woodland, or savanna and are interested in protecting them forever please consider placing a conservation easement upon them. Contact GPF for more information at gpf@prairienet.org 

A Summer's Reward

by Jim Hoyt



This summer has been one of the most interesting and rewarding that I have had in years. I have had the experience of working with two very bright and hard working students who care very deeply about the sound Stewardship of our world.

Robin and Jason have been very helpful and easy to work with. I am very happy to see a budding (no pun intended) nursery worker who is learning new techniques of propagating Trilliums, Jacobs Ladders, and other native woodland plants. With the increasing deer population in the area there will be an ever greater need for people with Robin's expertise in growing these plants. Jason showed a great deal of enthusiasm for his studies in DNA microevolution of prairie plants and weeds. He also helped me to improve my knowledge of prairie grasses and their identification.

It was so great to see the progress of our little family of Mallard ducks at Windsor Road Prairie. In this small marsh just a few feet away from speeding traffic we had a perfect little ecosystem. I saw Canada Geese, the aforementioned Mallards, two Least Bitterns, turtles, a muskrat, an old beaver dam, and many small fish. I enthusiastically recommend that all of our members contact Ruth Green, the Site Steward for a tour.

I would also heartily recommend a trip to Bonnie's Prairie, Loda Prairie, and Fairchild Cemetery prairie. Just watch out for the man eating Walking sticks. Robin thought it was so funny to see me get shook up over the Walking stick that crawled across my face.

Probably the most important thing relating to my personal growth was learning how to use my e-mail to contact my coworkers and Site Stewards to coordinate our weekly restoration work. A special thank you goes to Ruth Green who helped us in so many ways. Thank you Robin and Jason along with all of the GPF members, stewards, and officers who worked with us. 



Shortline Railroad Prairie. One of the sites worked by the summer interns. Phil Hult, steward.



by Chris Hauser

GPF is currently participating in the Conservation Congress, a public comment forum organized by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. In a 2 - 3 year process, environmental concerns of conservation organizations from all over the state are prioritized, refined, and finally forwarded to the state legislature as official recommendations. Two programs, Conservation 2000 and the Environmental License Plate, were created partly from the work of previous Conservation Congresses.

This fall, Chris Hauser and Jason Sheperis attended the three Caucus sessions, with dozens of other conservation organizations from the East Central Illinois area. Environmental concerns were brought forward in the first session, they were refined in the second session, and finally were voted on in the final session. The ten issues with the most votes will be forwarded to the second phase of the Congress, the Work Groups, in February 2000. At the work groups, the top ten concerns from all around the state are merged and refined. After more refinement, later in the Fall of 2000, the final environmental concerns will be forwarded on to the state legislature as formal recommendations. Contact Chris Hauser for more information at gpf@prairienet.org.

A Successful Prairie Conference

by Heidi Leuszler

The Fifth Central Illinois Prairie Conference was held the 18th-19th of September at Parkland College and was a huge success in many ways. Focusing on the multitude of interactions between people and the prairies, GPF hoped to educate people not only about the prairie itself, but also about the different people who interact with the prairie.

Jack White, a prairie ecologist and historian gave a phenomenal keynote address charting the history of the prairie ecosystem and its ties with Native Americans, European settlers, developers, and modern culture.

Workshops included a grass identification workshop, a roundtable discussion with several prairie restorationists, and development of a successful volunteer program. Saturday was finished off with a banquet and a presentation of natural preserves around the state from Guy Fraker of the Illinois Nature Preserve Commission. Field trips to local prairie sites were well attended on Sunday. We were fortunate to visit the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and to have local experts leading trips to some beautiful prairie sites around our area.

The informational breadth of the conference drew a diverse crowd: biologists, historians, hunters, horticulturists, farmers, storytellers, teachers, and craftspeople. Many of the participants commented that this aspect of the conference was enlightening and helped to promote a more complete sense of what prairie conservation is about and how working together toward the same goal might actually be a possibility.

Even the organization of the conference promoted the idea of the success that can be gained when we work together. GPF has had a productive year due to fusing the efforts of local groups like these and individuals from many different backgrounds and we hope to continue in this way.

(Huth continued)

The sprawl issue has not been so high-profile in this region as in some other parts of the country. In the Chicago area, for example, between 1970 and 1990 developed land grew by nearly half while the population only grew by about 4%.

However, concerns over public investment in infrastructure for expanding urban areas, the equity of developing new areas versus not redeveloping inner-city areas, long-term environmental and social problems caused by loss of open space, and the growth of car-centered communities, are applicable here as well, according to Huth.

The recent move of the U.S. Post Office in Urbana of its main operations from downtown Urbana, struggling to recover from earlier business loss, to a suburban-style commercial park at the east end of town is cited by Huth as an example of "dumb growth" or sprawl.

Other problems she sees include lack of bike routes and facilities in Urbana, lack of attention to "sustainable"

(Continued next page)

(Personalities continued)

University of Michigan and a B.S. from the University of Illinois. Jamie has had a longtime interest in prairies and ecological restoration. He grew up near Peoria and got involved in restoration as an undergrad. He was active in Students for Environmental Concerns, helped form Red Bison with Doug Chien, was the first GPF summer intern in 1994, and has put in many volunteer hours for restoration projects in both Illinois and Michigan.

Chris Hauser was born and raised in Ridgecrest, California, a small town in the Mojave Desert east of the Sierra Nevada mountains. With so much open space around, he began to love the outdoors at a very young age. Chris attended California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo where he studied Soil Science and Biochemistry. Chris is working toward an M.S. in Plant Biology at the University of Illinois; he and his wife Jennifer have lived in Champaign-Urbana for over two years. They have been nature volunteers since their college days when they helped remove invasive plants and plant native trees and shrubs on an Audubon Society preserve in California. They've been active GPF volunteers for a year and a half.

Mary Hruska was an active board member in the late 1980s and cochaired the 1991 Central Illinois Prairie conference. She left the board to pursue graduate work and received an M.S. in Botany from Eastern Illinois University. She has started a prairie restoration project on her parents' farm near Bloomington and spent many years learning all the different tasks involved in restoration. She is especially interested in helping GPF with fall seed collection and preparation for the spring plant sales.

Patti Malmborg is the Natural Areas Protection Project Manager with the Division of Natural Heritage at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in Springfield. She is responsible for managing the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory, which maintains information on natural areas of statewide significance, and assists in the identification, evaluation and protection of over 1200 Illinois sites. Previously she was the Northeastern Illinois Threats Coordinator for the IL Nature Preserves Commission and an ornithologist at the IL Natural History Survey. She is a graduate of the University of Illinois with a B.S. in Ecology, Ethology and Evolution and an M.S. in Biology. 



aesthetics in terms of pedestrian friendly business districts, and what she describes as a municipal government that by inertia tends to steer away from bigger issues of ecological vision.

"Commercial development like North Prospect [in Champaign] is definitely not what Urbana is or sees itself as becoming," she added, although she says it has become by default the model for city planing as Urbana seeks commercial tax revenue.

Such a car-centered path for development runs the risk of weakening efforts to develop greenway networks of trails and linear preserves, while also removing buffer zones between development and



remnant native ecosystems, and blocking downtown's recovery efforts.

Last year Huth attended a national conference on smart-growth measures where she gathered ideas on what other communities elsewhere in the country are doing to handle sprawl.

Such measures include growth boundaries, as in the case of Portland, Oregon, and the sharing of tax revenues from large commercial developments across a region to discourage competition for sprawl, as in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. A variety of measures to save farmland are also being tried around the country. Huth says that if public support were forthcoming she would help support anti-sprawl measures to

present to the Urbana City Council.

Meanwhile, she suggests that restorationists can take a few steps of their own to let their own voices be heard in shaping the development of the region:

1. Phone and buttonhole local officials about your concerns about "dumb growth," and show support for environmentalists in public office.

2. Consider ways in which local environmental groups can network, perhaps through a "mini-summit" of organizations, to develop a "smart growth" agenda for the area.

3. Think about running for local office or encourage and support others with strong environmental concerns to do so.



Special thanks to the following individuals and organizations for helping make the 5th Central Illinois Prairie Conference a success!

5th Central Illinois Prairie Conference Planning Committee

Robbie Berg	Connie Carroll	Kristina Hubert
Cynthia Dassler	Tony Endress	Heidi Leuszler
Ruth Green	Jennifer Hauser	Chris Johns

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Additional support was provided by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Conservation 2000.

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