

**Final Report
Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund
Small Project Grant
Neoga School Outdoor Classroom Trail**

Introduction

The appreciation and understanding of the outdoors is dependent upon the experiences and time an individual has spent enjoying a natural area. Many Illinois citizens simply do not have the opportunity to enjoy a natural community due to the loss of these habitats throughout the state. The Neoga School District, through the Outdoor Classroom Committee, has begun the establishment of natural habitat on the school grounds. In particular, a prairie establishment of approximately three acres has been planted. It is the desire of the Outdoor Classroom Committee that the children and citizens of Neoga and the surrounding area be exposed to a prairie to become aware of the importance of this vanishing resource in Illinois. A mowed trail around the prairie establishment will serve as an interpretive trail. The Neoga School District Outdoor Classroom Committee has purchased 7 interpretive trail signs to mark significant species and concepts around the prairie establishment.

Methods and Materials

Seven trail signs were ordered from Wilderness Graphics, Inc. The signs ordered are as follows: Killdeer, Signs of Wildlife, Food Chain, Succession, Great Blue Heron, Eastern Bluebird, and Purple Coneflower. Sign posts were installed by school district personnel using a gas powered post hole digger, and teacher and student volunteers then installed the signs on the posts using a cordless screw driver. The interpretive signs ring the prairie establishment area on the site. A series of bluebird boxes were also erected on the site by district personnel and volunteers, and will become part of the trail.

Results

Seven interpretive trail signs were ordered and received from Wilderness Graphics. The signs were installed on the site of the Neoga School Outdoor Classroom Trail in early April, 2005. The trail around the signs and the prairie is being maintained by the Neoga School District. Pictures of the site with the trail signs are included with this report as Attachment A.

Discussion

The seven interpretive trail signs add a new dimension to the prairie establishment on the outdoor classroom site. They focus attention on the prairie, and plants and animals that can be seen in the area. A few of the signs also address ecological topics such as succession, food chains, and signs of wildlife. These signs will help encourage elementary teachers and students to study the site in order to relate observations to these concepts. Junior high students will develop a trail brochure as part of the ongoing use of the area in the educational process.

Summary

The Neoga School Outdoor Classroom Committee appreciates the opportunity to further the educational goals of the district and the community by implementing this project. The interpretive trail signs installed in the outdoor classroom area augment the existing site, and draw attention to an example of a vanishing Illinois ecosystem. The trail will be used by students and community members, who will have the opportunity to learn and observe examples of Illinois native species.

Expenditures

The expenditures associated with this project are as follows:

Commodities:

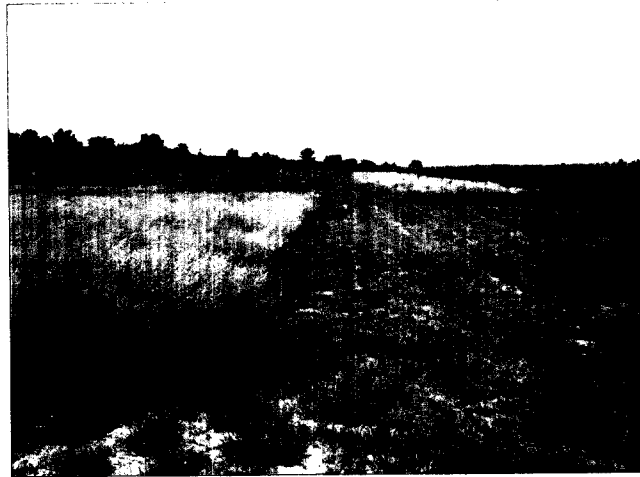
(7) aluminum 9x12" trail signs	\$210.00
(7) aluminum 9x12" trail sign frames	\$525.00
Shipping	\$ 30.00
(7) treated 4x4x6' wood posts	\$ 40.53
Total	<u>\$805.53</u>

Labor:

District maintenance personnel	\$130.64
District faculty	\$106.92
Volunteer labor	\$ 30.00
Total	<u>\$267.56</u>

Receipts for expenses are attached to this report as Attachment B.

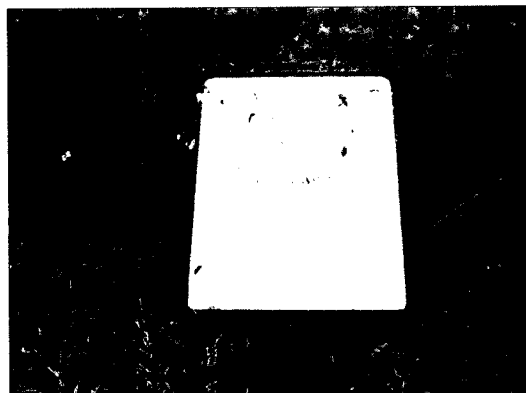
**Attachment A
Site photos**



Looking south along west trail



Looking south at first trail sign



Looking east "Signs of Wildlife"



Looking south along west trail



Looking east into prairie



Looking north across prairie toward school

Attachment B

WILDERNESS GRAPHICS, INC.

Invoice

324-G West Van Buren Street
Post Office Box 1635
Tallahassee, FL 32302
FEIN 59-2176079

Invoice Number: 05-04011

Phone: 850-224-6414 Fax: 850-561-3943

Neoga Jr/Sr High School District Unit #3 PO Box 280 Neoga, IL 62447	Date 4/1/2005 P.O. No. 005183 Job Number Terms Due on receipt
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Description	Amount
(7) aluminum 9x12" trail signs	210.00
Shipping	30.00
Total	\$240.00

*REC
4-7-05*

Please pay from this invoice - thank you.