

# **Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund Small Project Final Report**

## **Grant Agreement #08-016W**

Grand Prairie Friends  
P.O. Box 36  
Urbana, IL 61802

FY '08 (July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008)

Derek Liebert (grantee representative)  
(217) 217-1120  
derekliebert@yahoo.com

## **Project Title: East-central Illinois Natural Areas Internship**

### ***Project Objectives:***

- a) Teach two interns about tallgrass prairie, woodland, savanna, and wetland natural areas stewardship in east-central Illinois;
- b) Teach interns how to identify native and weedy plants in natural areas in east-central Illinois;
- c) Educate and demonstrate current prairie, woodland, savanna, and wetland management and ecological restoration techniques from professional and volunteer land managers to interns;
- d) Manage natural areas by removal of exotic and woody vegetation as prescribed;
- e) Gain experience with hands-on natural lands management including safe and proper tool and herbicide use;
- f) Maintain local school prairie gardens; and
- g) Coordinate with site stewards to perform other needed management activities.

### ***Project Description:***

For the summer of 2007, Grand Prairie Friends (GPF) proposed to hire two interns to carry out ecological management work in about 35 prairie, woodland, savanna and wetland natural areas, both remnant and planted, around east-central Illinois. The summer internship program, started in 1994, is needed to supplement the work of volunteer stewards. Summer interns spent much of their time removing or controlling exotic invasive plant species. They also spent time in the field with various volunteers and natural resources professionals to learn about management techniques, plant identification natural areas ecology.

### ***Summary of Project Accomplishments***

#### **Introduction**

Grand Prairie Friends (GPF) is an all-volunteer not-for-profit conservation group based in Urbana, Illinois. Management of native tall grass prairie remnants has been a focus of the group since formation and incorporation in 1984. In 2004, we joined forces and merged with another local group, Prairie Grove Volunteers, and we expanded our conservation focus to include

woodland, savanna and wetland natural areas as well. We rely on many dedicated volunteers to provide the labor to steward over 35 natural areas in east-central Illinois (Figure 1.). The group also assists and relies on the expertise of professionals from various agencies such as the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Illinois Natural History Survey, the University of Illinois, the Champaign County Forest Preserve District, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, the Urbana Park District, the Vermilion County Conservation District and others. While we steward natural areas using the wonderful efforts of volunteers and professionals, this is usually not enough to get all the work done that is needed to conserve and preserve these sites.

In 1994, GPF started a summer internship program to supplement the work of volunteer stewards. Summer interns, usually young, college students or recent graduates, are hired to help manage prairie, woodland, savanna and wetland natural areas, both remnant and planted, around east-central Illinois. At this time GPF also started growing and selling native plants to raise money to fund the summer internship program.

The bulk of the work is controlling exotic and invasive plant species as well as cutting brush, maintaining signs and collecting seed from native plants. Removal of exotic and invasive species benefits the native flora and fauna of each site. Not only do the interns provide valuable work for natural areas, they also receive an education about natural resources management. They spend quite a few days each summer with professionals in the field such as land managers, botanists and ecologists to learn about the ecology, native organisms and management of our local natural areas. The hands-on work and experiences with natural resource managers and scientists benefit the interns by providing education they can use in their future studies and career.

## Materials and Methods

In January 2007, the GPF Board decided to offer two full-time positions for summer 2007. Applications for the internship were accepted from mid January to the end of March. An internship subcommittee (consisting of GPF Board of Directors members) reviewed applications and selected candidates. Candidates were interviewed in early April.

The internship program is a 90-day commitment from June 1 to August 31. Interns are given a GPF Intern Manual which consists of background information about GPF, lists of GPF sites and stewards, management needs at each site, general position information, internship goals, a calendar, and reporting forms. Two books, Tallgrass Prairie Wildflowers and The Tallgrass Restoration Handbook are given to each intern. They are also allowed to borrow a copy of DeLorme's Illinois Atlas & Gazetteer to find their way around east-central Illinois. Interns provide their own auto and health insurance, but are covered under GPF's liability insurance while working on any GPF site.

Interns report weekly to the internship coordinator during the course of the summer to plan stewardship activities, turn in time sheets and ask any questions. Interns are paid \$8/hr. Work includes management activities at natural areas sites and educational activities as well as drive time to and from sites. Interns must turn in a time sheet every two weeks reporting hours worked, mileage driven, sites visited and work performed. They are reimbursed for vehicle mileage, if they use a personal vehicle. The GPF Treasurer issues paychecks when timesheets are received. GPF owns a truck for use by interns if they choose not to use a personal vehicle. Interns are

required to obtain a pesticide applicator license from the Illinois Department of Agriculture to learn how to safely apply herbicides at managed sites.

Interns are required to perform management work at sites as determined by site stewards and the internship coordinator. At the beginning of the internship they are given an orientation as to the scope of work and a tour of sites where they will be working. Educational components of the internship include time spent with professionals and volunteers from organizations throughout east-central Illinois, including the University of Illinois, Parkland College, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Natural History Survey, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, Champaign County Forest Preserve District, Urbana Park District, and others. Through these organizations, interns are exposed to a wide variety of management and educational perspectives that exist within the natural area conservation community.

## Results

In April 2007, GPF hired two applicants. Christy Wallace and Mike Polito were offered and hired to work full-time (40 hr/wk) internship positions.

Formal contracts were drawn up between each intern and GPF, and they each started work with an orientation and expectations meeting with the internship coordinator and a few volunteer stewards. They were then given a driving tour of some natural areas where they would be working.

In June, each intern successfully passed the required tests and obtained valid Illinois Pesticide Applicator Licenses.

Combined, Christy and Mike spent approximately 600 hours performing hands-on stewardship work at nineteen sites around east-central Illinois during June, July and August, 2007 (Table 1.). Much of their work involved the removal of exotic invasive species from natural areas. Early in the internship, they pulled garlic mustard at Jasmine Hollow. As June progressed, they worked at prairie remnants pulling wild parsnip and sweet clover. They also worked on woody invasive plant species such as autumn olive, bush honeysuckle and multiflora rose. At some sites they to cut woody stems and stump treat the cut stem with glyphosate. In July, they tackled teasel at Loda Cemetery Prairie and Paxton RR Prairie.

The interns spent additional time over the course of the summer working in a greenhouse potting plants for GPF's native plant sale. They additionally helped plant prairie plugs at a new campus prairie planting.

Some sign maintenance was needed at the Shortline Prairie RR Prairie site where they replaced the signage that designates the site as a natural area managed by GPF. They also collected seeds of a few species throughout the summer. Prairie phlox, spiderwort and cream wild-indigo were a few of the species they targeted. Seeds collected will be used to grow plants for the native plant sale or planted at local restoration sites.

In addition to their work time, the interns spent time with local natural resource professionals and volunteers. Illinois Natural History Survey botanists and plant ecologists including Paul

Marcum, Paul Tessene, John Taft, Jamie Ellis and Bill Handel were able to spend time in the field with the interns teaching them plant ID and some ecology of natural areas. Survey botanist Dave Ketzner spent half a day with the interns teaching them how to identify grasses. Lori Kae Schwab from the Urbana Park District showed them weed management techniques at Meadowbrook Park Prairie and toured other area restoration projects. GPF volunteer Jim Payne led the interns on work outings to Jasmine Hollow, a woodland preserve, to control garlic mustard and woody invasive species, and Phil Hult, steward at Buffalo Trace Prairie planting, led them on outings to remove invasive species such as wild parsnip and sweet clover. Volunteer Jim Hoyt assisted the interns at Parkland College Prairie. Christy and Mike also were able to tour a variety of natural area remnants and restorations over the course of the summer to expand upon their understanding of Illinois natural history.

## Discussion and Summary

In the summer of 2007, GPF hired two summer interns. Christy Wallace and Mike Polito worked a total of 761.8 hours during May, June, July and August. Most of this time, approximately 600 hours, was spent in the field at prairie, forest, wetland and savanna natural areas removing exotic, invasive plant species, collecting seed, and performing other site work. The remainder of the time was spent learning to identify plants, touring natural areas, or meeting with volunteers and professionals.

Overall, we were very happy with the effort and work accomplished by the two interns, and we feel that the project objectives were met. Due to various scheduling conflicts, the interns weren't able to work as many hours as budgeted, but this did not detract from the quantity or quality of work they accomplished.

## Project Expenditures

For the summer 2007 internship, GPF spent a total of \$7,015.64 (Table 2). The two interns worked a total of 758 hours. At \$8/hr we spent \$6,064 in salaries. Additionally we spent another \$951.64 in travel, supplies and contractual services. We budgeted to pay for the internship with funds raised from our annual plant sales and received from the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund Grant (Table 3).

Figure 1. Map of project area with GPF managed natural area sites indicated.

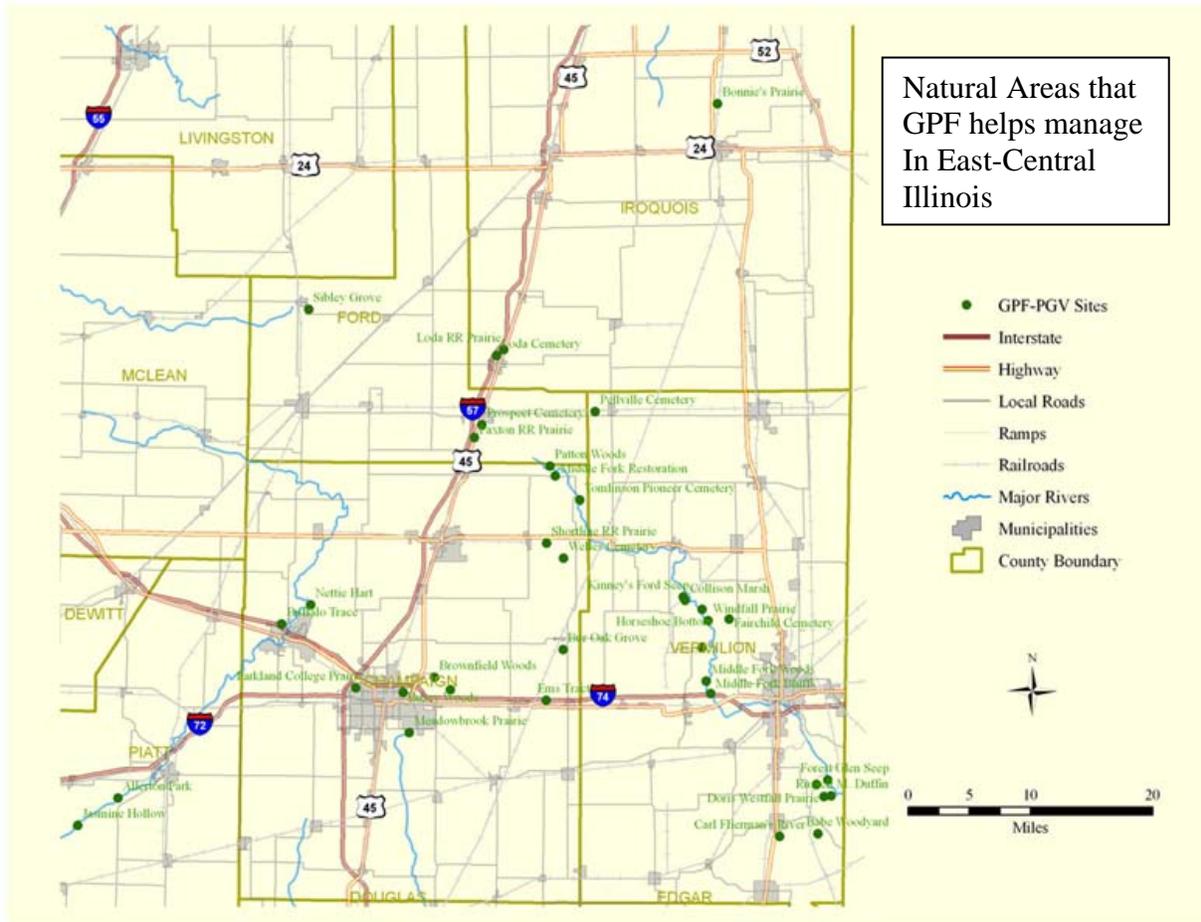


Table 1. Summary of stewardship hours worked by Grand Prairie Friends summer 2007 interns including major stewardship tasks performed at each site. Hours are summed from each intern and may include drive time to and from sites. Ownership of site is indicated in parentheses.\*

Site Name	Hours	Major Tasks
Allerton Park (University of Illinois)	12	Toured Allerton Park Natural Areas
Buffalo Trace Prairie (CCFPD)	57	Pulled wild parsnip and sweet clover
Doris Westfall Prairie Nature Preserve (VCCD)	31	Cut woody invasives
Ems Tract (GPF)	9	Cut woody invasives
Greenhouse	58.1	Transplanted native plants to bigger pots
Jasmine Hollow	33.5	Pulled garlic mustard; sprayed herbicide on woody invasives
Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve (GPF)	47.5	Pulled wild parsnip, sweet clover; cut and sprayed herbicide on teasel
Meadowbrook Park Prairie (UPD)	19	Removed sweet clover; toured Urbana Park District natural areas
Nance Woods (GPF)	6	Cleared woody invasives
Parkland College Prairie	5.6	Removed sweet clover
Paxton RR Prairie (leased from Canadian National Rail Road by GPF)	70.3	Cut and sprayed teasel with herbicide, pulled sweet clover, collected seed
Oak Street prairie planting (UI)	4	Installed native prairie plant seedlings
Pellville Cemetery Prairie	24.5	Pulled wild parsnip and sweet clover; collected native plant seed
Prospect Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve	73	Removed sweet clover and wild parsnip
Red Bison Prairie (Canadian National, IDOT)	14.5	Cleared wild parsnip and poison hemlock
Seymour RR Prairie (Heartland Pathways)	34	Removed sweet clover
Shortline RR Prairie (GPF)	64.5	Pulled wild parsnip and sweet clover; installed new GPF sign; cut woody invasives; collected native plant seed
Welles Cemetery Prairie	27.8	Removed sweet clover and wild parsnip
Windsor Road Prairie (City of Champaign)	20.5	Pulled sweet clover; sprayed herbicide on crown vetch; picked up trash
Miscellaneous	150	Education time with volunteers and local experts, site tours with stewards, meet with intern coordinator, seed collecting
Total:	761.8	

\*Ownership is indicated in parentheses: CCFPD = Champaign County Forest Preserve District, UPD = Urbana Park District, IDNR = Illinois Department of Natural Resources, GPF = Grand Prairie Friends-Prairie Grove Volunteers, VCCD = Vermilion County Conservation District. Site is privately owned if ownership is not indicated.

**Table 2. Detailed budget of expenditures**

PERSONNEL			
Name or Position Title	Hourly Rate	Hours	Total
Summer Intern (Mike Polito)	\$8.00	397.5	\$3,180.00
Summer Intern (Christy Wallace)	\$8.00	360.5	\$2,884.00
			\$6,064.00
TRAVEL			
Position/Description	Item Rate	Quantity	Total
Summer Intern Mileage Reimbursement	\$0.30/mile	1500 miles	\$450.00
Summer Intern Mileage Reimbursement	\$0.30/mile	755 miles	\$226.50
			\$676.50
EQUIPMENT (provided by applicant)			
Description	Price/Item	Quantity	Total
(equipment needed already on-hand)	0	0	0
MATERIALS/SUPPLIES			
Description	Price/Item	Quantity	Total
gloves	4.63	1 pr	\$4.63
soap	1.47	1 bottle	\$1.47
chainsaw chain	20.18	1 chain	\$20.18
			\$26.28
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES			
Description	Total		
brushcutter repair	\$54.57		
film developing	\$13.39		
	\$67.96		
OTHER			
Description	Total		
Books for interns	\$105.52		
Fuel in GPF truck	\$75.38		
	\$180.90		
<b>TOTAL COST OF PROJECT</b>	<b>\$7,015.64</b>		

**Table 3. Statement of Sources and Uses of Funds**

Funding Sources:

IDNR Wildlife Fund grant	\$2,000.00
GPF Plant Sale Proceeds	\$5,015.64

<b>Total</b>	<b><u>\$7,015.64</u></b>
--------------	--------------------------

Funding Uses:

Personnel	\$6064.00
Travel	676.50
Equipment	0
Materials/Supplies	26.28
Contractual Services	67.96
Other	180.90

<b>Total</b>	<b><u>\$7,015.64</u></b>
--------------	--------------------------











