

# **Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund Small Project Final Report, FY '05, Grant Agreement #05-008W**

## **Introduction**

Management of native tallgrass prairie remnants in east-central Illinois has been a focus of Grand Prairie Friends-Prairie Grove Volunteers since the formation and incorporation of the group in 1984. Grand Prairie Friends (GPF-PGV) is an all-volunteer not-for-profit prairie conservation organization based in Urbana. GPF-PGV relies on volunteers to provide the labor to manage 14 prairie sites in east-central Illinois, as well as another 21 sites that are forest or wetland. The group also 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, and others to make management decisions. While we steward sites using the wonderful efforts of volunteers, this is usually not enough to get all the work done that is needed to conserve and preserve these sites.

In 1994, Grand Prairie Friends started a summer internship program. Summer interns, usually young, college students or recent college graduates, are hired to steward prairie remnants, prairie plantings, and other natural areas. The bulk of the work is controlling exotic and invasive plant species at natural area sites as well as cutting brush, maintaining signs, and collecting seed from native plants. Removal of exotic and invasive species is the main benefit provided to the native flora and fauna of each site. In doing this work, not only do the interns provide valuable stewardship 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, organisms, and management of our local natural areas. The hands-on work and educational experiences benefit the interns in their studies and future career.

### **Project Objectives:**

- a) Teach the interns about tallgrass prairie and other natural areas in east-central Illinois;
- b) Teach the interns how to identify native and weedy plants of tallgrass prairie and other natural areas;
- c) Educate the interns about current prairie, forest, and wetland management and ecological restoration techniques from professional and volunteer land managers;
- d) Manage prairie sites and other 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 needed management activities

## Materials and Methods

Applications for the internship are accepted from mid January to the end of March. An internship subcommittee (consisting of GPF-PGV Board of Directors members) selects candidates to fill either a single full-time position or two half-time positions. Formal contacts are drawn up between each intern and GPF-PGV. Interns must provide their own auto and health insurance, but are covered under GPF-PGV's liability insurance while working on any GPF-PGV site. GPF-PGV owns a truck for use by interns and stewards, and GPF-PGV carries insurance on that vehicle. All 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.

The internship program is at least a 90-day commitment from June 1 to August 31. Interns are given a GPF-PGV Intern Manual which consists of background information about GPF-PGV, lists of GPF-PGV 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 report weekly to the internship coordinator to plan stewardship activities, turn in time sheets, and ask any questions. Interns are paid a monthly stipend based on the hours of work they complete, and they are reimbursed for vehicle mileage, if they use a personal vehicle. Work includes management activities at prairie, forest, and wetland 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. The GPF-PGV Treasurer issues paychecks when timesheets are received.

GPF-PGV is based in Urbana and manages natural areas in Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, Vermilion, and Piatt counties (see Figure 1). Interns are required to perform management work at sites as determined by site stewards and the internship coordinator. 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

Advertisement for the summer 2004 internship started in January 2004, and applications were accepted through the end of March 2004. Four applications were received by the end of March, and an internship subcommittee made up of GPF-PGV Board members reviewed the applications. Two applicants were selected after application review, and

each applicant was offered a half-time (20 hr/wk) internship. Only one applicant, Vera Bojic, accepted the position. All other applicants declined. With only one intern interested, the Board decided to offer Vera a full-time (40 hr/wk) position.

In early May, 2004, GPF-PGV was notified that we were the successful recipients of a grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. We received funds to allow the group to hire two full-time interns for the summers of 2004 and 2005. With the promise of funding for two full-time interns but only one person hired, we re-opened the internship search. Applications for this second round were accepted until the end of May 2004. Two applications were received for this new position, and after a round of interviews, Albert Carbo was selected and hired as the second intern.

Formal contracts were drawn up between each intern and GPF-PGV, and Vera started work on June 1 and Albert started work on June 14, 2004. Since neither Vera nor Albert owned personal vehicles, they chose to use the Toyota pick-up truck owned by GPF-PGV to drive to sites for stewardship work. In June they both successfully completed the tests to obtain an Illinois Pesticide Applicator's License.

Combined, Vera and Albert spent over 480 hours doing hands-on stewardship work at over 18 sites during June, July, August, September, and October 2004 (Table 1). They started out the internship by touring various sites with GPF-PGV volunteers Rick Larimore, Paul Marcum, and Dan Busemeyer. Much of their work involved removing exotic and woody invasive species from prairie and woodland sites including pulling white and yellow sweet clover, wild parsnip, and garlic mustard. They used Garlon 4 for basal bark applications on autumn olive, multiflora rose, and black locust. When they needed to cut out woody invasives, they treated the cut stump with a 15% solution of RoundUp. To control teasel, they cut the bolting flower stalk, and then treated the cut stem with RoundUp.

Educational opportunities included meeting in the field with INHS botanists and plant ecologists including Rick Larimore, Paul Marcum, Dan Busemeyer, Paul Tessene, John Taft, Bill Handel, and Jamie Ellis. These people taught the interns how to identify both native and non-native plant species. INHS botanist Dave Ketzner spent half a day with the interns teaching them how to identify grasses. Derek Liebert from the Urbana Park District showed them weed management techniques at Meadowbrook Park Prairie. GPF-PGV volunteer Jim Payne led the interns on work outings to Jasmine Hollow, a woodland preserve, to control woody invasive species, and Phil Hult, steward at Buffalo Trace Prairie planting, led them on outings to remove invasive species and collect seed. Volunteer Jim Hoyt assisted the interns at Parkland College Prairie.

Over the course of the internship GPF-PGV spent \$5,074 in salary and \$482 in mileage and other reimbursements.

## **Summary**

Vera Bojic and Albert Carbo provided Grand Prairie Friends-Prairie Grove Volunteers with over 480 hours of direct ecological management at over 18 sites stewarded by GPF-

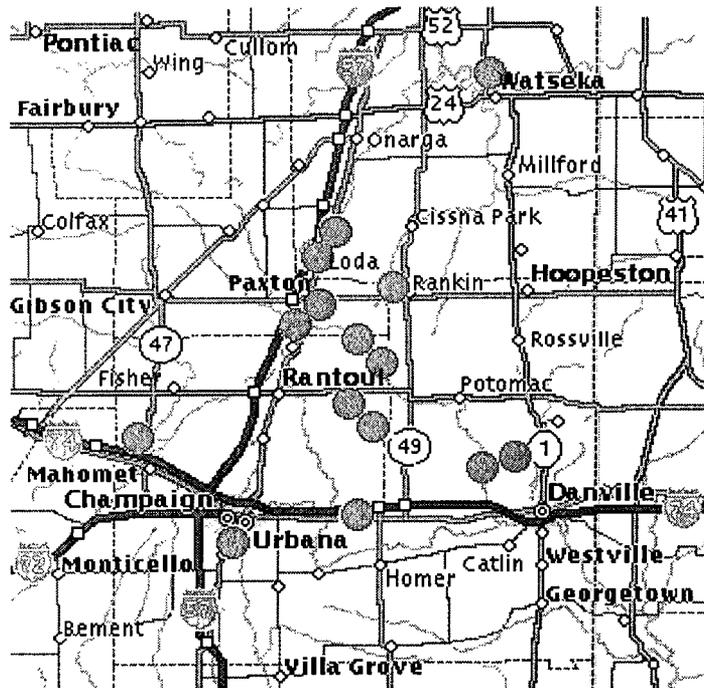
PGV. Their time was well spent controlling and removing exotic and woody invasive species, collecting native plant seed, and learning about natural area restoration and management techniques. Time spent with natural resource professionals and volunteers allowed the interns to learn to identify native and non-native plants of local prairies and woodlands as well as learn about the ecology of prairies and woodlands of east-central Illinois.

Pulling and cutting weeds out in the prairies and woodlands is hard work. They had to deal with hot, sunny days; combat biting insects; protect themselves from the poisonous sap of wild parsnip; and avoid the thorns and bristles of multiflora rose and teasel. Though hard work, their time spent working in prairie remnants, prairie plantings, and local woodlands gave them an appreciation of our small but ecologically valuable natural areas remaining in east-central Illinois. GPF-PGV strives to continue to provide this educational and work experience to train the next generation of managers and conservationists. The native prairies and woodlands benefit from the work of interns, stewards and landowners benefit from the work accomplished, and the conservation community benefits by the addition of active and knowledgeable participants.

Vera and Albert are continuing to finish their undergraduate education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. They both are focussing their studies in biology and natural resources as well as volunteering their time with Red Bison, a prairie restoration student group sponsored by the University YMCA.

As a small, grass roots, all volunteer not-for-profit organization, GPF- PGV always struggles to find enough volunteers, time, and money to accomplish the goals of conserving and preserving local prairie remnants and other natural areas. We continue to work in concert with other organizations and local units of government to steward natural areas. Membership dues and the spring plant sale barely cover the expenses of running the organization including the summer internship, but we continue to run the program because it is so important to properly manage our sites and provide an educational experience for interested young people. Thanks to grants from the IDNR Wildlife Grant Program and the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, we are able to continue and expand this worthwhile summer internship.

FIGURE 1: MAP OF PROJECT AREA



- Bonnie's Prairie Nature Preserve
- Loda Railroad Prairie
- Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve
- Pellville Cemetery Prairie
- Prospect Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve
- Paxton Railroad Prairie
- Middle Fork Wetland Restoration
- Tomlinson Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve
- Shortline Railroad Prairie
- Welles Cemetery Prairie
- Fairchild Cemetery Savanna Nature Preserve
- Windfall Prairie Nature Preserve
- Buffalo Trace Prairie Reconstruction
- Prairie Propagation Garden
- Windsor Road Prairie Reconstruction

**Table 1.** Summary of stewardship hours worked by Grand Prairie Friends-Prairie Grove Volunteers summer 2004 interns including major stewardship tasks performed at each site. Hours are summed from each intern and may include driving time to and from sites. Not all hours recorded over the summer are included in this table.

Site Name	Hours	Major Tasks
Buffalo Trace Prairie (CCFPD)*	40	Pulled wild parsnip and sweetclover
Fairchild Cemetery Prairie NP (VCCD)	10.5	Pulled crown vetch
Horseshoe Bottoms (VCCD)	7.5	Sprayed herbicide on woody invasives (multiflora rose, autumn olive, black locust)
Jasmine Hollow	46.5	Sprayed herbicide and pulled woody invasives (multiflora rose, coralberry, gooseberry)
Loda Cemetery Prairie NP (GPF-PGV)	16.5	Pulled wild parsnip, sweetclover; cut and sprayed herbicide on teasel
Loda RR Prairie	5	Sprayed herbicide on autumn olive
Meadowbrook Park Prairie (UPD)	8	Removed sweetclover
Middle Fork Bluffs (IDNR)	11.5	Pulled and removed garlic mustard
Parkland College Prairie	38.5	Removed sweetclover and autumn olive, installed prairie plants
Paxton RR Prairie (leased from Canadian National Rail Road)	45	Cut and sprayed teasel with herbicide, pulled sweetclover
Pelleville Cemetery Prairie	24	Pulled wild parsnip and sweetclover; collected native plant seed
Prospect Cemetery Prairie NP	71.5	Removed sweetclover; sprayed white poplar and mulberry with herbicide
Red Bison RR Prairie	32	Removed poison hemlock and sweetclover; planted and maintained native wildflowers
school prairie gardens (various sites)	17	Weeded flower beds; installed new plants
Shortline RR Prairie (GPF-PGV)	42.5	Pulled wild parsnip and sweetclover; installed new GPF sign; collected native plant seed
Welles Cemetery Prairie	19.5	Removed sweetclover
Windfall Hill Prairie NP (VCCD)	20	Sprayed herbicide on multiflora rose and autumn olive
Windsor Road Prairie (City of Champaign)	32	Pulled sweetclover; sprayed herbicide on crown vetch; picked up trash
Miscellaneous	146.75	Education time with volunteers and local experts, site tours with stewards, greenhouse work, meet with intern coordinator, etc.

Total: 634.25

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

**Table 2.** Detailed budget of expenditures

Item Description	Unit Cost	Units	Total Cost
<i>Labor</i>	\$8. <sup>00</sup> /hr		\$5,074.00
		Labor Subtotal:	\$5,074.00
<i>Travel</i>	\$300. <sup>00</sup>		\$219.60
		Travel Subtotal:	\$219.60
<i>Equipment</i>			
	\$. <sup>00</sup>		\$-0-
		Equipment Subtotal:	\$-0-
<i>Commodities</i>			
		Commodities Subtotal:	\$431.89
Project Total:			\$5,725.49

**Statement of Sources and Uses of Funds**

Funding Sources:

ICECF grant	\$3,100.00
IDNR Wildlife Fund grant	1,000.00
GPF-PGV Plant Sale Proceeds	1,625.49
Total	<u>\$5,725.49</u>

Funding Uses:

Labor	\$5,074.00
Equipment	.00
Contractual	.00
Travel	
Mileage	219.60
Commodities	
Books, reimbursed expenses	431.89
Total	<u>\$5,725.49</u>

APPENDIX

Photographs of GPF-PGV 2004 Summer Interns—Vera Bojic and Albert Carbo



Vera Bojic cuts white mulberry out of a prairie planting at Parkland College.



Vera Bojic lounges after pulling a mountain of sweet clover at Parkland College Prairie.



Albert Carbo inspects some wild parsnip he just pulled.



Vera Bojic at Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve



Albert Carbo at Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve



Albert Carbo removes teasel from Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve.