

JOB DESCRIPTION



Job Title: Natural Areas Stewardship Coordinator

Position Type: Full-Time. Exempt

Compensation: Starting salary of \$50,000

Reports to: Natural Areas Manager

About Us: As a nonprofit conservation land trust since 1984, Grand Prairie Friends has served a mission to preserve, protect, and promote land conservation across East-Central Illinois.

GPF owns and manages more than 1,500 acres, including some of the highest quality remnant prairies remaining in the state. More than 80% of GPF properties are part of the Illinois Nature Preserve Commission system. GPF landholdings include 14 river-miles of the Embarras River. This biologically-significant stretch of the River meanders through Warbler Ridge Conservation Area, home to a decade-long land restoration for the resident maternity colony of endangered Indiana bats.

Job Summary: The Natural Areas Stewardship Coordinator is a mission-critical, hands-on land management leader who plays a central role in advancing GPF's conservation outcomes across East-Central Illinois. With a primary focus on Warbler Ridge Conservation Area (~80% of work time), the Coordinator will intermittently work across all GPF sites across the 130-mile service area across (8) counties in Central Illinois. This position partners closely with the Natural Areas Manager to implement land management plans, lead stewardship operations, and ensure ecological integrity across GPF's diverse portfolio of prairies, savannas, forests, and conservation lands.

Roles & Responsibilities:

1. Land Stewardship & Ecological Management:

- Implement land management and restoration activities, including invasive species control, forest stand improvement, prescribed fire, and general ecological stewardship
- Conduct prescribed fire planning and operations, including fire line construction, communications, and implementation
- Support habitat management for sensitive and protected species, including monitoring and stewardship of biologically significant sites
- Prepare and monitor hunting areas in support of GPF's hunting program

2. Operations, Equipment & Site Management:

- Coordinate and regularly monitor the safe use, storage, maintenance, and inventory of GPF equipment, tools, vehicles, and infrastructure
- Oversee and maintain trails, bridges, buildings, signage, public access areas, and other site infrastructure
- Safely operate and perform basic maintenance on large and small power equipment, including UTVs, tractors, trailers, chainsaws, and brush cutters

3. Team Leadership, Contractors & Planning:

- Establish weekly work plans and seasonal priorities aligned with land management goals
- Train, supervise, and support seasonal natural areas staff and interns
- Manage and oversee land management and operations contractors, ensuring quality, safety, timelines, and budget alignment
- Independently plan and execute projects while collaborating closely with the Natural Areas Manager

4. Monitoring, Reporting, & Community Engagement:

- Monitor GPF conservation sites and complete required annual reporting using the LANDSCAPE® database
- Maintain accurate, timely documentation of stewardship activities in GPF systems
- Build and sustain positive relationships with land-based partners, property donors, volunteers, preserve visitors, neighbors, and service-learning groups
- Support volunteer stewardship events, outreach activities, and community engagement initiatives

Qualifications and Skills:

- Minimum of 2 years of experience (3+ years preferred) in natural resource management, land stewardship, or related operations
- Degree in natural resources, environmental science, or a related field, or equivalent hands-on experience
- Advanced experience with prescribed fire operations and planning; fire certifications (S-130/190 or Prescribed Burn Manager) preferred
- Strong ability to identify native Central Illinois plant and animal species and prioritize invasive species management
- Experience with chemical and mechanical invasive species control
- Ability to safely mix, apply, transport, and store herbicides; Illinois pesticide applicator license or ability to obtain within 3 months of hire
- Proficient in GPS, topographic maps, offline spatial field apps, and navigation tools
- Working knowledge of Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint); familiarity with Google Workspace, Adobe, LANDSCAPE®, and GIS (ESRI ArcGIS) preferred
- Knowledge of federal and state land programs (e.g., CRP, EQIP, mitigation) and Land Trust Alliance Standards & Practices preferred
- Experience with project management, including contractors, timelines, and budgets; construction or infrastructure maintenance experience a plus
- Ability to work primarily outdoors in remote natural areas and uneven terrain; capable of lifting and carrying 50+ pounds for extended periods
- Flexible availability, including variable schedules, occasional evenings and weekends, and weather-dependent work conditions
- Valid driver's license in good standing
- Self-directed, solutions-oriented professional with strong time management, communication, and interpersonal skills
- Prior experience working in a nonprofit organization preferred

The Company will consider requests or exceptions based on legally protected religious observances, as reasonable accommodations to an employee's disability, or as otherwise required by law.