



Strategic Plan
2021-2024

Mission

To preserve and restore natural communities in east central Illinois and to promote an understanding and appreciation of natural resources.

Why

Prairie Roots – The Grand Prairie Division encompasses the majority of the central Illinois region, stretching north to Ogle County, south to Shelby County west to Henry County and east to the Illinois-Indiana border.

The Grand Prairie was formerly dominated by tall grass prairie ecosystems, occasional forest and wet potholes...an “endless sea of grass.”

Preserve – The majority of Grand Prairie Friends preserves are registered or designated as either nature preserves or land and water reserves through the Illinois Nature Preserve Commission. This provides an additional commitment to maintain high standards of restoration, management and land-use on preserve sites.

Restore – Grand Prairie Friends is dedicated to conducting natural areas restoration which supports the native biodiversity of the land. Habitat restoration methods include certified or locally-sourced native plants in conjunction with management plans which emphasize best-practices.

How

Partnerships are an important part of restoration work. Grand Prairie Friends works with a variety of federal, state and local agencies and conservation organizations to complete projects on private and public lands.

All lands owned by the organization are open to the public for hiking and other preservation-compatible nature exploration.

Grand Prairie Friends is a partner in the University of Illinois Master Naturalist Education trainings, speaking and tour opportunities as well as student internships.

Board Governance

Goal: To utilize “Best Practices” that enable the Board of Directors to efficiently guide the strategic future of Grand Prairie Friends.

1. Revisit the rewriting of the bylaws to ensure that they reflect the future needs of the organization but maintain the culture of the organization.
2. Evaluate the skills and demographics of the current board members and actively recruit to supplement them with a specific focus on diversity and inclusion of representation from Coles County.
3. Create and execute a plan for regular educational opportunities at board meetings.
4. Review the role and responsibilities of the position of Treasurer, moving some of the operational responsibilities to the staff, while maintaining the strategic and oversight responsibilities of the board position.
5. Establish and execute a plan that makes steady progress towards achieving Land Trust Accreditation.
6. Observe board terms and officer terms as established in the bylaws.
7. Provide the resources needed to expand and diversify the donor base.

Finances

Goal: To ensure the financial viability, long-term sustainability and future growth of Grand Prairie Friends.

1. Create a plan to diversify funding streams to reduce the reliance on grants, establishing fee-for-service programs and enhanced individual and corporate donations.
2. Actively solicit contributions for the GPF endowment.
3. Build a planned giving program as part of expanded development plan.
4. Create a financial review process that allows for the segregation of financial duties with appropriate oversight.
5. Develop a formal deferred maintenance and equipment fund.
6. Identify financial resources needed to expand and diversify the donor base.
7. Create a long-term financial management and stewardship planning tool for all the properties.

Property

Goal: To establish a long-term approach to the stewardship and land in the care of Grand Prairie Friends and the opportunity to expand the work of the organization.

1. Land acquisition plan inclusive of land acreage targets (growth).
2. Establish protocol to acquire and/or accept property donations that do not represent undue financial or management burdens.
3. Establish a policy to support donations of land that can be sold to support the mission of GPF.
4. Create a work plan that ensures compliance with the GPF Strategic Conservation Plan.

Programs & Outreach

Goal: To expand awareness of the work of Grand Prairie Friends and to partner with additional organizations of similar mission and interests.

1. Identify strategic opportunities to build and optimize partnerships that are appropriate to support the mission.
2. Create formalized outreach plan.
3. Be an active partner with research programs.
4. Create an annual communications and marketing plan that increases GPF awareness among supporters and potential donors.
5. Create and execute a donor development plan with a focus on increasing individual and corporate donations as well as potential donations of property for use or for sale.

Staffing

Goal: To formalize the employment opportunities, suiting the needs of the organization and enhancing the experience for employees.

1. Generate financial resources for staff additions, especially in the area of fund development, bookkeeping and other backroom operations.
2. Identify resources to increase staffing needs.
3. Support financial resources for staff benefits including professional development.
4. Expand and/or re-think the workplace.
5. Provide sufficient equipment for employees to do their jobs.



This work is part of the Community Foundation’s “Building Better Boards,” a program of the Foundation’s Center for Nonprofit Excellence. The Foundation is committed to increasing the capacity of nonprofit organizations and their Boards of Directors, thus enhancing the service provided to their clients.