

JOB DESCRIPTION



Job Title: Natural Areas Internship

Position Type: Seasonal Internship (May – August) – Flexible hours alternating weekends and holidays required.

Reports to: Natural Areas Staff

Compensation: Starting pay \$15.00/hour (based on experience)

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 Internship is a hands-on, immersive opportunity for individuals who are passionate about conservation, ecological management, and land stewardship. Designed for students or early-career professionals exploring a future in natural resources, this role provides real-world experience within a private, non-profit land trust environment.

Roles & Responsibilities:

1. Land Stewardship & Restoration:

- Identify, monitor, and manage invasive plant species using mechanical and chemical control methods
- Assist with prescribed burns and vegetation management (training and certification provided)
- Safely operate hand tools and equipment such as bladed trimmers, loppers, and backpack sprayers
- Support habitat restoration efforts across prairies, woodlands, and wetlands

2. Project & Field Support:

- Assist Natural Areas staff with ongoing land management and conservation projects
- Support trail maintenance, grounds upkeep, and site improvements
- Participate in ecological monitoring and data collection projects
- Learn best practices in conservation fieldwork through hands-on experience

3. Visitor Engagement & Outreach:

- Greet, assist, and engage visitors at conservation sites
- Support outreach and educational efforts when needed
- Represent the organization with professionalism and enthusiasm

4. Professional Development & Collaboration:

- Attend professional development seminars and learning sessions
- Interact with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission system
- Shadow professional stewards, biologists, and restoration specialists
- Gain exposure to both private and public conservation partnerships

Qualifications and Skills:

- High School Diploma or GED required
- Valid Driver's License and reliable transportation
- Strong interest in conservation, ecological management, and/or natural resources; intent to pursue a career in natural resources strongly preferred
- Knowledge of Illinois plants and wildlife and/or coursework in Natural Resources preferred, but not required
- Self-motivated, organized, detail-oriented, and able to work independently
- Ability and willingness to work flexible hours, including evenings, weekends, holidays, and special events
- Willingness to work outdoors in varying weather conditions and on uneven terrain for extended periods
- Ability to learn and safely operate hand tools, power tools, vehicles, and equipment, including chainsaws and brush chippers
- Willingness to obtain a Pesticide Applicator License (coursework and testing provided)
- Comfortable adapting to software and technology used for field and administrative work
- Ability to successfully pass a drug test and background check
- Ability to perform strenuous physical activity, including frequent standing, walking, bending, twisting, stooping, and climbing
- Ability to lift, push, or pull objects weighing 50 pounds or more

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.

Forward Cover Letter and resumé:

Alissa Bell, Land Manager Alissa@grandprairiefriends.org (217) 512-3545

Applications Reviewed as Received, Apply Today!