

Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie Fact Sheet and Background Information

About 60 miles southwest of Chicago sits a landscape that is the last of its kind. Established in 1996, the Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie is the first national tallgrass prairie in the country.

This remnant prairie land once housed part of the former Joliet Army Ammunition Plant. In 1996, the Department of Defense transferred ownership of the 19,000 acres that comprise Midwin to the U.S. Forest Service, which has managed the prairie since then.

The Forest Service, community partners and countless volunteers have been actively restoring Midwin from industrial and agricultural lands to native tallgrass prairie since 1996, with the first 5,000 acres opening to the public in 2004. Today, more than 13,300 acres of Midwin are open to the public.

As the largest piece of protected open space in northeastern Illinois, Midwin offers a unique opportunity for the region's residents to connect with nature and their public lands.

Midwin boasts:

- More than 34 miles of trails; 22 miles for hikers, bicyclists and equestrians and 12 miles for hikers only
- 149 species of birds that utilize the prairie for nesting, breeding or overwintering, 108 of which are permanent residents
- Illinois' largest breeding population of endangered Loggerhead shrikes
- 18 endangered or threatened species, 40 aquatic species, 23 species of reptiles and 27 species of wild mammals

Midwin (pronounced mi-DAY-win) is the name of the Grand Medicine Society of the Anishinaabeg, which includes the Potawatomi (Bodéwadmik) people who were historic residents of this part of Illinois. As a society of healers and leaders, the Midwin keep the greater Anishinaabe society in balance. These indigenous values are reflected in the current use of the name and represent healing the natural world and providing balance to our urban, technology-filled lives.

In 2010, the National Forest Foundation partnered with the Forest Service, local conservation and other groups to spearhead restoration of 2,000 acres of Midwin. Activities include removing drain tiles and roads to restore the prairie's natural hydrology, removing ammunition bunkers left over from Midwin's past, and planting native prairie plants.

Additionally, the National Forest Foundation, the Forest Service and partners are preparing several hundred acres at Midwin to host an experimental herd of American bison. Bison were present in Illinois through the 1800s, and this experimental herd will be closely studied to learn how bison can aid native prairie restoration.



The areas of Midwin open to the public can be accessed from 4 am to 10 pm daily.

**Midwin Welcome Center
30239 S. State Route 53
Wilmington, IL
815.423.6370
www.fs.usda.gov/midwin**

Visitors are encouraged to stop at the Welcome Center for current information, maps and advisories.

For more information about the Midwin Experimental Herd of Bison, visit nationalforests.org/midwinbison