

Liberty Prairie Reserve

Defending a Last Chance Landscape



The Liberty Prairie Reserve, the Route 53 Extension, and You

What's at Stake?

- **3,400 acres of protected natural areas and farmland**
- **Public and private conservation investments of over \$100 million**
- **800 acres of productive farmland**
- **100+ acres of certified organic (8 farms; 50 jobs; \$2.5 million of economic value)**
- **Three designated Illinois Nature Preserves**
- **12 miles of public trails connected to a 200 mile regional trail system**
- **An extraordinary 28 threatened and endangered species**



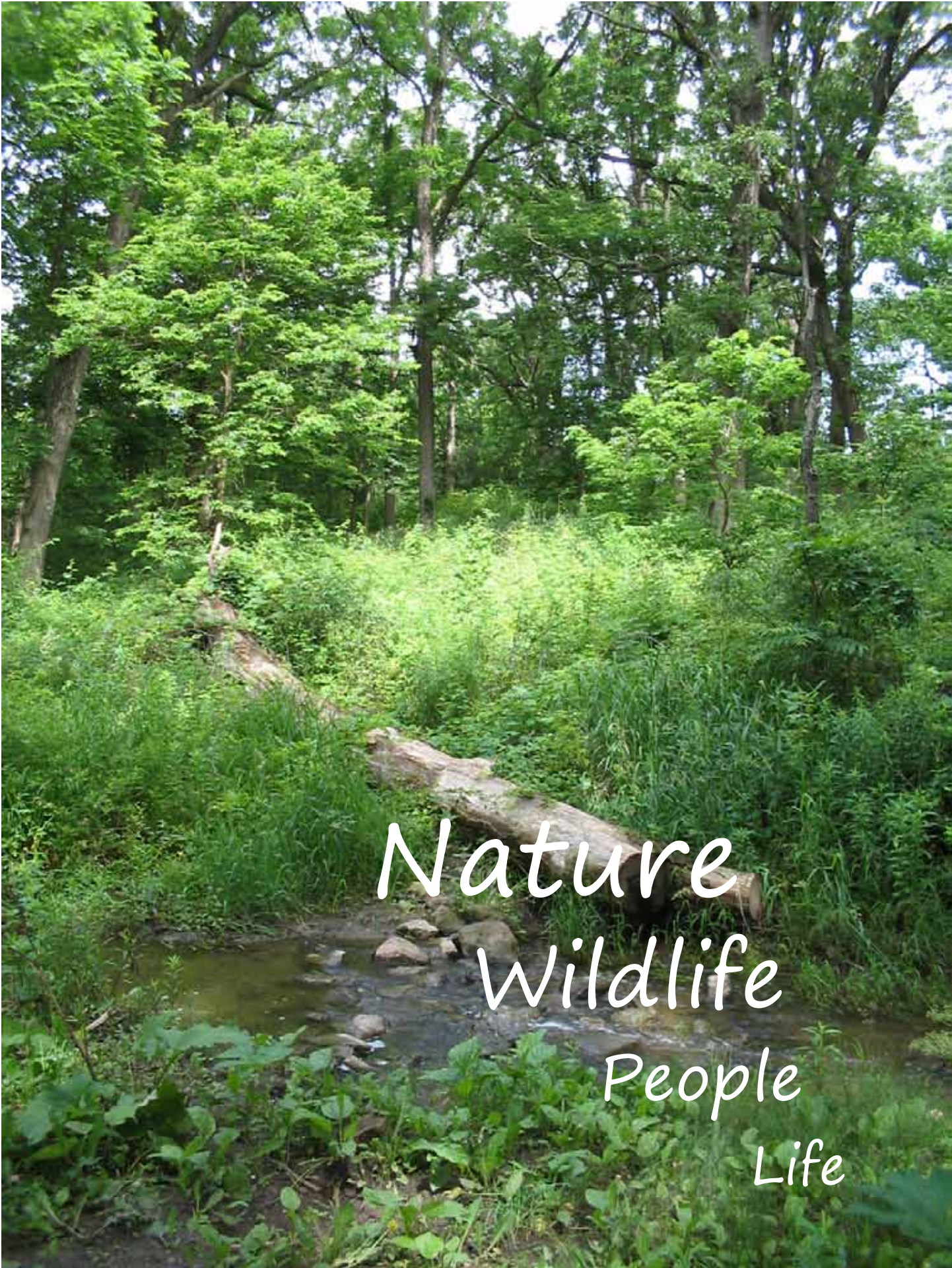
This is an appeal to you to protect a special place that is threatened by the proposed Route 53/Route 120 Bypass.

This place is the Liberty Prairie Reserve. Located between Grayslake, Gurnee, and Libertyville, the Liberty Prairie Reserve is a 5,800-acre area where a beautiful rural landscape has been preserved and cherished by an unusually large group of public and private stakeholders. So striking is this place that it was designated as one of twelve Last Chance Landscapes in the nation by Scenic America.

We cannot overstate the threat that the proposed Route 53/120 Bypass poses to the Reserve and the tremendous investments of time, love, and resources that have been made in the heart of Lake County by thousands of people over 40 years. A colossal road corridor of asphalt and concrete would irrevocably undermine the health and vitality of this unique rural landscape, its communities, and its diverse natural habitats.

Other than not building the extension at all, the only conscionable approach to this situation is to develop a modern and environmentally sound transportation solution that protects and even enhances the resources described in this booklet.

You will help shape the future of the bypass and the future of the Reserve. We urge you to better understand the Reserve and to protect its rare qualities.



Nature
Wildlife
People
Life

Valuable Habitat

The Liberty Prairie Reserve's natural resources are extraordinary, thanks to its diversity and quality of habitat so much of which is connected in one large mosaic of land and water. This has enabled the Reserve to sustain a wide variety of native wildlife – at least 300 native plants and animals.

The Reserve contains a surprisingly wide variety of habitats: several types of prairies, woodlands, oak savannas, a graminoid fen, marshes, sedge meadows, and stream corridors. **Some of the habitats, like the fen and wet prairie, are more globally threatened than the rainforest.**

State Nature Preserves: The Liberty Prairie Reserve contains three Illinois State Nature Preserves – Almond Marsh, Liberty Prairie, and Oak Openings. Only the highest quality natural areas in the state qualify for inclusion in the nature preserves system. Dedication is the strongest protection that can be given to land in Illinois and provides permanent protection.

Home to Rare Species: The Reserve supports 28 threatened and endangered species. A fish survey by the Illinois DNR on one section of Bull's Brook found 15 different species of fish, including two state-threatened species as well as a 14-inch northern pike.

After a 100-year absence, Sandhill Cranes are once again successfully nesting in Illinois, and the Reserve is one of the places where they are raising young. The Sandhill Crane is one of 57 species of animals found in the Reserve that are listed as species in greatest need of conservation by the state of Illinois.



The American Fisheries Society's journal recently featured an article on how the Prairie Crossing lake and pond are serving as a refuge for four threatened and endangered fish species.



Places for people

Recreation

Trails



An Outdoor Recreational Treasure

Easy access to the outdoors through trails and forest preserves contributes to a great quality of life for Lake County residents and a competitive advantage for its employers. The Liberty Prairie Reserve is one of the county's outdoor treasures that is on the verge of being a key linkage between two of the county's largest trails systems.

Thanks to the cooperation of Libertyville Township and the Village of Grayslake, a 10-mile trail system already winds its way through much of the Reserve and is connected to the rest of the Village's trail system that makes it way north all of the way to the Rollins Savanna Forest Preserve.

Thousands of residents and people from outside of the Reserve are delighted to have access to the beautiful rolling landscape through its trails. People use the trails for walking, bike riding, birding, cross country skiing, birdwatching, and fitness training. The annual Prairie Pedal bicycle ride, in fact, has averaged over 500 participants in the last six years.

For years, the Reserve's trail system ended just west of Route 21, less than a mile away from the Independence Grove. Through the efforts of the Lake County Forest Preserve District and Libertyville Township, that trail system will be linked to Independence Grove in 2013. This connection to the Des Plaines River Trail, the Reserve trail system and a portion of the Millennium Trail will provide new recreational possibilities on a 71-mile trail system.





Food & Farming

A Place Where People Grow Food

The Liberty Prairie Reserve is not just a place with abundant natural areas. It is also a place where people grow food.

More than 800 acres of land are currently in production for agriculture within the Reserve. What is unusual is that in excess of 100 acres are dedicated to organic local food production. Farmers within the Liberty Prairie Reserve are growing a wide variety of vegetables, fruits and grains and are also offering eggs, pork, beef, and products produced from goat's milk.

The Reserve is also growing farmers. Through its farm incubator program, the Farm Business Development Center at Prairie Crossing offers the opportunity for families interested in becoming organic farmers a chance to start on a manageable scale.

The Learning Farm at Prairie Crossing is exposing children and youth to farming as well. Through its Prairie Farm Corps program, for example, high school youth from around the county have the opportunity to not only farm organically but to also gain experience in food preparation and retail sales at local farmers markets. This has offered tremendous growth opportunities for the youth. The program was featured on a segment of NBC 5 Chicago last July.

Assuming that the Reserve's farmland is protected from harm, farming in the Reserve has a bright and dynamic future ahead. In fact, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning is helping stakeholders in the Reserve develop a strategic plan that, among other things, could help increase the potential of the Reserve for producing more local, sustainable food.





*Clean water,
healthy land
and open spaces for wildlife and people*



Defending the Liberty Prairie Reserve

As a wide corridor of concrete and asphalt, the Route 53/120 Bypass poses a number of potentially severe threats to the Liberty Prairie Reserve. These threats include:

- **Water pollution**
- **Loss of habitat (including globally rare habitat)**
- **Loss of plant life and wildlife**
- **Increased flooding**
- **Light pollution**
- **Noise pollution**
- **Destruction of farmland and farm businesses**
- **Disrupted public access**
- **Loss of beautiful landscapes and views**
- **Diminishment of real estate values of residents**
- **Increased cut-through traffic problems**

Over 40 years of dedicated efforts by community members and millions of dollars of investments have made the Liberty Prairie Reserve a beautiful and remarkable place. It is a sanctuary for some of Lake County's amazing diversity of wildlife. It is home for 10 communities and an amenity enjoyed by thousands. It is an emerging sustainable farming hub that will contribute to a regional food system for Chicago that will be a boon for local economies and the health of many families.

This remarkable place needs your voice to protect it. We ask you to speak and act for it.



Future Plans

A wide variety of people and organizations have invested in the Liberty Prairie Reserve to make it what it is today. The following list includes many, but not all, of the organizations who have made a difference through provisions of time, energy, skills, and money:

In August 2011 the Liberty Prairie Conservancy received a grant from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) to create a new master plan for the Liberty Prairie Reserve. The stakeholders listed below (in bold) are currently participating in master plan meetings. A new master plan is expected to be published by August 2012.

The Conservation Fund
Bert Getz/Globe Foundation
Bull Creek/Bull's Brook Watershed Council
Chicago Metropolitan Area Planning Agency
College of Lake County
Ducks Unlimited
Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
Grand Victoria Foundation
HSBC
Illinois Department of Transportation
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission
Lake County Department of Transportation
Lake County Forest Preserve District
Lake County Stormwater Management Commission
Landowners
Liberty Prairie Conservancy
Liberty Prairie Foundation
Libertyville Township
Motorola
Openlands
The Nature Conservancy
Upper Des Plaines River Watershed Council
Volunteers

