

Bluffviews

a quarterly newsletter by Clifftop

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Celebrating White Rock's Tenth Anniversary

With the grand celebration of the 50th anniversary of the dedication of Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve taking center stage, White Rock's 10th anniversary nearly escaped recognition. But thanks to Illinois Nature Preserves Commissioner, Pen DauBach, the over 100 attendees at the Fults event were reminded that White Rock turned 10 almost to the day on which the Fults celebration was held.

Clifftop became a conservation land trust in late 2010 with the acquisition of what would become the 306-acre White Rock Nature Preserve and 160-acre Land and Water Reserve. Clifftop partnered with Heartlands Conservancy to purchase the White Rock tract with generous support from foundations and agencies because the property is home to two unusual, rare and declining habitats in the state. White Rock sustains about seven acres of loess hill prairies and five acres of limestone glades.

Restoration efforts began on the site in 2011, with Clifftop volunteers, contractors, and Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO) Conservation Camp students all lending hands and backs for this labor-intensive work of stump cutting and herbicide treating woody invasive species in Overlook Prairie, the northernmost hill prairie. Contractors dropped cedars and other large woody encroachers southward on the site. Later, volunteers dragged, piled and burned over 500 cedars. (See photo at right.) The cedar and brush culling march has continued southward most notably in the last few months thanks to an Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Community Stewardship Challenge Grant.



Photo courtesy Joann Fricke

At the same time that restoration work was taking place, trails were being cleared along ridgetops. On October 22, 2011, Clifftop opened the White Rock Nature Preserve to the public for passive recreation. Nature preserve status had received final approval at the September 2011 meeting of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. More than 120 members, supporters and honored guests were in attendance at the grand opening.

The trails at White Rock became a haven for families and individuals during the pandemic in 2020. Hikers visited the site so often that mowing was almost unnecessary. Visitors consistently honor White Rock with



Photo courtesy Joann Fricke

an average of 4.5 stars on both All Trails and Google My Business apps and with comments like, "Pretty walk in the woods" and "Nice little trail."

Over the years, interpretive signage, mileage markers and stone benches have been added to enhance hikers' experiences. (See photo at left.) In early 2021, HeartLands Conservancy transferred their interest in the White Rock lands to Clifftop making Clifftop 100% owner. If you haven't had the chance to visit this haven of rare habitat, please consider it as your next hiking destination located at 6438 Bluff Road, Valmeyer.

Guestviews...

Fults Celebration: A Big Hit

By Travis Neal, Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC), Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), and Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves held a belated 50th Anniversary Celebration of the dedication of the Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve in Monroe County. With activities restricted in 2020, the 50th anniversary celebration of this dedicated Nature Preserve and National Natural Landmark (NNL) took place on October 9. The beautiful site has the largest complex of high-quality loess hill prairies in Illinois and was the first Nature Preserve to be dedicated in Monroe County. The event provided an opportunity to celebrate this nature preserve and for attendees to learn about the history and ecology of the site while enjoying the stunning views from the bluffs of Monroe County.

Over 100 people enjoyed the event that began with a short ceremony at the Cedar Bluff Park pavilion in Fults. Attendees celebrated collaborations of the past scientists, staff, and volunteers involved with protecting the precious ecosystems at Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve while acknowledging the importance of future generations that will continue to manage and care for this precious piece of Illinois nature. With Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve providing a dramatic background, some of those in attendance can be seen in the photo at right: front row, left to right, Christina Feng, Debbie Newman and Phil Borsdorf; second row, from left to right: Marty Kemper, Mark Phipps, Andy West and John Schwegman.



Photo courtesy Joann Fricke

The ceremony included several speakers, including Chris Young (IDNR Office of Resource Conservation Director) who had the opportunity to visit Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve for the first time and spoke about the importance of the next generation to protect the natural areas. Phil Borsdorf (IDNR District Heritage Biologist) manages the site and spoke of Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve's ecological value as well as the numerous people that have helped maintain the site. INPC Commissioner Pen DauBach spoke of the importance of volunteers at Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve as well as other sites in the region. Chris Collins of the National Park Service mentioned that Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve is one of only eighteen NNL sites in Illinois. John Schwegman, noted author and former IDNR botany program manager spoke of

the strategies used to purchase the Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve and the importance of preserving sites like Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve in perpetuity. After the speeches, those in attendance enjoyed cake together before tackling the challenging ascent up into the hill prairies.



Photo courtesy Katherine Accettura

For the hikers, the climb was enhanced as regional conservation experts shared their stories at various points along the 1.4-mile loop trail. Noted guests for the event along the trail included Andy West, Phil Borsdorf, Randy Nyboer, who can be seen in the photo at left, Marty Kemper, and Mark Phipps. These speakers shared stories about the special qualities of the site and the Illinois Ozarks region of Illinois, the process for evaluating a site rich with diversity and rare organisms, the importance of prescribed fire and other management activities to maintain hill prairies, and the unique flora of hill prairies.

This celebration of Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve has brought renewed attention to the importance of volunteers in preserving the state’s precious nature preserves. Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves will be co-hosting with the IDNR a volunteer event at Fults on November 6th from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm to introduce volunteers to the ecology of the Monroe County hill prairies and the management of these sites. More information is available at www.friendsillinoisnaturepreserves.org or <https://www.facebook.com/friendsilnature>.

More photos from the Fults event...

To view video of the ceremony or the expert talks along the trail, please visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/clifftopnfp>



Phil Borsdorf, center in dark blue, current IDNR Natural Heritage Biologist, talks to hikers. Photo courtesy Katherine Accettura



Beautiful and delicious cake from Ahne’s Bakery in Waterloo. Photo courtesy J. Fricke



Marty Kemper, left, retired IDNR Natural Heritage Biologist, talks to hikers. Photo courtesy Katherine Accettura



Andy West, center, retired IDNR Natural Heritage Biologist, talks to hikers. Photo courtesy Katherine Accettura

Upcoming events...



Volunteer Stewardship Workday, Saturday, November 6, Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. IDNR and Friends of the Illinois Nature Preserves invites all to come and learn the ecology of the site while actively participating in its management. If you plan to attend, bring a lopper or hand pruner and gloves, wear sturdy shoes and clothes you don't mind getting dirty. For the first hour we'll study and discuss. For the next couple, we'll work hard, but stop as needed to share ideas and appreciate rare nature with each other.

Prescribed Fire Training Day, Friday, November 12, Lewis and Clark Community College (SCI-113), 5800 Godfrey Road, Godfrey, IL, 9:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. The Great Rivers Prescribed Burn Association is partnering with Lewis and Clark Community College, Illinois Extension Forestry and the Southern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association to host this **FREE** event. The focus of this training will be preparing for a prescribed fire and will cover burn plans, firebreak design and creation, pre-fire walk-throughs, hazard tree and snag assessments, types of tools, and equipment and when/how to use them. Portions of this training will be held outdoors, please dress according to the weather. Bring your own drink and snack. For more information and to register, please contact:

Brent Masiero, 618-977-2851, brent_masiero@yahoo.com or Scott Moss, 314-898-8614, jkmoss@lc.edu



Full Moon Walk, Friday November 19, Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve, 3325 G Road, Fults We will walk the 1 mile ADA trail with the silvery light of the moon showing us the way as we listen to the sounds of the night. If you wish to join us, come between 6:30 and 9 PM, wear appropriate clothing for the weather and bring a small flashlight or headlamp. You may want to bring a lawn chair and warm up around a small bonfire and roast marshmallows. In case of cloudy weather the event will be cancelled.



Charitable Donations: The PATH Act of 2015 permanently renewed the charitable IRA provision allowing those aged 70½ or older to make direct charitable gifts from traditional and Roth IRAs to qualified charities up to \$100,000 annually free from federal income taxation. This method could benefit you in many ways, especially for those who must take required minimum distributions each year. To make this type of contribution, contact your financial advisor or your tax preparer for assistance. Clifftop NFP is an Internal Revenue Service qualified 501 (c) (3) charitable organization. For confirmation of Clifftop's charitable status, please contact Joann at 618-935-2542 or cliffmbr@htc.net.

Life insurance beneficiaries: Clifftop member, Quinn Johnson, owner of the Cowell Insurance Agency, notes, "When individuals select the beneficiaries of their life insurance policies, they can select an organization for the proceeds to be sent. What each company requires can vary. Some may need a tax ID, others may just need the name and address. It would be best for individuals to speak to their agent to find out what is needed for their specific policy. They can select the entire policy be applied or even just a portion." Again, Clifftop would be a qualified beneficiary of a life insurance policy.