

25. James Woodworth Prairie (Map T)

Site number: T-2

Overall size: 5.27 acres

Ownership: Other Public-University of Illinois at Chicago

Subwatershed: Des Plaines River

Mapped Land Cover on Site:

Prairie (4.01 acres): Rare Grade A remnant mesic tallgrass prairie featuring over 140 plant species native to Illinois.

Sedge Meadow/Wet Prairie (0.94 acre): Five ephemeral wetland pockets located among the unique remnant mesic prairie.

Developed (0.32 acre): Educational interpretive center is located on the southwest corner of site.



Existing Ecological Conditions:

James Woodworth prairie is located near the intersection of Greenwood Road and Milwaukee Avenue. The Grade A remnant mesic prairie intermixed with five depressional wetland pockets of wet prairie/sedge meadow, is a unique remnant that has never been plowed or heavily disturbed by humans. Over 140 native Illinois plant species are found here. The prairie is also home to several rare plants and animals. The wetlands are home to several species of burrowing crayfish and other aquatic macroinvertebrates.



The history of this site is unique because it represents one of the first ever efforts to preserve a prairie. Ten acres of the original prairie was saved by the first owners (Peacock and Long farming families) until the late 1950s when it was purchased by a developer. Four acres became a housing development to the north and the southwest corner was turned into a miniature golf course and go-cart track. Various struggles occurred to secure the land in the 1960s until the University of Illinois at Chicago obtained title to

the land as a research center. The current interpretive center was built where the old miniature golf course and go-cart track was located.

About 5 acres of the original prairie remain today and is surrounded by commercial, retail, and residential development. These surrounding land uses degrade the prairie by contributing polluted runoff, non-native species, and garbage. Ongoing maintenance and management is required to preserve the biological processes and integrity of the site.

The Village has zoned much of this area as an Environmentally Significant Area to further ensure its protection from development.

Restoration and Management Recommendations:

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) presently conducts maintenance and management of the James Woodworth Prairie. UIC students and staff remove garbage, remove non-native species, control overabundant native species, and introduce fire to mimic the historical beneficial responses. Control of non-native species is generally conducted without the use of chemicals and includes pulling, cutting, digging, and tree girdling. However, herbicide is used to control highly invasive species such as reed canary grass, lily of the valley, and smooth brome. Overabundant native species are also controlled and native species with low abundance are grown in UIC gardens and supplemented. Fire is the primary tool used to maintain the prairie and it is introduced every couple of years. Fire was the primary force that historically shaped and revitalized prairie in the region. It also kept invasive woody species to a minimum. UIC is doing an excellent job of managing the James Woodworth Prairie and should continue to do so in perpetuity.



Source: University of Illinois at Chicago
Milwaukee wetland swale in the winter.



Source: University of Illinois at Chicago
Rainpost wet prairie wetland in the winter.