

# Com Ed Prairie Restoration Ecological Management Schedule 2016-2017

**Site Description** Com Ed Prairie Restoration is located in the Com Ed right of way, nestled between Route 83 and Somerset Park, along the Prospect Heights Park District Bike path. The 4.5 acre site was likely prairie until the late 1800's, when it was converted into agricultural use. Sometime after 1938 high voltage power lines were installed and the area has been maintained by Com Ed as a right of way since then. The area is under a lease agreement from Com Ed to the Prospect Heights Park District, originally for the Park District to maintain the area next to the Bike Path. In 2015, the lease agreement was amended and updated to include all restoration activities of the PHNRC.

In 2014, a Com Ed Green Regions grant was awarded to restore the area back to prairie. The starting conditions were a nonnative turf grass and a seedbed of nonnative weedy species that had accumulated due to Com Ed mowing practices, except for one section labeled C that was mowed weekly for the last 30 years. In December 2014, 80 lbs. of prairie seed mix were seeded after removing the turf vegetation with herbicide.

In December 2015, a very thick mat of clover came in from the seed bed in addition to the prairie seedlings. Area A was herbicided with a selective herbicide and reseeded. Area C was herbicided and not reseeded.

Unfortunately, approximately 20% of the entire site was erroneously mowed down low, effectively killing most of the prairie seedlings coming up in those areas.

The current efforts are and will be focused on the removal of invasive species, encouraging the young prairie seedlings by selectively cutting, plugging and seeding plants, and on conducting regular prescribed burns to restore ecosystem processes and conditions.

| Location | Activity   | Timeline                 | Crew                              | Notes  |
|----------|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
|          | <p><b>Selectively cut non-native grasses and other early successional species</b></p> <p>Cut low quality, non-native and early successional species to make room for the high quality prairie plants. Cut low in the first year and then 1 ft or above once seedlings have started growing to provide them with a competitive edge</p> | <p><b>Sp, Su, Fa</b></p> | <p><b>Volunteers, Interns</b></p> | <p><b>Cut at about a foot</b> after the first year, consider plant biology when making cutting decision as to benefit perennials and discredit annuals</p> |
|          | <p><b>Collect and hand broadcast extant native seed</b></p> <p>Collect and distribute seeds of native plants near and within the site to improve colonization of cleared areas and bolster native populations; seed dispersal may be immediate, after a fall prescribed</p>  | <p><b>Su, Fa</b></p>     | <p><b>Volunteers</b></p>          | <p><b>Seed source</b></p> <p>Try collecting in the nearby collections familiar to the commission</p>   |

burn, or during the dormant season

1.

**Conduct prescribed burn**

**Late Fa, early Sp**

**Com Ed  
Contractors**

**Volunteer assistance**

The entire site should be burned frequently with one or few growing seasons in between fires. The prairie will be burned after it accomplishes a certain quality and good coverage of grasses that will carry a fire

Trained volunteers are welcome to help

**Note:** All ecological management schedule activities are subject to monitoring and supervision by the Prospect Heights Natural Areas Commission. Timing of treatments may change slightly depending on weather and phenology. All ecological management activities should follow best management practices and be acknowledged and approved by PHNRC