



Dear Teacher,

Thank you for choosing the McHenry County Conservation District's "Restoring the View" field trip at Prairieview Education Center in Crystal Lake.

The purpose of this program is to provide your students with:

- A better understanding of prairies, past and present
- An opportunity to see and hike through a restored prairie
- Field Experience to observe and identify native prairie plants
- A hands-on experience while planting native prairie plants in our restored area
- A personal connection and sense of ownership for our Conservation District areas

Please make sure all teachers and chaperones attending the field trip are aware of the following information.

1. This field trip is generally 3.5 hours long. Please note your start and end time on the permit. We will begin with an indoor introduction followed by outdoor activities. We will be outside for most of the field trip.
2. Teachers, chaperones, and students should dress for the weather and wear long pants and sturdy footwear for hiking.
3. After the indoor introduction, the students will take the bus from the Education Center to the prairie, approximately ½ mile further down Behan Road. Students will explore the prairie as they hike back to the Education Center. Please arrange for your buses to stay for the first hour of the program to transport the students to the trail.
4. To assist the field trip leaders in getting to know your class, please have the students wear secure nametags.
5. Encourage everyone to bring a waste-free lunch! Pack lunches in insulated, reusable containers and include items that can be eaten in their entirety, recycled or composted. Examples are whole fruits and vegetables, drinks in reusable bottles, snacks purchased in bulk and brought in reusable containers, cloth napkins, and reusable ice packs. For additional information on reducing waste visit www.epa.gov/eapwaste/wycd/index.htm.
6. A teacher packet for this program is available to you on the Conservation District's Website. This packet includes some background information, a "What to Expect" information sheet, a map to Prairieview Education Center, a post-trip evaluation sheet, and pre-trip and post-trip activities. The pre-trip activities are designed to give students background information before they come to Prairieview. Please take time to do the activity because the information will be built upon during the program introduction. The post-trip activities are designed to provide the students with an extension to the activities provided during the program.
-Download teacher packet information from our website at www.mccdDistrict.org
-To request information be sent to your email or school address call Andy Talley at 815-479-5779.
7. In the event of inclement weather on the day of your field trip, contact us. While there is not much room to reschedule programs, we will try to accommodate your needs. We do have indoor facilities that can be used as necessary.

We are looking forward to a day of fun and learning with your class. If you have any questions, please feel free to call, (815) 479-5779.

Sincerely,

Andy Talley, Education Program Coordinator

Restoring The View

What to Expect for Your Field Trip

Before you visit

- 1.) Please make sure that the students know to dress for the weather, as part of the program will be held outdoors. Also please have the students wear *long* pants and comfortable shoes for the day, as we will be taking a long hike through the prairie.
- 2.) Understanding the history of the prairie in Illinois will be an important lesson for the field trip. Have the children complete the "Illinois-The Prairie State" timeline by cutting out the pictures and pasting them in the correct chronological order. Included in this packet are enough pictures for your class. Each child should receive $\frac{1}{4}$ of the picture page to complete the activity. After the children have made the timeline, discuss how Illinois has changed over the last 150 years and how that has affected the amount of prairie in the state.

Your field trip will begin at Prairieview Education Center. Have the busses enter at the Behan Road entrance to the south of the Education center. You will be met by a Conservation District staff member who will give the students a brief program introduction inside the building. This will include rules, the plan for the day, and an introduction to "Restoring the View."

The program begins with an indoor introduction about our prairie heritage and history. This presentation also addresses the decline of our prairies here in Illinois as well as current restoration efforts. Students are then taken for a hike through a restored prairie. After a break for lunch on site, the students play our Prairie Predicament Game and help our current restoration efforts here at Prairieview by planting plugs of native prairie flowers in our restoration area.

After the hike, there will be a program wrap-up and the group will board the bus to return back to school.

After you visit

- 1.) Do the post-trip activity "Prairie Life Web" worksheet as a class activity. Each student will have made their web differently but the message will be the same...**ALL THINGS IN THE PRAIRIE ARE CONNECTED AND DEPENDENT ON EACH OTHER.** Make sure the children come up with the indirect connections too. (The bug depends on the fire because it regenerates the plants the bug needs to live...) To conclude this activity, talk about what happens when one element of a system is missing, what else is affected? Reinforce to the students that in order for a prairie system to be healthy it needs to have all of its necessary elements.
- 2.) Start your own prairie seed experiment! Obtain some prairie seeds for your group to grow in the classroom. Label the seeds and put them into the refrigerator until February 1. Germinate the seeds starting February 1, and pot the seedlings around May 15. Keep them in the sun and water regularly, and soon you will have your own prairie plants. At the end of the year, send them home with the children to plant in their yards.
- 3.) Please fill out an evaluation form as it gives us very valuable feedback about how our programs fit into the school's needs. Return it to the address on the form.

Thank you.



Restoring The View

Background Information

Prairie is an open expanse of grassland containing thousands of tall grasses and colorful flowers that are home to many birds, insects, mammals and even reptiles! Illinois is called the “Prairie State” because prairie used to cover 22 million acres of the landscape. Illinois now has 10,000 acres or 15 square miles of prairie left.

European settlement in Northern Illinois occurred in the 1840’s. In order to “Improve” the land and make it habitable for settlers, native communities were plowed up, cut down, drained, and non-native species were introduced. Due to this rapid change in their environment, prairie animals and plants could not survive because of loss of habitat.

In the 1970’s, the people of McHenry county realized the value of open space and native communities. The McHenry County Conservation District was formed with the mission of preserving open space for generations to come and restoring the native communities that were here for thousands of years. By collecting and growing seeds from remnant prairies, removing non-native plants that choke out prairie, replanting native species, “rewatering” wetlands, and doing periodic burns, the Conservation District has begun restoring parts of McHenry County to the prairies, savannas, and wetlands that were once here. Already, endangered animals and plants are returning to their native home...the prairie.

By planting young prairie plants at Prairieview Education Center, you and your class will be doing valuable native community restoration work. The project that you participate in is very important because the prairie plants you plant will grow future prairie and boost the amount of prairie in Illinois. While we do this, we will be learning more about our connection to the Prairie State.

Illinois - The Prairie State

Paste the pictures in the right order and you will have a picture history of the people of the Prairie State. The dots on the map represent the amount of prairie in Illinois.

We are a Potawatomi family and our ancestors have lived on the prairie for thousands of years. We take from the prairie only what we can use and live in harmony with the land.

Paste picture here

13,000-200 years ago



Paste picture here

My family and I are German immigrants. We have our own land that we farm with seeds and plants that we brought from our homeland in Germany.

1835



I am a railroad engineer that has seen much of the countryside. I have brought thousands of people out to Illinois to settle and find a better life for themselves with all the available land and growing cities.

Paste picture here

1850



Paste picture here

I am a farmer who can plow up my fields quickly and efficiently thanks to modern farm machinery. I can plant many acres of crops to sell for the fall harvest.

1900



Cities in Illinois are growing rapidly with many people, cars, highways and buildings. It's an exciting place to live with many jobs for people and fun things to do.

Paste picture here

1970



Paste picture here

I am a conservationist and I help to restore prairie habitat by planting plants, collecting seeds, doing controlled burns and removing aggressive non-native plants.

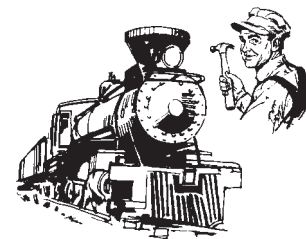
the future



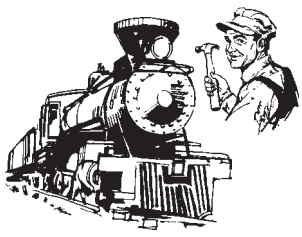
Paste these pictures onto the "Illinois - The Prairie State" timeline.



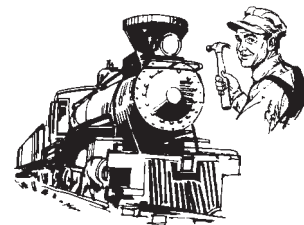
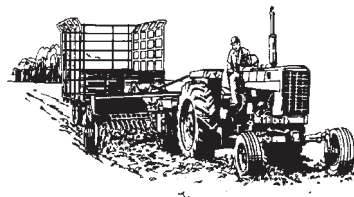
Paste these pictures onto the "Illinois - The Prairie State" timeline.



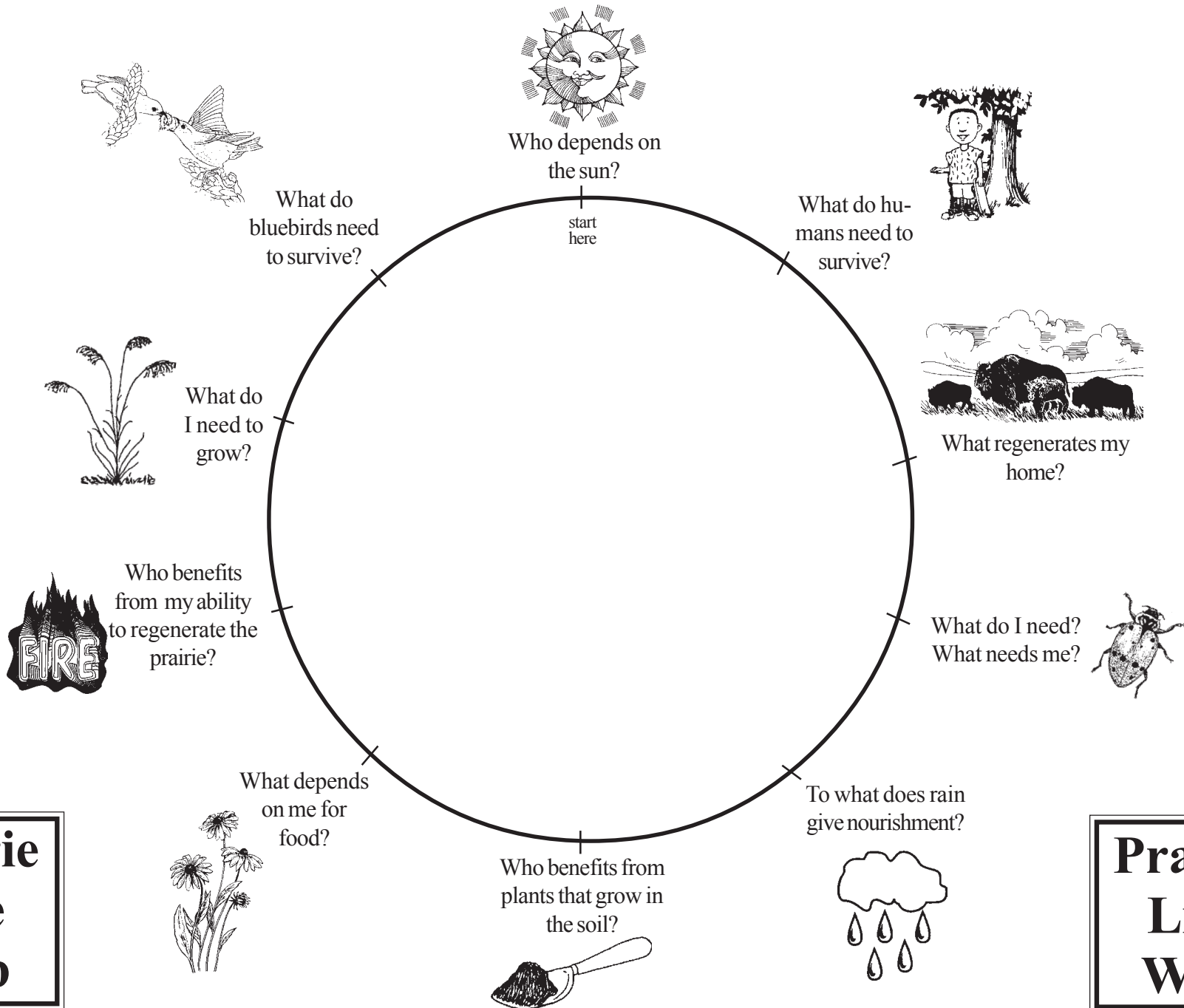
Paste these pictures onto the "Illinois - The Prairie State" timeline.



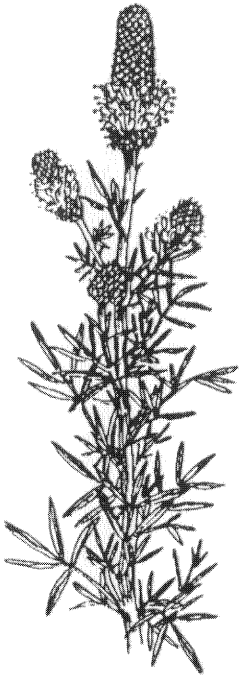
Paste these pictures onto the "Illinois - The Prairie State" timeline.



Start with the sun and draw lines between things that need each other. When you come to a new element, answer the question to keep on going. How many connections can YOU make?

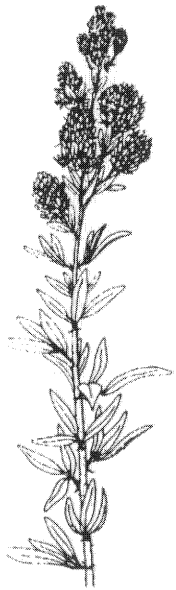
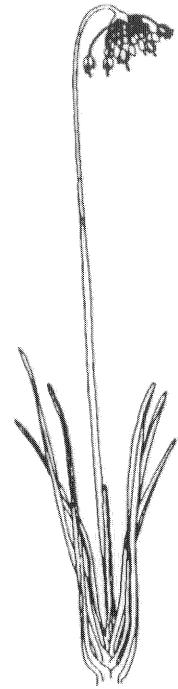


Prairie Plants You Might Meet!



PURPLE CLOVER

NODDING ONION

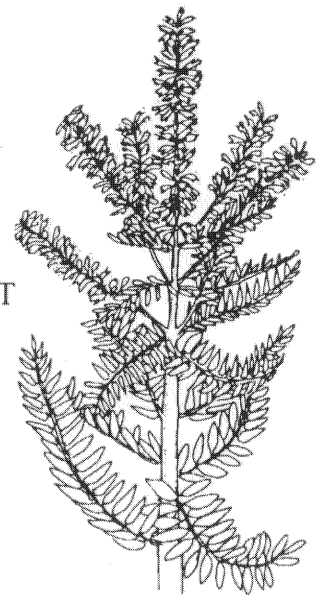


BUSH CLOVER



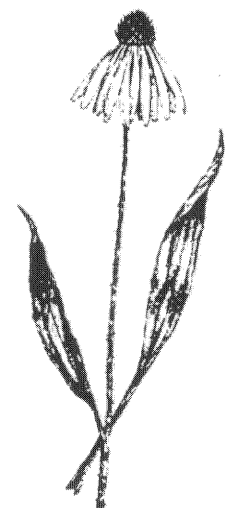
RATTLESNAKE MASTER

LEAD PLANT



WILD BERGAMOT

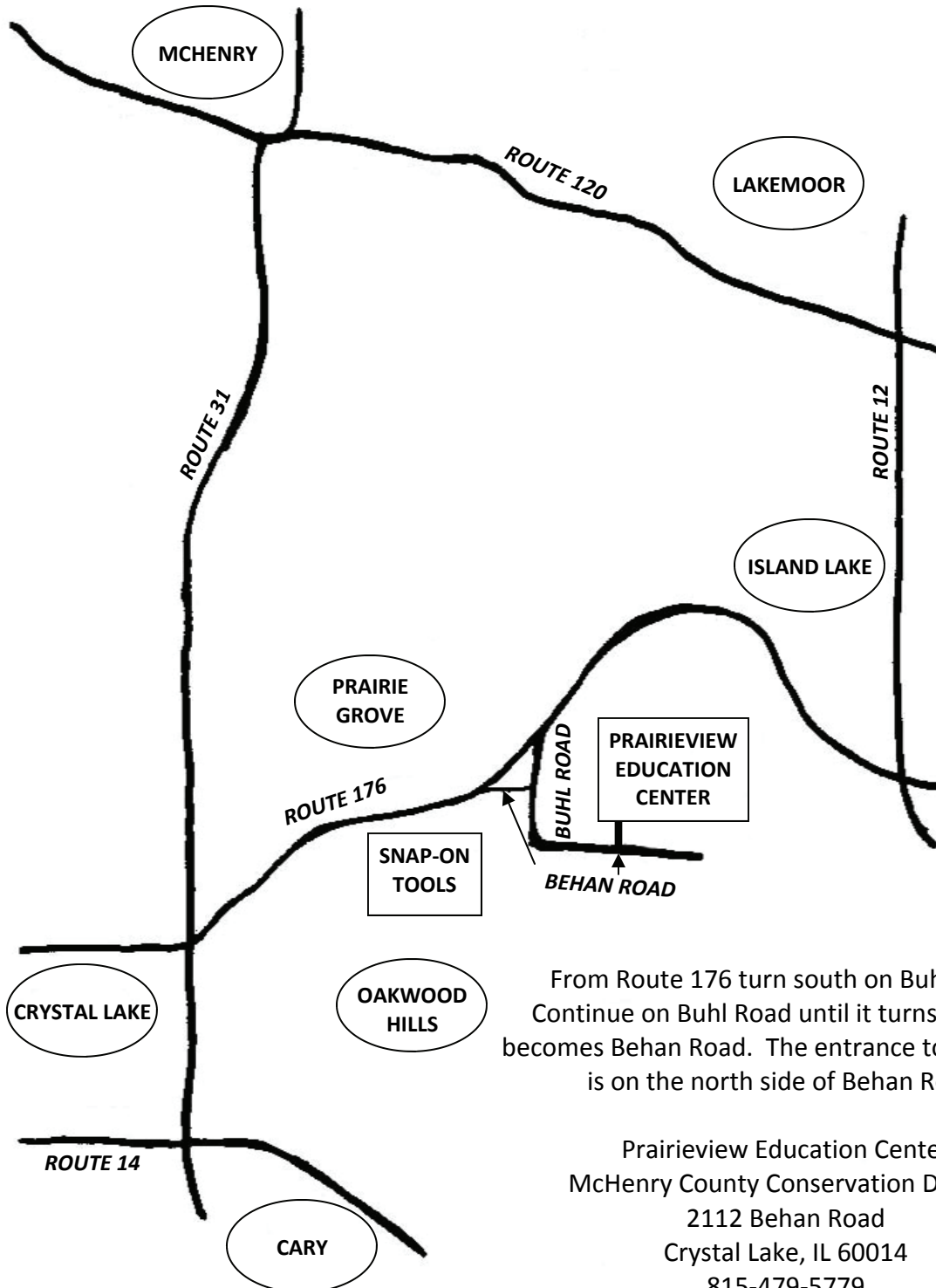
YELLOW CONEFLOWER





McHenry County
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

HOW TO GET TO PRAIRIEVIEW EDUCATION CENTER



From Route 176 turn south on Buhl Road. Continue on Buhl Road until it turns east and becomes Behan Road. The entrance to the center is on the north side of Behan Road.

Prairieview Education Center
McHenry County Conservation District
2112 Behan Road
Crystal Lake, IL 60014
815-479-5779



Field Trip Evaluation

Mail or fax your form to:

Education Services Manager, Prairieview Education Center, 2112 Behan Road, Crystal Lake IL 60014
Tel 815-479-5779 / Fax 815-479-5766

Thank you for participating in a McHenry County Conservation District field trip with your class. The Education Services Department wants to make sure the field trips are the best they can be, so that you meet your classroom goals. We sincerely appreciate your feedback on the field trip you attended.

School Name _____ Grade ____ Teacher's Name _____

Name of the Program _____ Date of Field Trip _____

Conservation District Leader Name(s) _____

1. Did you choose to receive your field trip packet by mail, email, or did you download it from our website?
2. How was the field trip packet helpful in preparing you and your class for the trip? What activities did you use? How could the packet be improved?
3. What were your goals for the field trip? Were they met? How could the program better serve your goals?
4. Were the trip activities and information educational and stimulating for the children? What activities do you recall that worked especially well? What activities could use revision?
5. Was your field trip leader well informed about the subject matter and enthusiastic about working with the group?
6. Would you participate in another Conservation District field trip?
7. Do you have any additional suggestions, comments, or remarks?

If you would like to receive our Environmental Education Opportunities Teachers' Guide electronically (Adobe pdf format) please provide an email address here. _____