

Airport AND Prairie

People and organizations from all across Illinois and the nation want to save the ancient ecosystem known as Bell Bowl Prairie, from unnecessary obliteration by the expansion of Chicago Rockford International Airport expansion as currently planned. We are not against the much needed economic boost this development will bring to Rockford. We want a win-win project. The airport can have the needed expansion AND the prairie can be spared at the same time.

Bell Bowl Prairie is a gravel prairie community and one of the finest of its kind. Natural prairie is vanishingly rare in Illinois, and gravel prairie is among the rarest of the rare. The remaining dry gravel prairie is less than one-hundredth of one percent of our original prairie acreage. What is left is irreplaceable for science and society. What we save of the Earth's biodiversity is all that will ever be saved. We simply cannot afford to lose even part of this natural treasure, Bell Bowl Prairie.

None of this precious prairie needs to be destroyed to accommodate the airport's needs. Some may portray the effort to save the prairie as anti-development, but nothing is farther from the truth. We propose smart, environmentally conscientious growth that focuses on long-term value to the airport and the entire community. We urge the Board of Commissioners to choose the competitive advantage of an airport designed to be efficient and forward-looking, one that adheres to principles of "green design."

The enclosed documents show a concept plan that saves the prairie and accommodates the development proposed for the Chicago Rockford International Airport. There will be no loss of services or jobs with the alternative. The simple difference is that this plan saves the prairie. We implore the Chicago Rockford International Airport Commissioners to choose Airport and Prairie!

We invite the airport design team and decision makers to work together with us towards a more sustainable alternative and to brainstorm finding additional funds to support the re-design.

Please reach out to Kerry Leigh at kleigh@naturalland.org or (847)609-1292 to discuss this further.