

## Bell Bowl Prairie

### Talking Points

- We support responsible economic development. Expansion of capacity at Chicago Rockford International Airport can be done in ways that do not damage the Bell Bowl Prairie or impact its rare and endangered species. Development of the airport in a way that protects the prairie and its biodiversity can be done in a way that highlights the positive environmental impact. It could be a source of pride in the region and be a competitive advantage for the Rockford Airport in attracting businesses that are increasingly looking at making environmentally responsible decisions.
- Bell Bowl Prairie is a historic, cultural, and scientific asset to the airport, the local community, the state, and the world. The City of Rockford passed a resolution in October 2021 to protect and conserve birds as part of the Bird City Illinois initiative. Protecting birds means protecting bird habitat like Bell Bowl Prairie. This prairie is something to be proud of and care for, not destroy forever.
- The environmental assessment supporting current work plans is flawed and incomplete and needs to be redone. The Illinois Natural Areas Inventory found Bell Bowl Prairie is a top priority, Category I site, a rare, high-quality ecosystem. At least one federally Endangered species (the rusty-patched bumblebee) and two state Endangered species (the large-flowered beard-tongue and prairie dandelion) live at Bell Bowl Prairie and are threatened with destruction. The environmental assessment overlooked these features of the site due to poor design.
- No public agency is known to have destroyed an ecosystem of this rarity and high quality since the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory identified and demonstrated their importance almost 50 years ago.
- Prairies are an ultra-endangered ecosystem: only 0.01% of original prairie is left in Illinois (with similar statistics in all states where this rich ecosystem survives). Bell Bowl Prairie is a 5.8-acre high-quality dry gravel hill prairie. According to the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory, only 19 acres of high-quality dry gravel prairies were left in the state in 1976.
- A tiny fraction of Bell Bowl Prairie biodiversity would survive if an attempt was made to move it. Its natural features developed in their current location over thousands of years and are irreplaceable. The prairie is akin to old-growth forest and cannot grow back.
- The issue at hand is not prairie **or** airport ..... It is prairie **and** airport.