SAVE BELL BOWL PRAIRIE

Public Meeting

February 21, 2022

February 21, 2022 Agenda

1. Welcome and Recap
2. Advocacy Update
3. Environmental Consultation Update
4. Legal Update
5. Fundraising Update
6. Things to Celebrate!
7. Action Items
8. Breakout Discussions
9. Breakout Recap
10. Next public meeting - March 8, 2022

How Did We Get Here:

- 2018 - Environmental Assessment Conducted
- 2019 - “Finding of No Significant Impact” (FONSI) Issued
- Summer 2021 - Construction work begins
- August 2021 - Rusty Patched Bumble Bee found on site
- September 2021 - Conservation advocates form Save Bell Bowl Prairie group
- September 2021 - Temporary hold on construction until November 1st
- October 2021 - Public pressure builds, much local, regional, and national media attention on Bell Bowl Prairie
- October 26 - Natural Land Institute files for injunctive relief
- October 28 - Airport releases a statement halting destruction of prairie until March 1 and reopening consultation with FAA/USFWS

See a more detailed timeline of events at savebellbowlprairie.org/timeline

How Did We Get Here:

- November 9 - Airport states they plan to continue construction as planned
- November, December, & January - Bell Bowl Prairie advocates show up and speak during public comment at GRAA board meetings
- December 1 - IDOT announces Rebuild IL funding for Rockford Airport
- December & January - Defendants (GRAA and federal agencies) file motions to dismiss lawsuit
- Early February - NLI submits list of questions to GRAA and federal agencies regarding endangered species consultation and construction plans and GRAA sends a threatening reply to the list of questions

See a more detailed timeline of events at savebellbowlprairie.org/timeline

Updates Since February 8 Public Meeting:

- February 8 & 16 - Exchange of letters between GRAA & FAA confirming construction delay until consultation is complete
- February 15 - NLI filed their amended complaint
- February 16 - Youth activists disrupt Airport Director Mike Dunn’s speech at The Parks Chamber of Commerce meeting
- February 17 - Initial court status hearing – the case was not dismissed as it was a 20 minute status hearing

Red:

Proposed “Midfield Entrance Road”

Plans from October 2021

Note: Dates in labels are incorrect

Proposed “Midfield Entrance Road”

Blue:
Proposed temporary stormwater detention areas

Plans from October 2021

Note: Dates in labels are incorrect

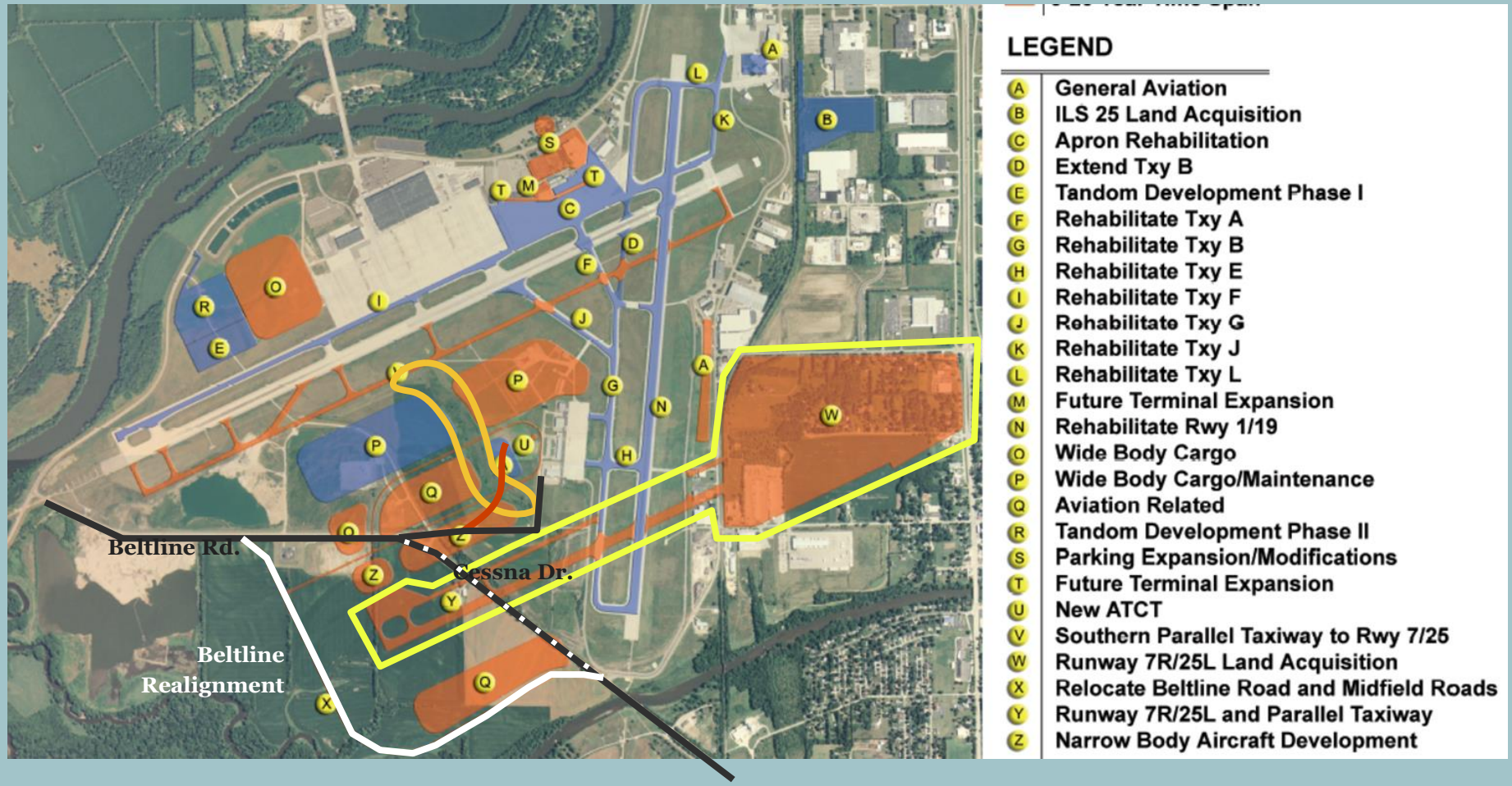
Existing Impacts to Prairie/Plum Thickets/RPBB Habitat

Black:
Proposed parking lots, buildings, roads, etc.

Remaining yellow prairie area could still be impacted with future expansion plans

Plans from October 2021

Note: Dates in labels are incorrect



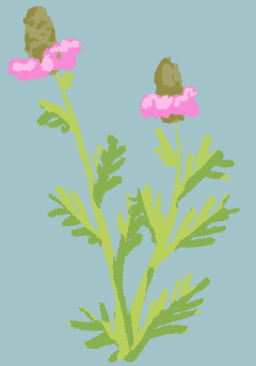
Masterplan included in 2019 Environmental Assessment

Advocacy Update

- Meet Robb & Jillian
- Social Media
  - # Facebook page
  - # Twitter Followers
  - # Instagram Followers
- Bob Dolgan Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2AbCDMDpcY

The Environmental Consultation Process

- As of February 16, the GRAA has not yet submitted the Biological Assessment (BA) to FAA
- Once the FAA has received the BA they will review it and submit it (“as appropriate”) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to initiate formal consultation
- Formal consultation could take up to 135 days (although the FAA does not expect USFWS to take the full amount of time)



The Environmental Consultation Process

CHICAGO ROCKFORD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

February 8, 2022

Ms. Amy B. Hanson
Environmental Protection Specialist
Federal Aviation Administration
Chicago Airports District Office
2300 E. Devon Ave
Des Plaines, IL 60018

Dear Amy,

Please allow this correspondence to confirm that the Greater Rockford Airport Authority has no intention and will not proceed with any construction in the area that is under Section 7 consolation, until said consultation is complete and final Federal Aviation Administration environmental approval has been obtained.

Sincerely,

Zachary D. Oakley
Deputy Director of Operations and Planning

60 AIRPORT DR ROCKFORD, IL 61109-2902 PHONE 815 969-4000 FLYRFD.com FOREIGN-TRADE ZONE (FTZ) #176

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration

Chicago Airports District Office
2300 E. Devon
Des Plaines IL 60018

February 16, 2021

Mr. Zachary Oakley
Chicago Rockford International Airport
60 Airport Drive
Rockford, IL 61109

Dear Mr. Oakley:

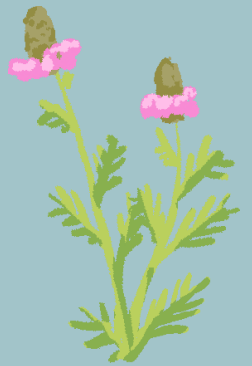
Thank you for your letter dated February 8, 2022, confirming that the Greater Rockford Airport Authority has no intention of proceeding with any construction in the midfield area of Chicago Rockford International Airport that is under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act consultation. As you know, the prairie areas that were not already impacted by construction, before the project stopped in 2021, are involved in the Section 7 consultation process.

The FAA looks forward to reviewing the Biological Assessment when you submit it for agency review. Once the FAA deems the Biological Assessment is complete, the FAA will review it and, as appropriate, submit it to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to initiate the formal consultation process. As you know, USFWS has 135 days under the statute to conduct its review, though we do not expect USFWS to take the full amount of time.

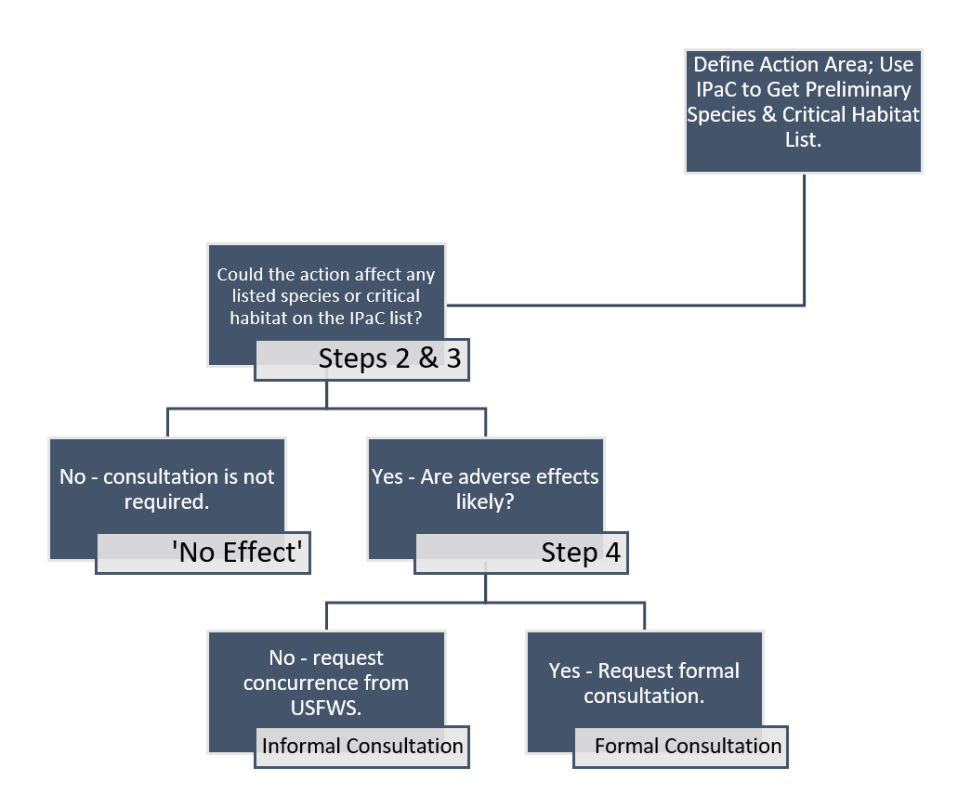
Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at (847) 294-7354.

Sincerely,

Amy B. Hanson
Environmental Protection Specialist



The Environmental Consultation Process



Source: https://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/section7/s7process/s7stepxstep.html

Legal Update:

- October
  - Complaint for injunctive relief and motion for temporary restraining order (TRO)
  - TRO withdrawn after airport agrees to stop construction
- November
  - Airport denies request to demarcate the BBP, give monitoring access to BBP, and to meet with consultants
  - Intent to sue federal agencies was filed- 60 day notice

Legal Update:

- December
  - Airport files motion to dismiss, saying that NLI doesn't have standing
- January
  - NLI responds to Airport's motion to dismiss
  - Federal defendants file motion to dismiss

Legal Update:

- February
  - NLI submits list of questions about construction plans & receives a threatening reply from GRAA
  - NLI files an amended complaint (needed 60 day notice to file) - adds IDOT to list of defendants, adds Endangered Species Act claim
  - Initial status conference held with judge and because of amended complaint defendants need to re-file based on amendments.
  - NLI lawyers sent letter to GRAA lawyers agreeing not to file for TRO if airport stipulates to halting construction until July or 3 weeks after consultation ends

Fundraising Update

- Fundraising drive through February
- Generous donors have created a matching pool of $14,500
- https://gofund.me/796a84d1

Fundraising Update

- Donor Gifts:
  - First 60 donors giving a gift of $100 will receive an illustrated nature journal page (suitable for framing) from Domenico D'Alessandro
  - First 20 donors giving gifts of $250 or more will receive *Confluence,* a book of poems and photographs from Domenico D'Alessandro (A collection that spans 1970 to 2020) ....
  - First 10 donors giving gifts of $500 or more will receive *Thought Patterns,* by Domenico D'Alessandro (Collectors edition signed by the author)
  - All donors of $25 or more between February 8 and March 1 will be entered into a raffle to win a print of a Northern Harrier taken by Walter Kitundu.

Fundraising Update

- Donate at https://gofund.me/796a84d1
- Donations up to $14,500 will be matched through the end of the month
- Since this was announced on February 8 we have received $5,515 in donations. Our goal is $50,000.

A Moment to Celebrate! (And then we'll get back to work)

- Over 90 stories in the media - including local, statewide, and national. People all over the country care about this prairie and the biodiversity here!

- Feet are being "held to the fire."
  - Duckworth's office met with USFWS last week
  - Oakley wrote a letter to the FAA saying that they would follow the law regarding consultation
  - Pritzker's office said he will be calling the airport to 'check in'

- This is because advocates care and aren't being quiet!

Take Action!

- Next Airport board meeting - February 24 at 5:00 pm, rally outside at 4:00 pm
- Take the Challenge
  - Receive a Save Bell Bowl Prairie wooden coin
  - Complete 3-5 Actions (mail a postcard, contact Pritzker's office, etc.)
  - Post a photo of you and your coin on social media once your challenge has been completed (don't forget to write about your actions!), tag your post, use hashtags too!
- A limited supply of pins will also be available

Take Action!

- Write letters ✉
- Make phone calls ☎
- **Visit www.savebellbowlprairie.org/action for scripts, ideas, talking points**

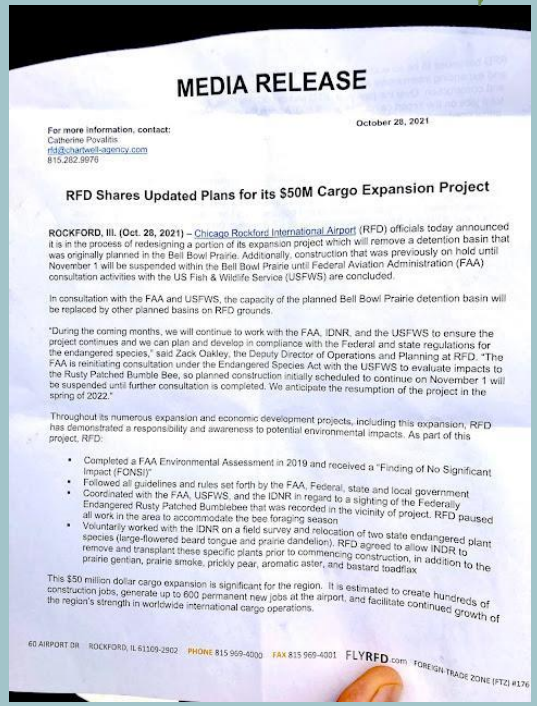
Take Action!

- We need help now!
- Artists, writers, social media content creators, event organizers, protestors, demonstrators ….
- Need to know how to help? Email amy@friendsilnature.org

Take Action!

- If you have contacts with local, state, or federal politicians, now is the time to ask them to do something!

- Tell more people - every day tell 5 people - why is this prairie important



MEDIA RELEASE

October 28, 2021

For more information, contact:
Catherine Povalitis
rfd@chartwell-agency.com
815.282.9976

RFD Shares Updated Plans for its $50M Cargo Expansion Project

ROCKFORD, Ill. (Oct. 28, 2021) – Chicago Rockford International Airport (RFD) officials today announced it is in the process of redesigning a portion of its expansion project which will remove a detention basin that was originally planned in the Bell Bowl Prairie. Additionally, construction that was previously on hold until November 1 will be suspended within the Bell Bowl Prairie until Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) consultation activities with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) are concluded.

In consultation with the FAA and USFWS, the capacity of the planned Bell Bowl Prairie detention basin will be replaced by other planned basins on RFD grounds.

"During the coming months, we will continue to work with the FAA, IDNR, and the USFWS to ensure the project continues and we can plan and develop in compliance with the Federal and state regulations for the endangered species," said Zack Oakley, the Deputy Director of Operations and Planning at RFD. "The FAA is reinitiating consultation under the Endangered Species Act with the USFWS to evaluate impacts to the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee, so planned construction initially scheduled to continue on November 1 will be suspended until further consultation is completed. We anticipate the resumption of the project in the spring of 2022."

Throughout its numerous expansion and economic development projects, including this expansion, RFD has demonstrated a responsibility and awareness to potential environmental impacts. As part of this project, RFD:

- Completed a FAA Environmental Assessment in 2019 and received a "Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)"
- Followed all guidelines and rules set forth by the FAA, Federal, state and local government
- Coordinated with the FAA, USFWS, and the IDNR in regard to a sighting of the Federally Endangered Rusty Patched Bumblebee that was recorded in the vicinity of project. RFD paused all work in the area to accommodate the bee foraging season
- Voluntarily worked with the IDNR on a field survey and relocation of two state endangered plant species (large-flowered beard tongue and prairie dandelion). RFD agreed to allow INDR to remove and transplant these specific plants prior to commencing construction, in addition to the prairie gentian, prairie smoke, prickly pear, aromatic aster, and bastard toadflax

This $50 million dollar cargo expansion is significant for the region. It is estimated to create hundreds of construction jobs, generate up to 600 permanent new jobs at the airport, and facilitate continued growth of the region's strength in worldwide international cargo operations.

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Five Breakout Groups

All illustrations by
Liz Anna Kozik

To choose your breakout group you need to have updated Zoom

If you don’t have that, the organizers will assist you and put you in a group

There are 2 local groups and 3 non local groups, and each will have a leader to take notes and report back to the whole meeting.