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Find us on the web at:

[www.parklands.org](http://www.parklands.org)**Newsletter****April – May 2007**

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## Innovative donation expands tallgrass prairie

ParkLands recently received a permanent conservation easement on 52 acres to allow expansion of critically endangered tallgrass prairie at its new Letcher Basin Nature Preserve in southeastern Woodford County thanks to a very generous gift from Dr. Sherri Thornton, Dr. Matt Fraker and Greg & Christi Kennett. As you know, Matt and Christie are also Parklands Foundation Board members. The donation of this conservation easement represents a gift of \$393,180 to our organization.

The restoration of tallgrass prairie on this 52 acres contiguous to the Letcher Basin Nature Preserve will expand the site significantly as we establish a natural vegetation buffer to preserve the quality of the Mackinaw River and provide access to the public for education and nature enjoyment.

The acceptance of conservation easements is a new tool for the ParkLands Foundation to use to

incorporate private lands and landowners into the large Mackinaw Bluffs restoration corridor in Woodford County. Conservation easements are conservation restrictions self-imposed by private landowners who wish to protect their properties from future development. The loss of land value that occurs due to these restrictions determines the value of the “gift” of the conservation easement.

Under current conservation tax law, landowners who grant conservation easements to a 501(c)3 organization, such as ParkLands, are eligible for a tax deduction on 50% of their income. Furthermore, the carry-forward period for this deduction has been increased from 5 to 15 years. This tax benefit is set to expire at the end of 2007 so interested landowners who want to learn more about conservation easements should contact Matt Fraker at 309.454.8606.

## Good luck Tim, Welcome Jason

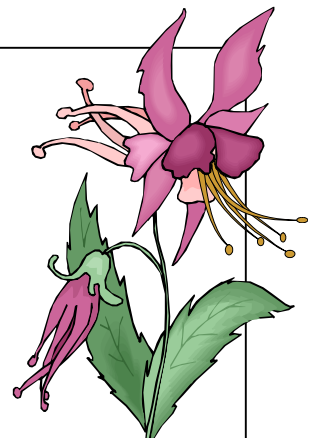
After nearly four years of employment, Tim Lindenbaum tendered his resignation effective March 26. During his tenure with ParkLands Tim worked diligently to help the organization meet its land management goals. In addition, he was instrumental in developing positive relationships with numerous land owners and farmers throughout Woodford and McLean Counties. Through these relationships he was able to actively promote our mission of land preservation and restoration. On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to thank Tim for his commitment to ParkLands and wish him the best in his future endeavors!

Since Tim’s resignation members of the Board have been conducting interviews with potential land stewards. I am pleased to announce that we have hired Jason D. Shoemaker, who will begin his duties on May 21. Jason grew up in Gridley, Illinois, and is familiar with our properties. In May he will graduate from the College of Agriculture Sciences at Southern Illinois University with a bachelor’s degree in forestry. His specialization is

in forest resources management. Since 2004 Jason has worked as a Natural Resources Assistant at Sugar Grove Nature Center. He has training in fire management and exotic species control. We look forward to having Jason join our organization!

*Mary Horgan  
President*

Join us for a  
Spring Wildflower Walk  
Sundays,  
April 15 and May 13



## Coming soon — improved web site, member survey

The ParkLands web site will soon undergo changes that will make it much friendlier to those of you who prefer to get your information the "cyber" way. We plan to automate our membership application and renewals on the site, as well as add a means for you to submit questions, register for events, and send us your comments. We'll also be able to put our newsletter on line, and allow you to provide us with your e-mail address so we can send information to you electronically.

During the month of April, the site will switch over to a new locally owned hosting service, Evalto. After this switch is made, you will begin to see changes to the web site.

### Merwin protected forever

The February dedication of 640 acres, in addition to the 78 acres dedicated in October 2006, as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve means that ParkLands Foundation has now protected in perpetuity the entire Merwin Preserve.

The Mackinaw River Land and Water Reserve will buffer the southern and eastern boundaries of the Merwin Savanna Nature Preserve and protect and enhance habitats used by the state-threatened Cerulean warbler and the state-threatened Henslow's sparrow. Both species were observed during the 2006 breeding bird surveys.

Government Land Office survey records indicate that in the 1820s, the area encompassing the proposed Mackinaw River Land and Water Reserve was open oak woodland and savanna, maintained as such by periodic fires sweeping off of the nearby prairies. Floodplains were likely more forested than the uplands. Active management, including exotics species control, grazing, and prescribed fire, will be implemented to work toward habitat restoration.

The Mackinaw River Land and Water Reserve is open to the public, but visitors should check with representatives of the ParkLands Foundation for special conditions (e.g., deer management, grazing by livestock) that may restrict visitation during certain periods.

*Eric Smith*

Be watching for a post card some time in late April or early May inviting your participation in a membership survey. Every active ParkLands member will receive a card with a link to the web-based survey. Once you complete the survey you will be able to sign up to receive future electronic mailings from ParkLands. Until now, we've never collected our members' e-mail addresses. Nowadays it's a must for organizations to allow members their choice of media for receiving information.

Exciting changes coming, and we look forward to your participation!

*Martha Phares*

### Calendar of Events

#### **Wildflower Walk**

Sunday, April 15, 1:00 p.m.  
Merwin Preserve West Gate  
Leader: Dale Birkenholz  
309-452-8086

#### **Garlic Mustard Control**

Saturdays, April 21 & 28, 9:00 a.m..  
Merwin Preserve South Gate  
April 21 Leader: Barb Schneider  
309-365-8531  
April 28 Leader: Mary Horgan  
309-527-5636

#### **Wildflower Walk**

Sunday, May 13, 1:00 p.m.  
Merwin Preserve West Gate  
Leader: Roger Anderson  
309-452-5728

#### **Sweet Clover Control**

Saturday, June 2, 9:00 a.m..  
Lexington Prairie  
Leader: Mary Horgan  
309-527-5636

#### **Parsnip Control**

Saturday, June 16, 9:00 a.m.  
Merwin Preserve  
Prairie Gate  
Leader: TBA

**NOTE:** Dates are subject to change. For up-to-date information, check with the leader or log on to [www.parklands.org](http://www.parklands.org).

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