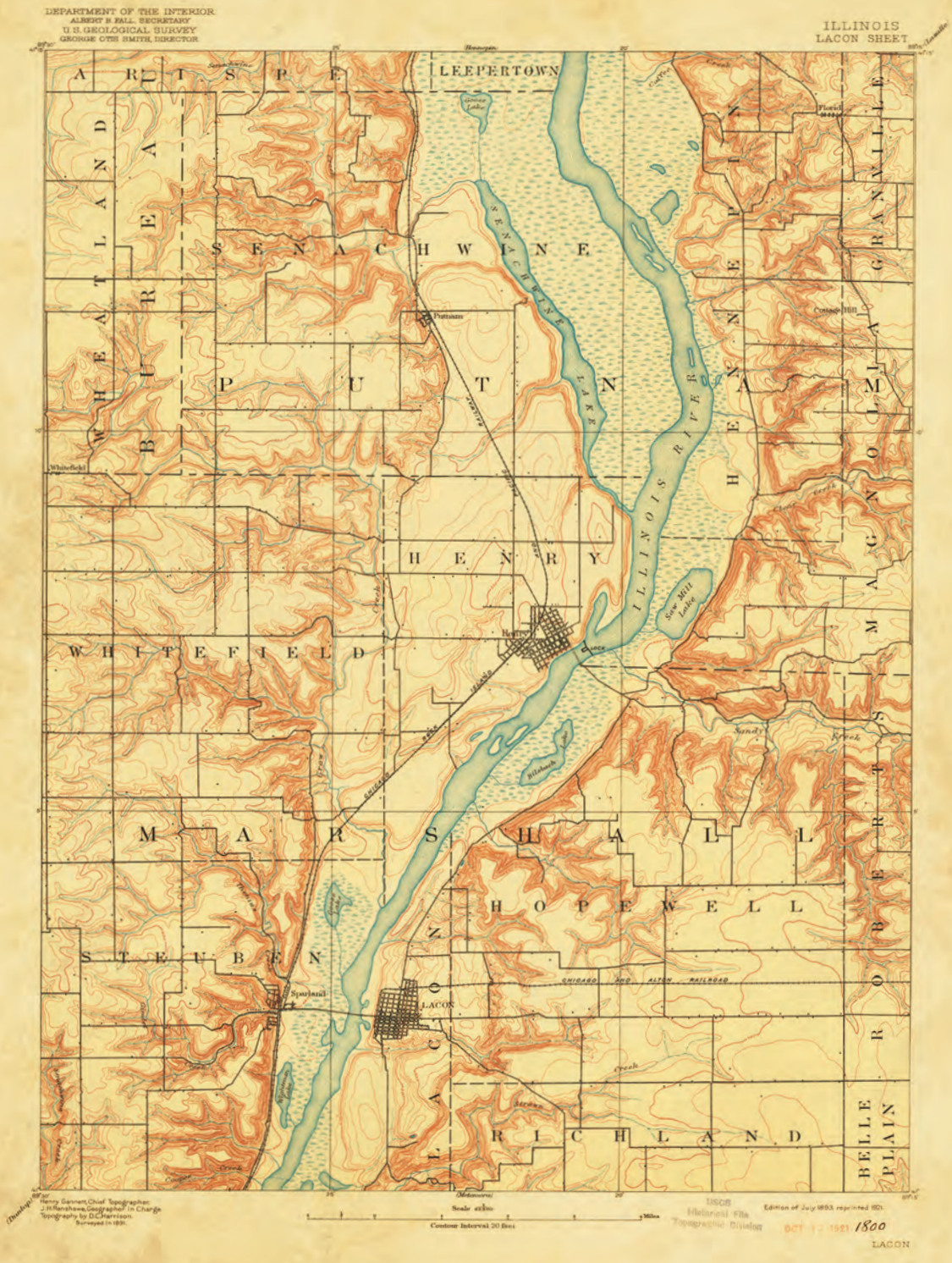
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GEORGE OTIS SMITH, DIRECTOR
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ROBERTS
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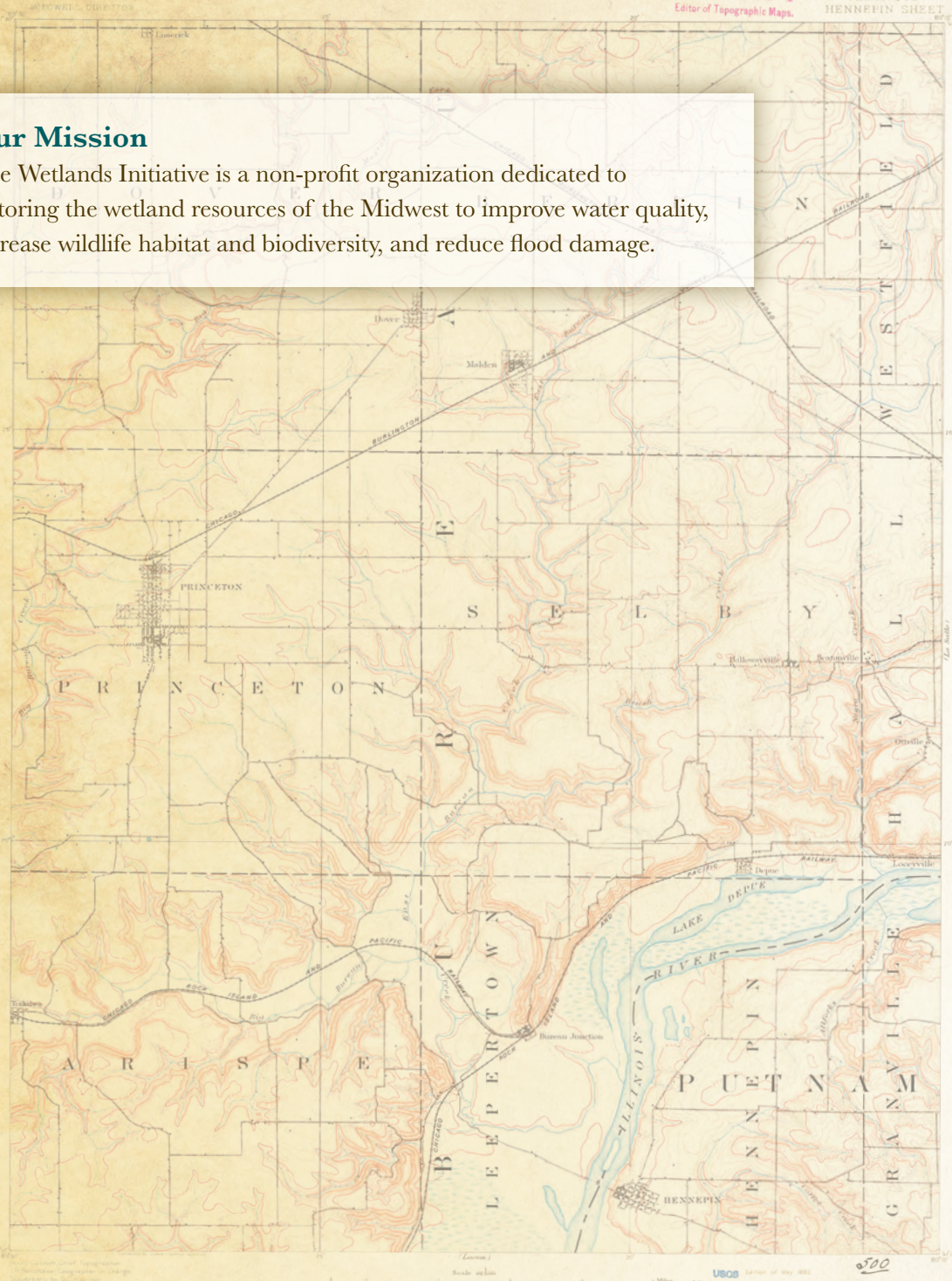
Henry
Spurgeon
LACON
Senachwine Lake
Illinois River
Sawmill Lake
Chicago and Alton Railroad
Henry Garnett, Chief Topographer.
J. H. Renshawe, Geographer in Charge.
Topography by D. C. Harrison.
Surveyed in 1911.
Scale 62500
Contour Interval 20 feet
Edition of July 1913, reprinted 1921.
USGS
Historical File
Topographic Division
1800
LACON

Our Mission

The Wetlands Initiative is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring the wetland resources of the Midwest to improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and reduce flood damage.



Mapping Forward

Each Wetlands Initiative project begins with a map. Or more accurately, many maps. We dig up historical maps to see what the particular landscape about to be restored once looked like; we make maps depicting current conditions using satellite and other types of data; and then we map a vision for the restoration based on analyses of the past and present, and also our best scientific understanding of what will happen in the future as the climate and other factors change.

As this annual report depicts, the mapmaking continues all through a project. Together the maps tell a vivid story of natural transformation, full of colors, shapes, and symbols as beautiful as any prairie flower or marsh bird.

With maps so central to our work, TWI has always prioritized having a mapmaker on staff, though the more modern title for the position is *GIS analyst,* reflecting the data-driven nature of the job. A geographic information systems (GIS) analyst is someone who knows how to capture, integrate, analyze, and display data with a geographic or spatial component.

The data can be captured in many ways: most simply by downloading it from an existing database (land elevations, for example) or with more complexity by using a GPS device to record location points associated with a specific variable of interest (for instance, where a particular bird species has nested).

Once captured, the different types of data can be layered and manipulated in innumerable ways for analysis and then displayed graphically in the form of a map. There are many applications of GIS, the most familiar of which is probably the navigation system you likely have in your car.

Jim Monchak is TWI's geospatial analyst and developer, a quiet guy with four computer monitors and a printer that can produce maps big enough to cover a tabletop during a meeting. As the board chair and the executive director of the Wetlands Initiative, both of us know from experience how critical Jim is to all of our projects. His maps help us figure out where we've been, where we are now, and where we can get to down the road.

TWI Geospatial Analyst and Developer Jim Monchak using a portable GPS device to survey Chicago's Hegewisch Marsh, in the Calumet region.

As you explore TWI's current projects through the maps in the pages that follow, we hope you'll want to learn more about the actual sites they depict. At different stages of restoration, all are made possible by the people who support TWI's mission. We are deeply grateful to all of you who are helping to turn Jim's maps into native habitats, his geospatial data into living landscapes.

And when you decide to visit one of TWI's project sites that's far enough along to be open to the public, we've got the maps to get you there!

Carl Yudell
Chair, Board of Directors

Paul Botts
President & Executive Director

Cover map *U.S. Geological Survey, Illinois: Lacon Sheet (1893).*
Opposite *U.S. Geological Survey, Illinois: Hennepin Sheet (1893).*

Hickory Hollow at the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge

A map of projected habitats to be restored at Hickory Hollow, based on soil analyses and other data.

A long-desired addition to TWI's Sue and Wes Dixon Waterfowl Refuge in north-central Illinois, the 283-acre Hickory Hollow tract was acquired in December 2014. Much of the tract was being farmed at the time; other areas were thick with trees.

An important reason for the purchase was to protect the sensitive wetland habitats of the Refuge's Dore Seep, just downslope from the tract. But the new parcel also contained remnants of upland habitats that would add to the preserve's already-rich mosaic of lowland habitats.

Through methodical sampling, we confirmed that most of Hickory Hollow has very sandy soils. By combining the soil data with detailed surveys of the existing vegetation and other factors, we mapped the native habitats to be restored. On the modest acreage, there is potential for no less than nine habitat types.

Much of the restored tract will be prairie, including rare sand prairie and even rarer sand hill prairie. There will also be a lot of oak savanna, including globally imperiled sand oak savanna. Add to these some oak–hickory woodland, black walnut riparian forest, sycamore floodplain forest, and mixed woodland and you've got a varied upland landscape perfect for hiking once trails have been laid out.

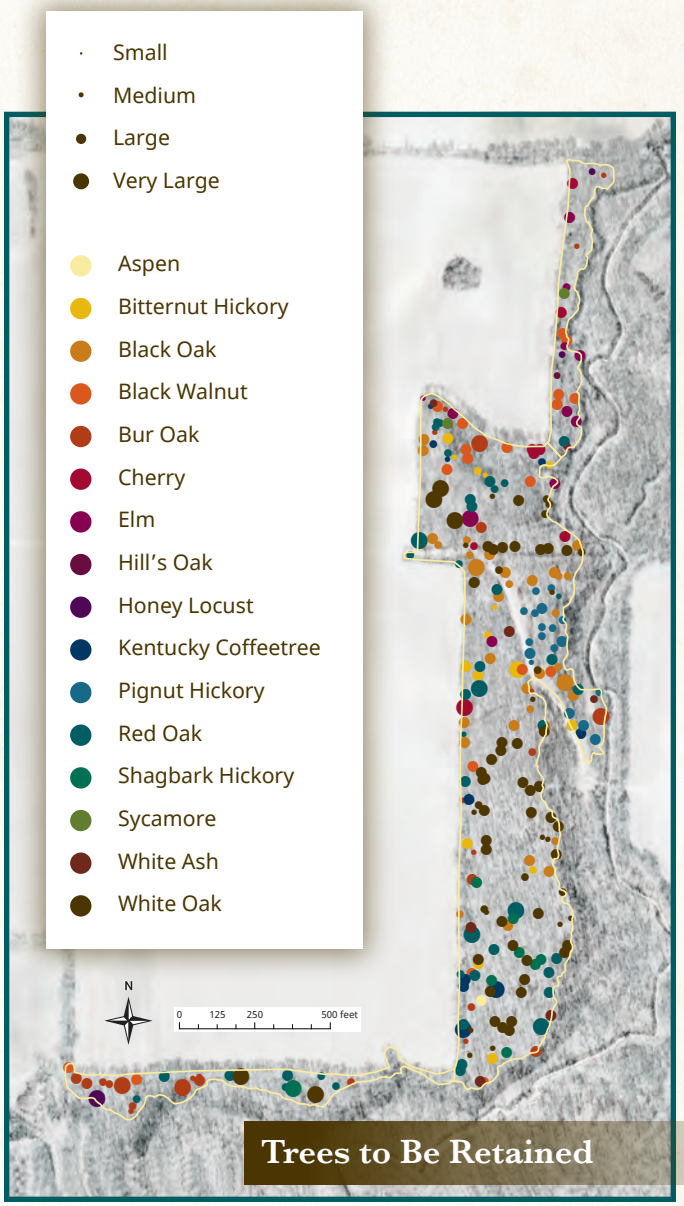
Using the projected-habitat map as a blueprint, TWI's restoration team focused on the prairie and savanna areas in 2016. More than 2,200 pounds of seed made up of 165 native species were scattered in January over the bare fields. The seed included common prairie species like lead-plant and cream wild indigo and also rare

ones like sand milkweed and clustered poppy-mallow. In the spring, 41,000 seedlings were planted by hand, representing 142 native species. Prescribed burns followed in late December.

The savanna areas have required a different approach. Savannas are characterized by their relatively open canopy allowing sunlight to reach the ground, but those portions of Hickory Hollow had become dense with trees and shrubs. The first step in restoration was to thin them out. Using GPS, staff mapped all the native trees to be kept, coded by size and species. The non-native, small, or weedy trees not included on the map were then removed.

The remaining large trees became the architectural frame for the savanna restoration. In the fall of 2016, more than 700 saplings were planted throughout these zones—a younger generation of trees that will ultimately replace the old ones and ensure healthy savanna for decades to come. Six different oak species dominated the planting, with hickory, pecan, American plum, prairie willow, and other native trees scattered throughout. Nearly all the trees planted will be excellent sources of food for birds and wildlife.

With different types of maps guiding the effort, restoration of Hickory Hollow is well underway. As the projected-habitat map indicates in dark gray, though, there will be one non-native habitat there even after restoration: a parking area for visitors to this very different upland area of the Dixon Refuge.



A map of trees to be retained during thinning out of some Hickory Hollow areas being restored to savanna.

Indian Ridge Marsh in the Calumet Region

The Illinois–Indiana Calumet Lake Quadrangle in 1929 by the U.S. Geological Survey, with the area of TWI's current Indian Ridge Marsh restoration added in green.

The Calumet region, covering much of Chicago's Southeast Side and part of northwest Indiana, was once one of the most biodiverse wetland areas in North America. In the late 19th century it began to develop into an industrial hub, eventually known worldwide for its steel factories and the manufacture of Pullman train cars.

A U.S. Geological Survey map from 1929 depicts the bustling area around Chicago's Calumet Lake, marked by factory buildings, train tracks, and the residential neighborhoods where workers lived, including the famous company town of Pullman. Remnant marshes are scattered across the map, particularly between Calumet and Wolf lakes, many of which still exist.

As the area's industrial vitality declined in recent decades, conservationists began looking at the possibilities for ecological restoration. Since 2015 TWI has been working closely with Audubon Great Lakes, the Chicago Park District, and others to assess Calumet sites for their potential to be restored to hemi-marsh, to encourage the return of the many wetland-dependent bird species that once thrived in the region, such as the state-endangered Black-crowned Night-Heron.

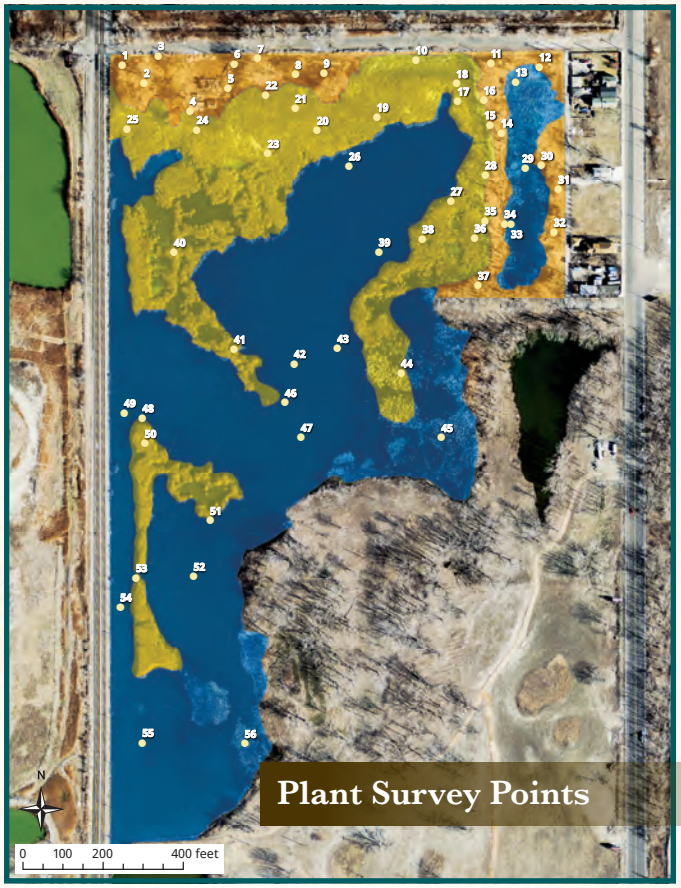
One of the assessment's priority sites is Indian Ridge Marsh, just south of a long-closed coke-smelting plant; the marsh site is now managed by the Chicago Park District. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers previously restored the southern portion of Indian Ridge

Marsh and, in 2016, TWI began restoration of 32 seriously degraded acres at the north end in partnership with Audubon Great Lakes. We spent much of the year clearing the site of invasive species like phragmites, as well as old tires and other castoffs.

Following prescribed burns, planting of native species will start in 2017. To gauge the progress of the restoration over time, we have used GPS to establish more than 50 plant monitoring points around the site. TWI staff will return at regular intervals to these points and, using formalized plant survey protocols, they'll track the species growing at each one. With steady management of invasives, the reintroduced native species like nodding wild onion, swamp milkweed, and red bulrush should proliferate, providing shelter and food for declining wetland birds and other wildlife.

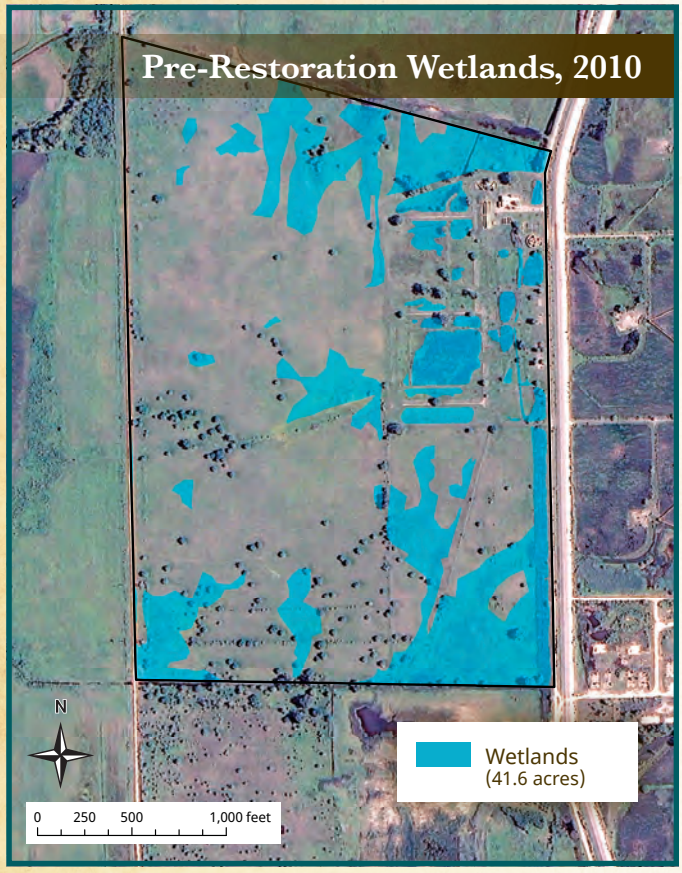
One unique plant species native to the Calumet may be gone forever, though. *Thismia americana* is the only flower endemic to Chicago. Last seen on the South Side in 1916, this low-lying, minuscule plant is thought to be extinct. Ever hopeful, TWI Restoration Specialist Trevor Edmonson helped lead the Thismia Centennial Hunt at Indian Ridge Marsh in August 2016, marking the 100th anniversary of the last sighting.

Sadly they didn't find any thismia that day, but it was a great chance for plant enthusiasts to rediscover Indian Ridge Marsh and get a sense of the restoration to come.



A map of TWI's restoration monitoring points for surveying the development of plant communities at Indian Ridge Marsh.

Lobelia Meadows at Midewin



A map of Lobelia Meadows in 2010, prior to restoration, revealing a drained landscape with a significant manmade footprint.

In 2016 TWI completed four years of intensive restoration at Lobelia Meadows, a 160-acre parcel at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie near Joliet, Illinois. Formerly a U.S. Army arsenal that produced record amounts of explosives during World War II, Midewin is now managed by the U.S. Forest Service. TWI has been partnering with the Forest Service on gradual restoration of the vast site, and Lobelia Meadows was the sixth parcel we've completed.

The challenges of restoring Lobelia Meadows were big: Crisscrossed by roads, drain tiles, and earthen berms, the parcel was home to the sewage treatment plant that had served the army arsenal. After removal of all this infrastructure, restoring the parcel's original hydrology and topography was TWI's first step for the project.

A TWI pre-restoration aerial map shows the parcel in 2010 with the sewage treatment plant clearly visible in the northeast corner: 41.6 acres were wetlands at the time. After hydrologic restoration, the wetland areas had increased to almost 112 acres—even more than we had anticipated in our habitat projections.

TWI's Prairie Champions

Lobelia Meadows couldn't have been restored without the help of lots of volunteers. In 2016, TWI recognized four corporations as "prairie champions": **The Dow Chemical Company, Ecolab, Harrah's Joliet, and Waste Management.**

Over the years of restoration, employees from these companies' local offices joined TWI staff in planting tens of thousands of seedlings, and the companies also contributed financially to the Lobelia Meadows restoration effort. Their sustained support was celebrated at a public ceremony at Midewin, followed by more planting of course!

With so much wetland habitat, Lobelia Meadows has ended up with a majority of plants that like "wet feet." In both wet and dry areas, though, what makes this restoration special is the dolomite bedrock so close to the soil surface in many spots—in some places within 12 inches. TWI's early soil sampling and mapping had revealed the chance to bring back globally rare dolomite prairie and wetlands here.

Dolomite-adapted plants are finicky. They're very sensitive to disturbance, slow to establish, and extremely range-restricted. As we planted various dolomite-loving species, we marked their location with GPS so as to be able to monitor their progress over time. Our plant surveys in 2016 revealed that these rare species are already naturalizing and spreading on their own at Lobelia Meadows. The federally endangered leafy prairie-clover in particular is thriving in the thin, rocky soils.

As we turn over Lobelia Meadows to the U.S. Forest Service for long-term management, TWI's next project at Midewin is already underway—the biggest chunk of restoration yet undertaken there. At 1,800 acres, this new seven-year project will link previously restored parcels on Midewin's west side into a 4,000-acre corridor of wetland and prairie habitats. Along with the Forest Service, the massive project is anchored by several longtime Midewin supporters: the National Forest Foundation, Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, and Grand Victoria Foundation. We promise they'll see many more maps as the new restoration unfolds.

A map of Lobelia Meadows in 2015, several years after hydrologic and topographic restoration, now mostly wetlands.

Constructed Wetlands in the Farm Belt

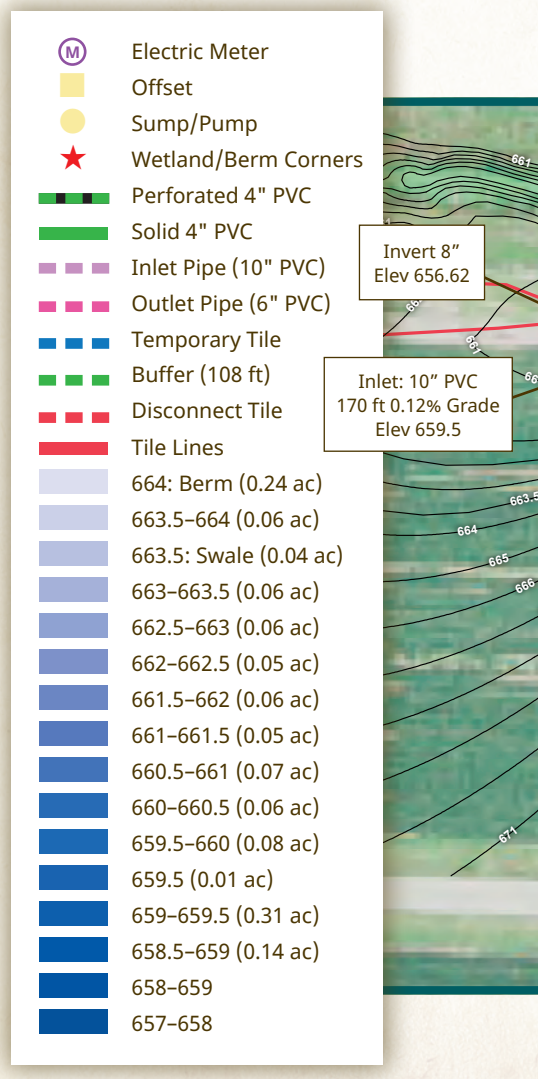
The maps created for TWI's Growing Wetlands for Clean Water project are altogether different from other project maps. Instead of guiding restoration of lost habitats, they're blueprints for constructing new wetlands on farms to reduce nutrient pollution.

Designed by TWI Senior Environmental Engineer Dr. Jill Kostel, these constructed wetlands remove excess nitrogen and phosphorus in agricultural runoff to improve water quality. Too much nitrogen and phosphorus—known as nutrient pollution—is the cause of aquatic "dead zones." While the Gulf of Mexico's dead zone may be the best known (and Illinois is the #1 contributor of the nutrient runoff that causes it), dead zones are increasingly common in bodies of water throughout the Midwest.

Dr. Kostel describes constructed wetlands as a natural solution through an engineered design. In designing one, she needs to locate the underground drain tiles in the farm fields and calculate the acreage that will drain into the wetland to determine how big it needs to be. She needs to analyze the topography of the site to determine the optimal shape and placement of the wetland. And she needs to take into account what the farmer wants, like the size of the buffer zone to avoid losing productive farmland.

These and other factors get integrated into a preliminary project design. Once the landowner has approved it, more detailed engineering specifications are drawn up to be used by the contractors who will build the wetland over the course of several days.

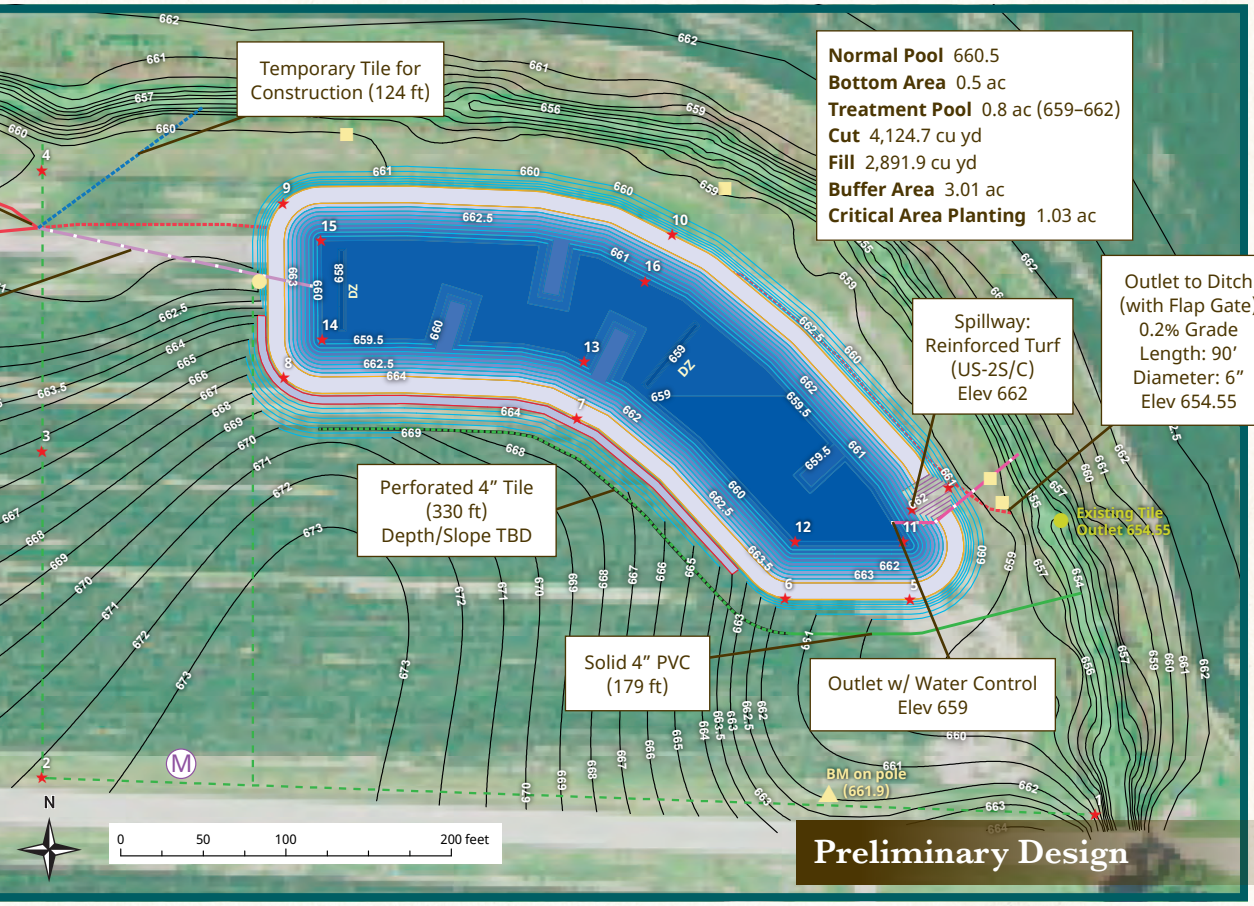
TWI's second farm-based wetland was installed in 2016 in Bureau County by the Illinois Land Improvement Contractors Association (ILICA). In the preliminary project design, it looks rather like a kidney-shaped swimming pool. In reality, once it's planted with native species it will more closely resemble a naturally occurring wetland, and act like one too.



The emergent marsh vegetation in TWI's first farm-based wetland, installed a year earlier in Bureau County, began developing in 2016 and started to remove nitrogen and phosphorus draining off the fields. Both constructed wetlands are being monitored for TWI by Dr. Karl Rockne of the University of Illinois at Chicago and his team, whose research is documenting their effectiveness at nutrient removal.

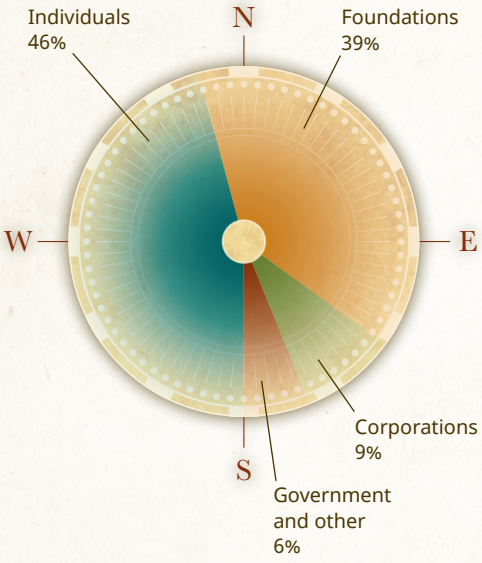
TWI is currently designing wetlands for more farmers in the Big Bureau Creek Watershed, as well as in the headwaters of the Vermilion River in Livingston County, Illinois. With ag-sector partners like the Illinois Corn Growers Association, the American Farmland Trust, and others, we're aiming for constructed wetlands throughout the state's Farm Belt—and for cleaner water both locally and downstream.

The preliminary project design for TWI's second farm-based, nutrient-removing constructed wetland.

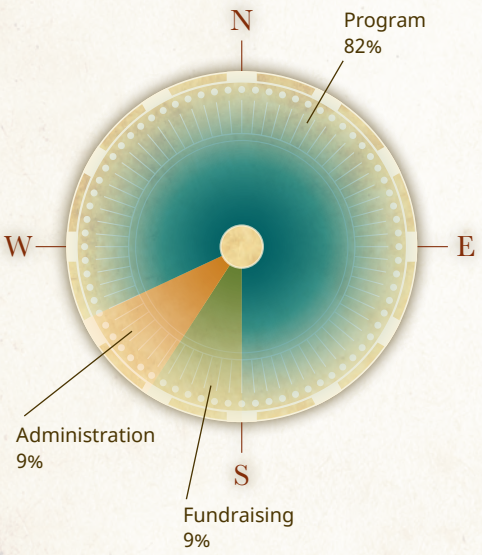


Financial Statements

2016 Revenue Breakdown



2016 Expense Breakdown



Statement of Activities	2016	2015
Revenue		
Program grants	$442,535	$357,688
Contributions	563,692	507,570
Program fees	26,276	65,395
Miscellaneous income	56,396	132,294
	$1,088,899	$1,062,947
Net assets released from restriction	736,928	536,513
Total revenue	$1,825,827	$1,599,460
Expenses		
Program	$1,352,692	$1,263,629
Administration	154,687	149,354
Fundraising	137,848	186,684
Total expenses	$1,645,227	$1,599,667
Increase (decrease) in unrestricted net assets	$180,600	$(207)
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets		
Program grants	$1,724,222	$576,697
Net assets released from restriction	(736,928)	(536,513)
Increase in temporarily restricted net assets	$987,294	$40,184
Increase in Net Assets	$1,167,894	$39,977
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	5,998,074	5,958,097
Net Assets at End of Year	$7,165,968	$5,998,074

Statement of Financial Position	2016	2015
Assets		
Cash, cash equivalents, and investments	$1,681,754	$927,772
Grants receivable	708,717	247,500
Pledges receivable	1,999,589	2,155,131
Accounts receivable	7,955	35,444
Notes receivable	897,416	897,416
Prepaid expenses	24,484	24,699
Land and leasehold improvements	2,747,724	2,702,085
Equipment	250,978	221,476
Less—accumulated depreciation	(345,034)	(319,074)
Total assets	$7,973,583	$6,892,449
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Accounts payable	$29,450	$67,364
Notes payable	720,858	777,883
Accrued expenses	48,974	40,795
Deferred revenue	8,333	8,333
Unrestricted funds	3,284,716	3,104,116
Temporarily restricted funds	3,881,252	2,893,958
Total liabilities and net assets	$7,973,583	$6,892,449

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Hickory Hollow at the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge
A grand old bur oak (top) and spring seedling planting (bottom).

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Indian Ridge Marsh in the Calumet Region
A prescribed burn in preparation for the first planting of native species.

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Lobelia Meadows at Midewin
Great blue lobelia (top), one of the native species thriving in the restored wetlands (bottom).

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Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey R. Ramsay
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Christopher Rintz
John Rogner and Sue Elston
Gary Ropski and Barbara Schleck
Dana and Sue Rose
Denise Sandoval
Dominic Schilt
John and Barbara Schmitz
Nancy Schroeder
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Lucinda Toft
George W. Vieth
Clark D. and Andrea Wagner
Suzanne L. Wagner
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Bob and Pat Wheeler
Dolph Williams
Mr. and Mrs. Alain Wood-Prince
Bill and Nancy Yurek
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Evan Barker
John W. Barriger IV
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Leslie and Jonathan Bass
Jami Beck
Naomi Berkove
Charles D. Bonnell
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Constructed Wetlands in the Farm Belt
One of TWI's nutrient-removing wetlands in Bureau County, Illinios, a year after installation.

Mary O'Connell
Michael Pehanich
Anna Nessy Perlberg
Craig Peterson
Victoria Pettit
Juliet Priebe
Cheri Reader
Iza and Maciej Redlinski
Monica Richart
Ron Rodriguez
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Lorin and Renate Schab
Bill and Mary Schubert
Sherman Shaw
Jeff Smith
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Lauren Umek
William and Cassie Wagner
John and Sallie Watson
William Watson
Mark Westcott
Ron Wojtanowski
Virginia Woulfe-Beile
Hannah A. Wright
William Yacktman
Virginia Yang and Fred Shuppara
Margarita Zamora
Stan Zatarski
Tony and Debbie Zoia
Anonymous (2)

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Caterpillar Foundation
Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
The Retirement Research Foundation
U.S. Bank Foundation
Wrigley Company Foundation

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Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd.
Dr. Karl Rockne/University of Illinois at Chicago
Steve and Ann Ryan
Waste Management

Tribute Gifts

In memory of Todd L. Bolt
Tylana Coop

In honor of Ross Bruhnke
Sara Earhart

In honor of Kevin Bryant
Jami Beck

In memory of Jeffry Cecil
NSA Civilian Welfare Fund

In honor of Paul F. Cruikshank
Sara C. Foster

In memory of Daisy
Diane Pascal and Thomas Richie
Missy Pascal

In honor of Shirley DeLorme
Jane McBride

In honor of Mrs. Wesley M. Dixon
John R. and Carolynn D. Loacker
Sally B. Searle

In memory of Gordon Eggers
Dominic Schilt

In memory of M. "Doc" Hall
Thomas Karras

In honor of Jane McBride
Judy Sutherland

In honor of Carol McConnell
Jane McBride

In honor of David and Christine Murdoch
David M. Murdoch

In honor of Sarah Richardson
Richard Ellis Hudson

In honor of Carol Richart
Monica Richart

In honor of Steve Ryan
Linda and Gary Stephans

In honor of Rick Seibert
Peggy and Dick Lami

In honor of Judy Sutherland
Jane McBride

In honor of Richard P. Toft
Lucinda Toft

In honor of Clark and Joan Wagner
Thomas Goldstein

In honor of Clark L. Wagner
Jim and Wanda Hollensteiner

In honor of Suzanne L. Wagner
Mary O'Connell
Linda and Gary Stephans

In honor of Carl Yudell
Mrs. Mildred Eisenstadt

In honor of Helen Zimmerman
Jane McBride

The Dixon Waterfowl Refuge
Harvesting native seed in the fall.

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