

NATIVE TALLGRASS PRAIRIE RECONSTRUCTION AND MANAGEMENT AT NEWPORT CHEMICAL DEPOT, INDIANA

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Abstract: Tallgrass prairie reconstruction at the U.S. Army's Newport Chemical Depot began in 1994. Inspiration for this project was garnered from a 1993 Indiana Division of Nature Preserves flora survey and their subsequent 1994 report which stated: *A large acreage of the southwestern portion of NAAP was formerly mesic silt loam prairie. The Vermillion County Soil Survey showed prairie soils for this area, old Indiana county maps showed a large area of prairie, and we observed Big Bluestem and Prairie Dock along the road in the area. A restoration this large (1900 +/- acres) in this part of the Midwest is an exciting opportunity. There are no remnants in Indiana of prairies of the size of this potential restoration. The largest prairies that do remain in the state are sand prairies; thus the significance of this area is even more important because it is silt loam prairie restoration.* Therefore, in the spirit of good land stewardship, the Depot voluntarily contracted with Peter Schramm Prairie Restorations for 10 years between 1994 and 2005 to plant 336 acres of Tallgrass prairie. All of these acres were former pre-settlement Tallgrass prairie soils that had been producing corn/soybeans in recent years. Using some of the proceeds from the remaining Depot agricultural tracts the Depot spent nearly \$128,000 for site preparation, seed and planting. A total of six (6) species of grasses and fifty-four (54) species of forbs were planted. Management of this reconstructed ecosystem has mainly consisted of prescribed burning in cooperation with the Indiana Division of Forestry.