

## Decision Memo

### Middle Grant Creek Restoration Project Boundary Extension

USDA Forest Service  
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie  
Will County, Illinois

#### **Decision**

I have decided to approve the extension of the Middle Grant Creek restoration project boundary. The southern boundary lines will now extend to south, to Old School House Road.

The extension will include approximately 120 acres of upland, which includes nearly identical landscape and physical characteristics that occur in the original project area and is accessed by the same roads. The extended area will comply with the following original project goals; 1) implementing integrated watershed restoration to restore and optimize hydrological, aquatic, and soil conditions for ecological values, 2) restoring habitat and ecosystems, and 3) improving scenic integrity. In hindsight, these lands should have been included within the original decision to allow more efficient and effective restoration treatments.

The project activities authorized include:

- Improving hydrological functioning by; stabilizing stream banks with appropriate native species; filling unneeded ditches; locating and removing drain tiles; and removing old roads, culverts, fire hydrants, rail beds and ballast.
- Implementing an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to control invasives grasses and herbaceous cover, including mechanical treatments, prescribed fire, herbicide treatments, and competition by native plants.
- Cutting woody vegetation with hand tools and removing (burning or chipping); treating cut tree stumps with herbicides to prevent sprouting.
- Monitoring to determine management results before and after to enhancing native vegetation remnants or planting appropriate native species to restore prairie, and savanna.
- Protecting and enhancing existing native vegetation remnants.
- Utilizing prescribed burning, mowing, and possibly grazing after the initial invasive species control actions to manage the restored prairie and savanna.

My decision to implement the goals and activities is based on information provided in the Drummond Floodplain and Middle Grant Creek Restoration Decision Notice and Environmental

Assessment, both published in 2003. Since the extended area includes contiguous landscape of similar conditions and physical characteristics, the project activities would have no new effects to the hydrology or other natural resources, including threatened or endangered species. Heritage resources located within the added area, which has already undergone the required archaeological survey, would be avoided during project activities in accordance with consultations completed under the National Historic Preservation Act.

The proposed action fall under Category Number 6 in Section 31.2 of the *Forest Service Handbook 1909.15- Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook*. The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects, which may significantly affect the environment. I considered all physical and biological components of the environment. Therefore, this action can be excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

### **Public Involvement**

The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping on May 3, 2005. In addition, the agency received comments from the public and agencies, which were used to refine the project and analysis and were also used to explore the possibility of extraordinary circumstances and potential effects on those resources.

### **Findings Required by Other Laws**

**Prairie Plan-** This decision is consistent with the Prairie Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act. The project was designed in conformance with Prairie Plan decisions for Management Area 1, which is designated for prairie ecosystem restoration. (Prairie Plan 2002, Chapter 3, Section 3.2)

**Endangered Species Act-** The Endangered Species Act requires that Federal activities do not jeopardize the continued existence of any species Federally listed or proposed as threatened or endangered, or result in adverse modification to such species' designated critical habitat. It was determined that no listed species are present at this project location and that this decision will have "no effect" on listed species or their critical habitats.

**Sensitive Species (Forest Service Manual 2670) -** Forest Service Manual direction requires analysis of potential impacts to sensitive species, or those species for which the Regional Forester has identified population viability concerns. Potential effects of activities at Midewin on sensitive species were analyzed and documented in a Biological Assessment for the Prairie Plan (2002). This decision will have "no impact" on sensitive species.

**Clean Water Act -** This Act requires restoration and maintenance of the integrity of waters. The Forest Service complies with this Act through the use of Best Management Practices. This decision incorporates Best Management Practices to ensure protection of soil and water resources.

**Wetlands (Executive Order 11990)**- This order requires action be taken to minimize the destruction, loss or degradation of wetlands, and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands. My decision complies with this act, through the decision to restore the natural and beneficial values of the wetlands in the area.

**Floodplains (Executive Order 11988)**- This order requires actions to be taken to reduce the risk of flood loss, to minimize the impact of floods on human safety, health and welfare, and to restore and preserve the natural and beneficial values served by floodplains. My decision will not negatively affect the floodplains.

**National Historic Preservation Act**- There is some historic properties or other heritage resources located within or adjacent to the project area. Impacts to Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or histories properties may occur as a result of this decision.

**Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)**-This order requires consideration of whether projects would disproportionately impact minority or low-income populations. My decision complies with this Act. This decision is not expected to adversely impact minority or low-income populations.

**National Environmental Policy Act**- This Act requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. The entirety of documentation for this decision supports compliance with this Act.

### **Implementation Date**

Implementation of this project may occur immediately.

### **Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities**

This decision is not subject to administrative appeal.

### **Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Renée Thakali, Restoration Team Leader at the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Supervisor's Office (Address: 30239 S. State Route 53, Wilmington, IL 60481; Voice: 815-423-6370 Fax: 815-423-6376; [Email link](#)).

### **Signature and Date**

I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment as it is within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, section 31.2, and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in significant individual or cumulative environmental effects.

My conclusion is based on information presented in this document and the entirety of the Planning Record.

  
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LOGAN LEE,  
Prairie Supervisor

February 2, 2007

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