



NGRREC Presents Piasa Palisades Nature Hikes: Hill Prairie Series

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GODFREY – Join Lewis and Clark Community College’s National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC?) on any Tuesday in June for an exclusive look at the Palisades Nature Preserve.

This property offers breathtaking views of the Mississippi-Illinois River confluence from the bluffs overlooking the Great River Road. It is owned by the Lewis and Clark

Community College Foundation and managed by NGRREC and the Great Rivers Land Trust, in cooperation with the Illinois Nature Preserve Commission, and it has never been open to the general public.

“NGRREC is very focused on expanding the ways in which we can include our community in the work that we do,” said NGRREC Environmental Educator Allison Rhanor. “Launching scheduled hikes of this privately owned property will not only give hikers a way to experience this local gem, but it will also continue our mission to bring the public into the environmental science happening in their backyard.”

NGRREC will provide the public with its first look at these ecologically important ecosystems through guided hikes offered each Tuesday in June from 6–8:30 p.m., culminating in a chance to catch spectacular sunsets over the river from the 150ft-high bluffs. Tickets are \$10 per hiker, and all proceeds will fund NGRREC outreach events.

Hikes will be led by Palisades Manager and Field Biologist Megan Cosgriff and will focus on the remnant loess hill prairie ecosystem present within this preserve, a rarity in the state of Illinois and the surrounding region, as well as the restoration and management efforts that go into the preservation of this habitat. With any luck, the prickly pear cactuses will be in full bloom.

“Loess hill prairies are a rare and declining habitat in Illinois and the surrounding region. Situated atop the bluffs of Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, these prairies support a unique community of plants and animals,” Cosgriff said. “We are excited to provide opportunities for the public to visit the Palisades Preserve to experience this habitat firsthand and learn more about the importance of hill prairie conservation and management.”

Each Tuesday in June will offer the same experience, but registration is required and capacity is limited. A maximum of 20 individuals per hike. Participating hikers must be 18 years or older, or 12 years and up when accompanied by a legal parent or guardian.

The hiking experience will alternate between mild and moderate in difficulty, and hikers are encouraged to come prepared with normal hiking necessities such as sunscreen and bug spray. Long pants and closed-toe shoes are a requirement. Shoes offering sturdy ankle support are highly recommended.

Hikers should bring their own water bottles, but there will be a water cooler for refills. Please be advised that this experience may bring hikers into contact with biting insects,

ticks, venomous snakes, sheer cliff sides, chiggers, trail-less areas, and other such aspects of this natural environment. Waivers must be signed upon arrival for all individuals.

“We are hopeful that this hill prairie series throughout the month of June will be just the first in a lineup of other hiking experiences we can provide the public throughout other times of the year, such as hikes to enjoy fall colors, spring wild flowers, bird watching and more, so please come out and tell us what you think,” Rhanor said.

Registration for each hike will close the day before the scheduled date, or when registration reaches 20 individuals for that hike. Those wanting to register can visit <https://conta.cc/2Jwokc0>.

Please Note: This property is privately managed and access is by registered tour only. Please continue being respectful of these beautiful local bluff ecosystems by not entering without prior permission.

National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC?)

Founded in 2002 as a collaborative partnership between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Lewis and Clark Community College, NGRREC is dedicated to the study of great river systems and the communities that use them. The center aspires to be a leader in scholarly research, education, and outreach related to the interconnectedness of large rivers, their floodplains, watersheds, and their associated communities. To learn more about NGRREC, visit www.ngrrec.org.