



Friends Of Illinois Nature Preserves Hires Travis Neal As First Field Organizer For Southern Illinois

September 17 2021 2:56 PM



SOUTHERN ILLINOIS - Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves is excited to announce and welcome Travis Neal as our first Field Organizer. Neal will be responsible for supporting and facilitating the growth of new and existing volunteer stewardship communities at southern Illinois nature preserves and identifying partnerships and resources.

Launched in 2020, the mission of the Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves is to support the Illinois Nature Preserves System by advocating for and finding increased support, resources, funding, and staff for the system and assisting local volunteer communities as

they help restore and care for their Illinois biodiversity reserves. The Friends believe that when people are connected to their Nature Preserves, this leads to more resilient support for the conservation of the state's Nature Preserves.

The Illinois Nature Preserves System was established by state law in 1963. In preserves owned by scores of agencies, organizations and individuals, dependent upon popular support and inter-agency collaboration, the 607 preserves and reserves protect the state's finest woodlands, prairies, and wetlands for the benefit of science, the public, and for the survival of nature itself. These lands and their rare and endangered species represent thousands of years of heritage and millions of years of evolution. They are crucial resources for the future. They are also beautiful and thrilling to visit.

Mr. Neal brings his passion for protecting and maintaining resilient ecosystems to Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves. Travis currently also works as a Field Technician with Plants of Concern – Southern Illinois Region. Travis has a Master's degree in Plant Biology with a focus on Ecology from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. In addition to his work with rare plants, Travis also has experience developing collaborations. Working with a National Science Foundation grant, Travis collaborated with K-12 educators, graduate students, researchers, and professors to advance science education in rural schools in Southern Illinois.

“Travis’ enthusiasm for rare plants and their ecosystems is contagious,” said Amy Doll, Director of Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves. “We can’t wait for Travis to get started in building stewardship communities and mentoring stewards at nature preserves in Southern Illinois.”

In his free time, you'll find Travis exploring the natural wonders of Illinois as he is fascinated by the swamps, hill prairies, and the rest of natural Illinois. Travis begins his work with Friends on September 20th. You can meet Travis at the Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve 50th Anniversary event on October 9th. (<https://www.facebook.com/events/816992625646087>) Travis can be reached at travis@friendsilnature.org.

www.friendsofillinoisnaturepreserves.org

<https://www.facebook.com/friendsilnature>