



# Restoring the Midewin Prairie

## National Water Replenishment and Enhancement Initiative

The Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie was established in 1996 on the U.S. Army’s former Joliet Arsenal. Portions of the prairie—including the South Prairie Creek Outwash Plain—were heavily degraded by previous management actions. Partners focused their efforts on this particular portion of the landscape, replanting native grasses, treating invasive weeds, and removing agricultural drain tile. This prairie restoration improves the capacity to retain water, contributes to the formation of wetlands, and connects this area to Prairie Creek.

**Location:** Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, Illinois

**Partnership Accomplishments:** Removed 16,925 feet of drain tile, treated 226 acres for invasive weeds, and planted 79 acres intensively with native plants.

**Number of Projects:** Two (2013 and 2014)

**Project Accomplishments:**

- 2013: Removed 5,217 feet of drain tile.
- 2014: Removed 11,708 feet of drain tile, treated 226 acres for invasive weeds, and planted 79 acres with native plants.

**Restoration Benefits:** Wetlands and wetland plants are becoming re-established. Water is infiltrating the ground.

**Additional Benefits:** Native plant species are becoming re-established, and the habitat is opening up for wetland and grassland birds.

**Coca-Cola Replenishment Value:** 292 million liters per year.

**Total Funding:** \$306,567 (Funding Sources: Coca-Cola—\$178,131, National Forest Foundation— \$97,436, Forest Service—\$31,000)

**Implementation Partners:** National Forest Foundation, The Wetlands Initiative



*Some of the thousands of field tiles that are being removed to restore the area to a more natural setting. (Courtesy U.S. Forest Service)*





*Heavy equipment being used to remove the buried agricultural drain tile lines (top) and a disabled tile drain (bottom). (Courtesy U.S. Forest Service)*