



Plants of Concern
Monitoring Rare Species in Chicago Wilderness -
A Volunteer-based Program

FACT SHEET

Plants of Concern, launched in 2001, is a rare plant monitoring program designed to gather standardized, regional monitoring data over time to learn population trends in relation to management practices. The program is a collaboration of trained volunteer monitors working together with land managers and scientists. The data collected are providing land managers with information that helps them set management goals for species within a community context and evaluate management practices. This long-term project is part of the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan goal to assess, research, protect and recover the region's rare plants.

Plants of Concern, coordinated by the Chicago Botanic Garden, has strong partnerships with local, state, federal and non-profit agencies. It has been funded by Chicago Wilderness, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (Wildlife Preservation Fund and Conservation 2000), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, and CorLands (Corporation for Open Lands). The Nature Conservancy has provided funding for volunteer events.

Key Program Elements

- Standardized monitoring protocols designed for use throughout the region
- Monitoring focused in NE Illinois. Pilot programs have been initiated in SE Wisconsin and NW Indiana:

✦ Cook	✦ Lake	✦ Kankakee	✦ Walworth, WI
✦ DuPage	✦ McHenry	✦ Kenosha, WI	✦ Porter, IN
✦ Kane	✦ Will	✦ Waukesha, WI	
- In-depth monitoring program at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie (Will County, near Joliet)
- Conservation Design process: feedback loops between monitoring, research and adaptive management
- Volunteers trained as citizen scientists through workshops and in the field
- Broad-based landowner collaboration: public and non-profit agencies and private owners
- Data analysis for long-term species tracking (ACCESS database, compatible with other regional databases)
- GIS applications

Level 1 Monitoring

- Complete standardized data forms
- Take population census – record numbers of plants and area covered
- Record management activities, invasives and other threats to populations
- Record associate species
- Record locations using GPS coordinates and drawn maps or aerials
- Sign confidentiality form to ensure protection of sensitive species locations

Cumulative Results for 2001-2008 (as of Dec. 1, 2008)

- 459 trained volunteers
- 9281 hours donated by volunteers
- 83 cooperating landowners
- 242 different sites
- 203 species (110 listed and 93 rare but not listed)
- 707 element occurrences
- 55% of listed EORs in northeastern Illinois

POC volunteers also conduct demographic monitoring (Level 2) on four target species: *Viola conspersa* (Dog Violet), *Cypripedium candidum* (White Lady Slipper), *Cirsium hillii* (Prairie or Hill's Thistle) and *Tomanthera auriculata* (Eared False Foxglove).

Contacts

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