

Field Day Offered for Managing Loess Hills Timber and Prairie

Wildlife, timber and wildflowers all benefit from active management of natural areas. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) will offer a Loess Hill Timber and Prairie Field Day 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 31, at the Sean and Erin Slocum farm south of Mound City. The workshop is free and lunch will be provided by MDC.

The morning session will focus on timber stand improvement, said Jim Pierson, an MDC private land conservationist. Experts will talk about timber sales and how thinning stands can benefit tree health and improve habitat for native species such as deer and turkey. A walking tour will be held.

"Wildlife can benefit from more mast (such as acorns) for food," Pierson, "while people can see increased profit from timber sales down the road."

Restoring and maintaining loess hill prairies will be the focus for the afternoon session. Wind-blown glacial loess soil created steep hills bordering the Missouri River valley. Many hills were originally prairies. The hilltops have arid conditions, so many contain plants rare in Missouri that are usually found in drier lands in the West, such as soapweed yucca and dotted blazing star. The afternoon tour will showcase restoration progress on a loess hill prairie.

"Loess hill prairies are very precious," Pierson said. "There are quite a few species found on them that you usually only see out West."

In the absence of wildfire, loess hill prairies are often invaded by red cedar trees and non-native plants. Prescribed burns and tree removal can help native grasses and wildflowers. Deer and turkey utilize such areas, as does other wildlife.

"Loess hill prairies provide forage and hangout places for bobwhite quail, lots of songbirds and lots of butterflies," Pierson said.

For more information or to register for the field day, call Pierson at 660-442-3173, ext. 114. For more information about conservation in Missouri, go to <http://www.mdc.mo.gov>.