

Kohn Park—Lodi's newest conservation park
Charlie Luthin (Volunteer)

Several years ago, Ms. Audrey Kohn of Lodi donated a 4-acre plot of land to the City of Lodi as its newest park property. The former tobacco field and later hay meadow is wedged between Main Street and Spring Creek. After careful evaluation and deliberation, the City decided the best use of the parcel – Kohn Park-- is as a “conservation park” with limited development.

Last fall, some Lodi-area volunteers collected seeds of diverse prairie plants for a spring planting. In addition, friends at the Madison Audubon Goose Pond Sanctuary in Arlington provided additional prairie seed. I spent time this winter cleaning and inventorying the seed that we collected. We currently have seed from 44 species of native prairie plants, with other species forthcoming! We'll receive additional seed through a grant to the City of Lodi from the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

In late fall a neighbor mowed a fire break around the entire parcel, and an ecological consulting company out of Baraboo, EC3, was contracted to treat the upper 2/3rd of the parcel with herbicide to kill the meadow grasses in preparation for a spring prairie planting. The lower portion of the site has a nice mix of native plants and will not be treated with herbicide.

This spring residents will begin to see increased activity in Kohn Park. Within the next two weeks, the Lodi Fire Department will undertake a prescribed (intentional) burn across the entire parcel. The burn will remove the dead grass buildup, help warm the soil, and stimulate growth of any residual vegetation. Once the meadow “greens up” again, EC3 will return for a second herbicide treatment. Several weeks later the site will be ready for seeding.

EC3 will return once again with a “seed drill” in late spring to drill our seed mix into the soil over much of the site. Some of the remaining seed will be hand-sown into the prepared site this spring. We'll be seeking volunteers to participate in the seed-spreading effort. After all, this is OUR park and we will count on volunteers to make this project a success.

Although you'll see some positive changes in the park this summer, it will take several years for the new prairie to become established. We'll continue to supplement the site with seed and we will continue conducting prescribed burns on the site long into the future, as a prairie landscape is maintained by occasional fires.