Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

2022

Conservation Education Programs
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Thank you to all presenters and partners who make these programs possible. Special thanks to Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie (NTP) volunteers who provide time, talent, and knowledge in order for these programs to be presented. The award-winning Midewin NTP Volunteer Program is managed through a USDA Forest Service partnership agreement with The Nature Conservancy.

MIDEWIN
NATIONAL TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

2022
CONSERVATION
EDUCATION
PROGRAMS

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SHARE YOUR PHOTOS

Photos of your prairie experience can be shared around the world through the Midewin NTP library in the iNaturalist smartphone application, [https://bit.ly/2HAYFiK](https://bit.ly/2HAYFiK).

ENTER THE MIDEWIN NTP 2022 CARING FOR THE LAND PHOTO CHALLENGE!

Share your best prairie photos in the 2022 Caring for The Land Photo Challenge! Check the Midewin NTP website [https://www.fs.usda.gov/midewin](https://www.fs.usda.gov/midewin) for details. Finalists will be announced during a special webinar on National Public Lands Day, Saturday, September 24, 9 a.m. and will be featured in the 2023 Conservation Education Program guide.
MIDEWIN NTP PUBLIC WEBINARS
CARING FOR THE LAND
MIDEWIN NATIONAL TALLGRASS PRAIRIE
2022 PANEL DISCUSSION SERIES
In this 50th birthday year for Woodsy Owl, the 2022 Midewin NTP Panel Discussion Series acknowledges and celebrates one of the conservation hero’s greatest messages, “Care for the Land.” The Caring for the Land webinars are tailored to connect people of all ages and backgrounds with conservation experts who will share their knowledge regarding natural habitats, efforts addressing current concerns, and how each of us can get involved to make a difference.

REGISTRATION
Register for all programs by phone at 815–423–6370 Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Central, or by email at SM.FS.Midewin_RSVP@usda.gov. Please provide your name and email address and a representative will respond with information to participate in the program.

JANUARY
THROUGH SATURDAY JANUARY 22
BRUSHWOOD CENTER’S “AT EASE” NATURE PLATOON PHOTOGRAPHY DISPLAY
Experience the prairie through the lens of U.S. military veterans and their family members. Photos taken at Midewin NTP by participants in the Brushwood Center’s “At Ease” Nature and Art for Veterans Program will be displayed through January 22nd at Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods, located at 21850 North Riverwoods Road, Riverwoods, IL 60015.

Get information about the 2022 “At Ease” Nature Platoon on the Midewin NTP website (https://www.fs.usda.gov/midewin) or by emailing JKlinge@BrushwoodCenter.org.

10 WEDNESDAY, 6 TO 6:40 P.M.
SAVE THE EAGLES DAY
MAGNIFICENT RAPTORS—THEY STILL NEED YOUR HELP
In 2002, a bald eagle nest was spotted in the Chicago area for the first time in 100 years. Today, northeastern Illinois is home to nearly 40 known nesting pairs. What contributed to the increase in numbers, and how can that upward trend continue? What are some current programs and activities that help increase bald eagle numbers? What can you do—as an individual, family, or group—to support the growth of bald eagle populations and areas of their natural habitat? Learn when and where to look for bald eagles, and how to identify gender, age, and more. Find out about the Illinois Raptor Center [a 501(c)(3) organization] and other resources where you can volunteer or spread the word about their services.

Panelists
• Jo Fessett, Assistant to the Executive Director, Illinois Audubon Society
• Richard Hickson, Volunteer, Midewin NTP
• Mike Redmer, Supervisory Natural Resources Manager, USDA Forest Service, Midewin NTP
• Maqs Rheude, Eagle Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
January

29 SATURDAY, 9 TO 9:40 A.M.
NATIONAL SEED SWAP DAY
PLANT A PATCH OF PRAIRIE AT HOME:
HOW YOU CAN HELP PUT THE PRAIRIE BACK INTO “THE PRAIRIE STATE”
There was once so much prairie in Illinois that it became known as “The Prairie State”; now, less than a fraction of 1 percent remains. What’s more, this remaining prairie is scattered over different areas of the State. Why does prairie matter? Natural habitat creates more sustainability for butterflies and other pollinators that are responsible for one in every three forkfuls of food we eat. If that isn’t enough, the surprisingly long roots of prairie plants absorb carbon molecules. You can make a difference! By starting small and planting incrementally year over year, you can grow a patch of prairie at home. How do you get started? Which plants are almost sure to take hold? A little effort in the first year can result in years of less lawn maintenance and more pollinators and wildflowers to enjoy—right outside your door! On National Seed Swap Day, learn these important points before you place your 2022 seed and plant orders.

Panelists
- Janine Catchpole, Volunteer, Midewin NTP
- Jennifer Durkin, Horticulturist–Native Plant Specialist, USDA Forest Service, Midewin NTP
- Michelle Pearion, Botanist, USDA Forest Service, Midewin NTP
- Ellen Starr, Area Biologist, retired, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

February

2 WEDNESDAY, 6 TO 6:40 P.M.
WORLD WETLANDS DAY
(AND GROUNDHOG DAY!)
PLANT A PATCH OF PRAIRIE AT HOME:
WETLANDS
If you have wet areas in your yard that challenge your designs for a backyard prairie, there are moisture-loving native Illinois prairie plants to consider. Which plants are best suited for wet areas? Find out what resources are available to help home gardeners make the best choices and take steps to increase their chances of success. From rain gardens to pond plants to those spots that just don’t seem to get dry enough to plant, this program will give you options to think about that will work well in your yard.

Panelists
- Anna Braum, Ecologist, The Wetlands Initiative
- Ellen Starr, Area Biologist, retired, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
March

23 WEDNESDAY, 6 TO 6:40 P.M.
NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY
FROM COWS TO CORN—HOW AGRICULTURE IS HELPING TO RESTORE THE PRAIRIE

Agriculture is one of four key priorities identified in the Illinois Land Conservation Act that established Midewin NTP 25 years ago. The legislation’s other three priorities are (1) Recreation; (2) Education and Research; and (3) Restoration. How are corn and soybean crops and cattle and bison grazing helping to restore the land where the Joliet Arsenal once manufactured and stored munitions? Why is grazing an important component of the bison experiment? Find out from USDA Forest Service specialists who are directly involved in these projects.

Panelists
Row Crops
• Mike Redmer, Supervisory Natural Resources Manager, USDA Forest Service, Midewin NTP

Grazing
• Kelly Gutknecht, Rangeland Management Specialist, USDA Forest Service, Midewin NTP
• Liz Kovel-Fenoglio, Range Technician, USDA Forest Service, Midewin NTP

April

21 THURSDAY, 6 TO 6:40 P.M.
NATIONAL GO BIRDING DAY IS APRIL 24
FOR THE BIRDS? FROM BIRDWATCHING TO BIRDSCAPING, YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

From looking for grassland birds at Midewin NTP to planting a prairie garden at home, this program will address the value of protecting and increasing natural habitat for important bird species. You will be inspired to get out into the great outdoors and birdwatch this coming weekend, and throughout the year. Learn when and where to find birds at Midewin NTP, how to look for birds, and ways to identify them. New mobile applications make identifying a bird just a screen tap away on your smartphone—hear about some of the more popular applications and why birdwatchers like them.

Panelists
• Cory Anderson, Wildlife Biologist, USDA Forest Service, Midewin NTP
• Greg DuBois, Vice President, Will County Audubon Society, and Volunteer, Midewin NTP
• Rita Renwick, Volunteer, Midewin NTP

29 FRIDAY, 10 A.M.
ARBOR DAY
BUR OAK TREE PLANTING AT IRON BRIDGE TRAILHEAD:—A FACEBOOK LIVE EVENT

Magnificent overseers of the prairies—some bur oak trees were reference points for 1820s land surveyors. A few still rise high above the prairie landscape at Midewin NTP. Trees, especially native species, are stalwart contributors to the land. Tune in through Facebook Live as we plant a new bur oak tree at the Iron Bridge Trailhead at Midewin NTP.
“HAPPY TOGETHER”: UNDERSTANDING THE PLIGHT OF TURTLES—IMAGINE WHAT ME AND YOU CAN DO TOGETHER TO HELP THEM

Declining numbers of turtles can contribute to the breakdown of an ecosystem. Turtles are substantial contributors of biomass, making them essential to their environment. As the prairie ecosystem has dwindled, many native turtle species have significantly declined. Radio telemetry tracking and other technologies are helping researchers track turtles to learn more about the natural habitat they need to survive. Find out about some of the organizations and resources in the area that focus on learning ways to help increase turtle numbers and how you can get involved and make a difference.

Panelists
- Cory Anderson, Wildlife Biologist, USDA Forest Service, Midewin NTP
- Rich King, Professor and Chair, Department of Biological Sciences, Northern Illinois University
- Callie Klatt Golba, Student, Northern Illinois University
- Mike Redmer, Supervisory Natural Resources Manager, USDA Forest Service, Midewin NTP

BIRDS OF MIDEWIN NATIONAL TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

Learn why so many people consider Midewin NTP a haven for birdwatchers. Volunteers, partners, and staff are working with over 275 species of native Illinois prairie plants to re-establish and expand natural habitat for grassland birds and other important pollinators. This restoration process seems to be working; Midewin NTP visitors report sighting short-eared owls, bobolinks, Henslow’s sparrows, dickcissels, and more! Get the scoop about the birds you might see at Midewin NTP as well as the best times and places to look for them.

Presenter
- Greg DuBois, Vice President, Will County Audubon Society, and Volunteer, Midewin NTP
**JUNE**

20 **MONDAY, 6 TO 6:40 P.M.**

**NATIONAL POLLINATOR WEEK KICK-OFF EVENT**

**BEE THE DIFFERENCE: YOU CAN HELP INCREASE POLLINATOR HABITAT**

One in every three bites of food we eat depends on pollinators. Pollinators, including monarchs and other butterflies, moths, bees, grassland birds, and more, rely on natural habitat. At Midewin NTP, volunteers, partners, and staff are working with over 275 different species of native Illinois prairie plants to increase pollinator habitats. Their painstaking efforts appear to be making a difference. In recent years, millions of monarch butterflies roosted in large groupings, mostly on the branches of oak trees along the Henslow Trail, in the first few weeks of September. The monarchs rest for a time at Midewin NTP on their way to winter in Mexico. Learn the optimal times and places to experience the incredible roosting of migrating monarchs and what you can do at home to support them.

**Annual Honey-Tasting:** Break out your new or favorite local honey to participate in our annual National Pollinator Week honey tasting. The webinar will begin with sharing of tasting notes.

**Panelists**

**The Importance of Native Plants and Pollinators**
- Eleanor Schumacher, Illinois Pollinator Liaison, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Project Wingspan State Coordinator for Illinois, Pollinator Partnership
- Veronica Hinke, Public Affairs Officer, USDA Forest Service, Midewin NTP

**JULY**

7 **THURSDAY, 6 TO 6:40 P.M.**

**THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE OF 1840 ON THE TRAIL OF ELIZA STEELE**

Who was Eliza Steele, and how does her journal inform what we know of the historic prairies today? On July 7, 1840, the prosperous New York writer was traveling through the area that is now Midewin NTP. She wrote about her first experience in a prairie:

> I started with surprise and delight. I was in the midst of a prairie! A world of grass and flowers stretched around me, rising and falling in gentle undulations, as if an enchanter had struck the ocean swell, and it was at rest forever. Acres of wildflowers of every hue glowed around me, and the sun arising from the earth where it touched the horizon, was kissing with golden face the meadows green. What a new and wondrous world of beauty! What a magnificent sight! Those glorious ranks of flowers! On that you could have one glance at their array! How shall I convey to you an idea of a prairie.

Expressive, illuminating, and insightful—Eliza’s words are about all we know of what the prairies might have looked like in a world long before cameras. Her words were published the next year in a book titled “A Summer Journey in the West.”

This program celebrates Eliza’s journey with readings and interpretive information about her journal writings. Learn how you can walk in the footsteps of Eliza Steele at Midewin NTP.

**Presenter**

- Joe Wheeler, Archaeologist, USDA Forest Service, Midewin NTP
July

**20 WEDNESDAY, 7 TO 7:40 P.M.**

**PART 1**

**MIDEWIN PRAIRIE 101**

What exactly is Midewin NTP? Learn the origins and geography of this very special place. Find out why ecological restoration is so important and experience some of the best examples of restored prairie. Learn how Midewin NTP will change and what that will mean for wildlife and recreation. View wetlands and prairie under restoration and observe wildlife. Midewin NTP volunteers will present this 2-part miniseries.

**Panelists**
- Lynn Dempsey, Volunteer, Midewin NTP
- Greg Dubois, Volunteer, Midewin NTP
- Ronald Kapala, Volunteer, Midewin NTP
- Christina Sammet, Volunteer, Midewin NTP

August

**10 WEDNESDAY, 7 TO 7:40 P.M.**

**PART 2**

**MIDEWIN PRAIRIE 101**

Program information is the same as July 20th, above.

September

**24 SATURDAY, 9 TO 9:40 A.M.**

**NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY 2022 CARING FOR THE LAND PHOTO CHALLENGE PREVIEW**

Celebrate National Public Lands Day by seeing all of the wonderful photos submitted in the 2022 Caring for The Land Photography Challenge. Hear from the photographers who captured the beauty of the prairie in photographs. Category finalists and overall winning photo will be announced. Photos submitted for the 2022 challenge will be featured in the 2023 Conservation Education Program guide!

>The photos in this Conservation Education Program guide are from the 2021 Woodsy Owl & Friends 50th Birthday Photo Challenge.
NOVEMBER

5 SATURDAY, 11 A.M.

NATIONAL BISON DAY
VIRTUAL BISON EXPEDITION

Celebrate America’s National Mammal—the Bison—on National Bison Day with live feeds from across North America. First stop is the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway to spot the Midewin NTP bison herd. Continue live to the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump World Heritage Site in Alberta, Canada. Then travel virtually to Montana, to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center and the First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park. Park Manager, Clark Carlson-Thompson said the jump was critical to human survival for hundreds or years. “A buffalo jump is a site that was used by native peoples to harvest large numbers of buffalo, usually entire herds,” he explained. “This spot has forever been known as a place of peace and gathering. Thousands of pounds of meat, hides, bones for tools, and more were harvested. It looks just like a hill, and as we get closer and closer to the cliff, it just appears out of nowhere.”

TBD 6 TO 6:40 P.M.

COMMEMORATING THE ROUSE SIMMONS SCHOONER—HOW VEGETATION MANAGEMENT HELPS THE ENVIRONMENT

Loaded down heavily with trees harvested from the Manistique area in Upper Michigan, Chicago’s beloved “Christmas Tree Ship”—the Rouse Simmons schooner—sunk off the shore of Lake Michigan near Two Rivers, Wisconsin, on November 22, 1912. She was headed for the Clark Street Bridge on the Chicago River in The Loop. For years, Captain Herman E. Schuenemann and his crew docked the Rouse Simmons on the south end of the bridge and sold Christmas trees from the ship to Chicagoans. Schuenemann became widely known for his generosity, giving many of the trees away to Chicago families that could not afford a Christmas tree.

On the first weekend in December each year, the U.S. Coast Guard honors Captain Schuenemann and his crew by coordinating the distribution of Christmas trees to families in need from Chicago’s Navy Pier.

This virtual program supports the U.S. Coast Guard event with USDA Forest Service specialists providing information about vegetation management and its importance for the environment. Find out why Christmas trees are as essential to forest health as they are to spreading joy and hope during this magical time of year. The panel discussion will celebrate the legacy of the historic Christmas Tree Ship, while focusing on renewable resources and sustainable forestry through the practice of vegetation management.
MIDEWIN NTP FOR KIDS
SUMMER 2022 SCHEDULE

ALL PROGRAMS ON ZOOM
11 TO 11:30 A.M. CENTRAL

Midewin NTP will provide virtual 30-minute informational sessions tailored especially to children on select dates from June 15 to August 10, 2022. Each session will feature a different natural resources or conservation topic and be led by a National Association of Interpretation-certified interpreter.

To Register: Send an email to SM.FS.Midewin_RSVP@usda.gov or call 815-423-6370. Please provide your name and email address so we can send you information about how to connect virtually. Please indicate if closed captioning or other accommodations would be helpful for you so we can make arrangements.

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JUNE

15 WEDNESDAY
FUN WITH FOSSILS
Discover the plants and critters that left their impression in rocks. How did they get there? Test how much you know about fossils and find out where you can find them. Unearth amazing fossils!

23 THURSDAY
CRAYFISH
What do you know about these little crustaceans? Are they just lobster’s cute smaller cousin or are they more? Can they be found in Illinois and even on a prairie? Come find out!

29 WEDNESDAY
POND LIFE
Dip into the amazing world of creatures that live in ponds. Find out about life under water. Learn about the insects, amphibians, mammals, and birds that call a pond home.
**July**

7 **THURSDAY**

**JUST BATTY**

Learn about the flying mammal that eats mosquitoes! Become an expert and know the difference between myth and fact. These wonderfully shy creatures of the night help people in many ways.

13 **WEDNESDAY**

**PRAIRIE DETECTIVE**

Become a prairie detective! Use your senses to find the signs critters leave behind to solve the mystery of what animals live at Midewin. Uncover clues to the plants and animals that live on a prairie. Use these new detective skills to figure out what animals live near you!

21 **THURSDAY**

**LIFE OF A BUTTERFLY**

Observe the life cycle of butterflies. What attracts these colorful winged beauties? What is a baby butterfly called? Do all butterflies migrate? Get the answers to these questions and others when you come fly with the butterflies!

27 **WEDNESDAY**

**BIRD IS THE WORD**

What makes a bird a bird? How do you identify a bird? Where do they live? Can you point them out in a tree? Get all the answers in *Bird is the Word!*
Thank you to the Midewin NTP volunteers, partners, staff members, visitors, and friends who shared photos in the 2021 Woodsy Owl & Friends 50th Birthday Photo Challenge. All submitted photos were reviewed by a panel of volunteers and are featured in this 2022 Conservation Education Program Guide.

Cover
- **Overall Winner; Tied Wildlife Category Winner:** Howling coyote on the Henslow Trail. Courtesy photo by Carl Pixel.

Pp. i–ii
- Showy tick trefoil. USDA Forest Service photo by Veronica Hinke.
- Bald eagle nest. Courtesy photo by Laura Lewis.
- Silhouette heart at sunrise. Courtesy photo by Barb Parisi.
- Two rainbows over Boathouse Road. Courtesy photo by Thomas Coyne.

Pp. 2–3
- Yellow coneflower and bergamot (bee balm). Courtesy photo by Janet Lyons.
- Prairie dock in the dolomite prairie. USDA Forest Service photo by Veronica Hinke.
- Dr. Yuanying Peng (left) and Dr. Xiaoyong Chen (right) of Tinley Park harvest big bluestem seeds in the South Patrol Road Prairie. USDA Forest Service photo by Veronica Hinke.
- East side algae brightening the reflection of the cottonwood trees. Courtesy photo by Grace Wu.

Pp. 4–5
- **Sunrises and Sunsets Category Winner:** Henslow Bridge at sunrise. Courtesy photo by Barb Parisi.
- Sunrise through a tree. Courtesy photo by Janet Lyons.
- Barred owl in summer. Courtesy photo by Monika Bobek.
- **Native Illinois Prairie Plants Category Winner:** Yellow coneflower. Courtesy photo by Janet Lyons.

Pp. 6–7
- **Owl Category Winner:** Barred owl in spring. Courtesy photo by Monika Bobek.
- Walking bison. Courtesy photo by Janet Lyons.
- Brown snake. Courtesy photo by Grace Wu.

Pp. 8–9
- Two bees on Culver’s root. Courtesy photo by Thomas Coyne.
- Evening primrose on Sand Ridge in the Prairie Glacial Plains. USDA Forest Service photo by Veronica Hinke.
- Hummingbird. Courtesy photo by Monika Bobek.
- Egret with a twig. Courtesy photo by Thomas Coyne.

Pp. 10–11
- Fences at sunset. Courtesy photo by Ronald Kapala.
- The old and the new: plants on railroad tracks. Courtesy photo by Ronald Kapala.
- Sunset on the Group 63 Trail. Courtesy photo by Laura Lewis.
- Indian grass at sunset. Courtesy photo by Mary Broadway.

Pp. 12–13
- Bison on the prairie. Courtesy photo by Mary Broadway.
- Bison cow with calf. Courtesy photo by Gabby Pawlak.
- Raccoon kit nestled inside a hollow tree. Courtesy photo by Grace Wu.

Pp. 14–15
- Indian Grass at the Welcome Center. Courtesy photo by Grace and Olivia Thompson.
- Blue lobelia. Courtesy photo by Grace and Olivia Thompson.
- Cattle at sunset on the Route 53 Trail. Courtesy photo by Grace and Olivia Thompson.
- Sunset cattails at the pond. Courtesy photo by Grace and Olivia Thompson.

Pp. 16–17
- Butterfly with prairie cord grass and sawtooth sunflowers. Courtesy photo by Laura Lewis.
- **Tied Wildlife Category Winner:** Wolf spider on milkweed. Courtesy photo by William Shea.

Pp. 18–19
- Turk’s-cap lilies. Courtesy photo by Grace Wu.
- Wild petunias. Courtesy photo by Mary Broadway.
- Summer blooms. Courtesy photo by Ronald Kapala.
- White spiderwort. Courtesy photo by Ronald Kapala.
MIDEWIN NTP FARM HISTORY DISPLAYS IN JOLIET AND WILMINGTON

“The Roaring 20s” Farm History display features items essential to everyday life for hundreds of families who farmed here over 100 years ago.

In the cities, the era known as “The Roaring 20s” ushered in a distinct wave of new and iconic trends. There were waist-length pearl necklaces for women, fedoras for men, and a whole new style of party food. But, while urban socialites caroused in their splashy Duesenbergs and modern Millies kicked up their heels, plenty of rural Illinois families still painstakingly scoured the farmlands with horse-drawn fertilizer spreaders. Rudimentary tools introduced over 30 years earlier—the butter churn, the hog scraper, the milk stirrer, and the like—remained mainstays to their daily life. These families were only first experiencing the luxury of indoor plumbing. In the city, money was freely being spent on fleeting fashion trends like flapper-inspired dresses and lavish nights out, while rural residents continued their embrace of a necessary resourcefulness. One inventive approach was to repurpose seed sack cloth into fabric that savvy women sewed by hand to fashion dresses. Never since has there been a greater contrast between rural and urban life in America. As people everywhere celebrate the 100th anniversary of these early years of the highly stylized 1920s in American cities, this Midewin display provides a glimpse of what life was like during that time—on the prairie.

• Joliet Area Historical Museum, 204 Ottawa St., Joliet, IL 60432
• Wilmington Island Park District Community Center, 315 N. Water St., Wilmington, IL 60481

SELF-GUIDED INTERPRETIVE TOURS

“STORY” MOBILE APPLICATION

A self-guided tour is a screen-tap away on your mobile device, and now with more tour routes and narratives recorded by people with expertise in prairie topics. Walk in the footsteps of 19th century adventure journalist Eliza Steele, bask in row upon row of native Illinois prairie plants in the River Road seedbeds, stroll through bluebells and other spring ephemerals. Check out all the available tours at: https://midewin.oncell.com/en/index.html.

TRAIL MAPS

Trail maps are available online in English and Spanish, along with the Midewin NTP Visitor Guide and other resources at https://tinyurl.com/46z7rzjf.
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To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint (https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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