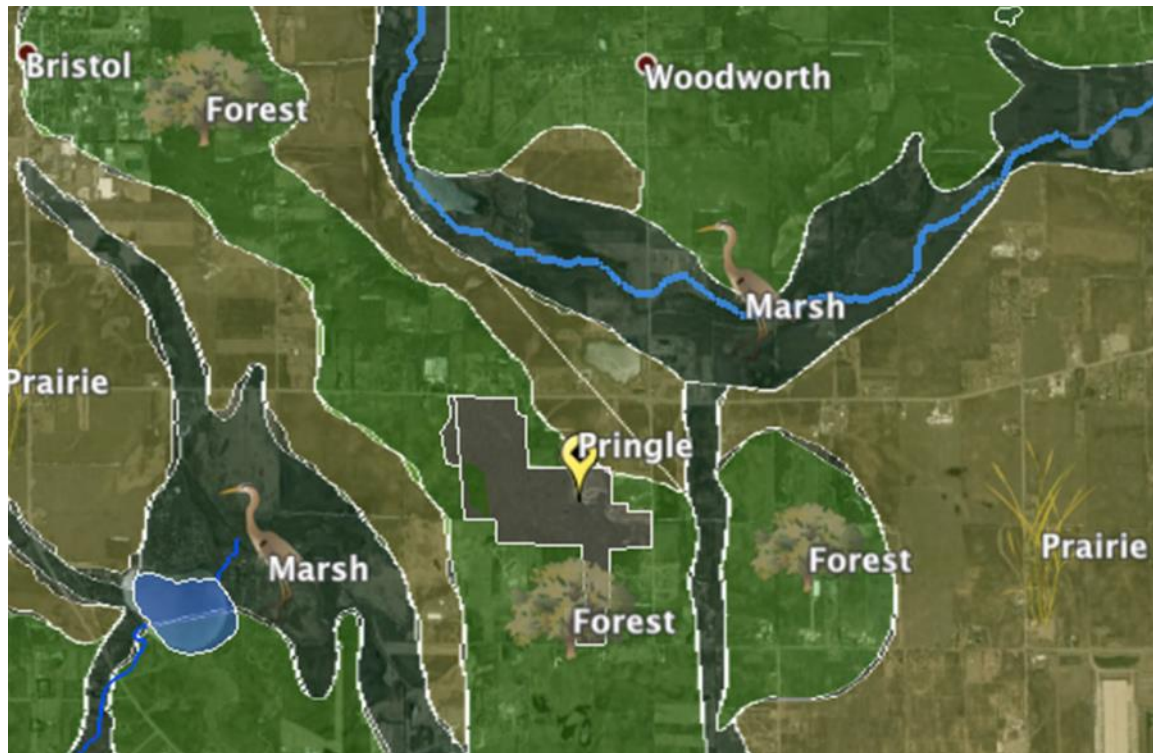


# Prairie Restoration



In 1999, the open land within this part of park was set aside as prairie, which meant that grasses came to be replaced by various other plant species more typical of prairie habitat. The area before you is being restored to a tall grass prairie habitat. You may notice reedy looking clumps of grass with very long stems. This is Bluestem grass, a name that comes from the blueish green sprouts that emerge in late spring. If you can, imagine miles of prairie covered by these grasses taller than 6 feet! Such was the scene in the Midwest tall grass prairies. Bluestem grasses develop very deep roots and over time produce a rich loamy soil. Like the savannas, fire was crucial to the ecology of the tall grass prairies and the bluestems in particular.