

Natural Resources Management Activities

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

December 2013

Primary activities for the month of December included:

1. Brush clearing. “Brush season” began in November and will continue throughout the winter as conditions permit. During December, our Stewards group and staff finished clearing Honeysuckle, Buckthorn and Multiflora Rose from the southern section of the Knute Olson Forest Preserve both east and west of the parking lot. Brush was cut with chain saws by staff then stewards assembled burn piles from the cut material. These piles will be burned sometime this winter before spring plants emerge.

2. Tree planting. We still had some Oak, Butternut and Kentucky Coffee trees in pots when the first week of December arrived. Since the soil was not yet frozen, we determined that it was a good enough time to get them in the ground in the former lowland camp sites west of the sledding hill at Russell Forest Preserve. One of our large augers was attached to the tracked Bobcat and it made quick work of digging the holes for the trees. The next day we were able to plant and mulch three dozen healthy saplings that had been in five gallon pots. The day after that, the temperature dropped and the ground began to freeze.

3. Intern program coordination. Terry Hannan and Al Roloff met with staff members of the Biological Sciences department and the Environmental Studies Program at Northern Illinois University. We discussed how the Forest Preserve District and the students in these two programs might best benefit from increased coordination between the District and the NIU program staff. Our experience during the past three years has been that our summer help tends to be more effective when they are students whose course of study coincides with the kind of work (ecological restoration, wildlife management, etc.) that we do in our preserves. We discussed a number of options that could be mutually advantageous, and will continue our contacts and coordination efforts.

4. Wetland Bank Report. Having submitted our new Afton South Prairie Wetland Bank Application using the most recent guidelines recommended by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), it became apparent that we should also adopt the currently recommended guidelines for reporting the condition of our existing wetland bank which was approved in 1999. Much has transpired since that time, including advances in ecological assessment methods, common use of GPS and GIS systems, and the creation and all encompassing everyday use of the internet. (Remember when there was no internet?) The new guidelines require much of the same information we have reported in the past, but in a different format with more detail. Using the newer format benefits us by providing more specificity about required management activities and reporting methods. We have prepared this year’s report in the new format, and have already begun to incorporate revised activities and methods in to the 2014 management schedule for the wetland bank.

5. 2014 management schedules. Each year, management schedules are prepared for every forest preserve. These schedules prioritize the various objectives and activities within each preserve that contribute to our mission: *... to preserve, protect and restore the flora, fauna and natural beauties of forest preserve lands ...in their natural state and condition ...for the education and recreation of our citizens.* Terry Hannan and Al Roloff review each schedule together to confirm priorities and budget considerations before finalization.



Stewards cut and pile invasive brush at Knute Olson Preserve in early December, 2013.



Only an hour before, it would have been impossible to walk through the thick brush at this site.