

## Natural Resources Management Activities

### DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

February 2014

Primary activities in the month of February included:

1. **Snowplowing.** The additional snow plow certainly turned out to be a wise investment this year. Not just the frequency of the snowfalls, but the continual accumulation of snow without significant thaws has given us the opportunity to really “break-in” this new piece of equipment. Since mid-March is usually the beginning of our burn season, we hope not to have to *keep breaking it in* much longer.
2. **Seed stratification.** Another inconvenience of the accumulation of snow this season has been the inability to do our winter “frost seeding”. Frost seeding is the scattering of seed during the winter when there is little or no snow. Before spring, the seed is then able to absorb moisture while being subjected to a few months of freeze/thaw cycles that work the seeds into the soil during cold damp conditions. This process is called seed “stratification”. Most perennial wildflowers require these conditions before the seed embryo can germinate in the spring. We usually do frost seeding during the winter in the many smaller areas where we have used herbicides to control weeds during the previous year. So, with too much snow, we instead mixed the seed with damp sand or vermiculite, packed it in plastic bags and stored the seed in a refrigerator at 33 to 38 degrees. During February, we stratified almost 50 species of seeds. By the time the snow is gone and we are able to scatter seed, it should have gone through much of the stratification process, and germinate this spring.
3. **Wetland bank expansion application.** The US EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers were the two agencies that submitted comments on the draft “Instrument” (proposal) for the Afton South Prairie Wetland Mitigation Bank. We have begun preparing responses and design modifications to address each of the comments.
4. **Winter tree identification program.** We were pleased to assist with the activities at the Maple Syrup Festival at Russell Woods. Peggy Doty decided to include additional activities to the festival this year (since it seemed the sap would be flowing very slowly, if at all) so Al Roloff prepared a program for how to identify woody species (of DeKalb County) by their winter characteristics. Twigs, bark, photos and other features of native and naturalized trees and shrubs were gathered for examination and discussion during the one hour presentation. Steward Ron Cress has assumed the role of semi-official photographer and provided the attached photos of the program.
5. **Stewards Group.** The stewards completed the initial design for the new landscape surrounding the Natural Resources Center at Russell Woods. The plants in the design will be ordered from several different suppliers and some will be donated. Stewards also helped prepare for the winter tree identification program. Like staff, the stewards continue to hope spring will not be delayed too much longer.



A heated shelter at Russell Woods was the site of the winter tree ID program.



Two inquisitive sisters determine the identity of a Red Oak by the buds and remnant leaf.