

Natural Resource Management Activities

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

April 2014

Primary activities for the month of April Included:

1. **Prescribed Fires in the Forest Preserves.** 2014 was our most successful burn season thus far. After the snow melted, we began burning the hillside prairies and, with the weather being very cooperative, just kept going. There was one stretch of eight days, from April second to April eleventh, where we burned prairies, wetlands or woodlands every day. We burned a total of 21 units on 126 acres in seven different preserves. Our largest single fire was at the South Branch Prairie – a *wetland* burn of almost 60 acres, including the CRP segment still held by the Hoppe sisters. Burning is a critical management tool for preservation and restoration of our natural habitats. A good burn season like this one favors the expansion of native plant communities, and helps us better control invasive species.
2. **Inter-seeding.** We used up the last of the seed gathered last season by scattering it in the areas where we want to increase density or diversity of native plants. Fall or winter seeding is best for perennial plants, but early spring works, too, just not as well.
3. **Plant divisions.** Continuing our plant divisions (digging, dividing roots and re-planting elsewhere) was another of our April activities. Sedges, Phlox, Wild Geranium, Glade Mallow, Bellwort, and Blue Bells were among the species we divided. Our stewards were a major asset in this year's plant division work. The new landscaping around the Natural Resources Center at Russell Woods Preserve is composed partly of plant divisions from our planting beds or native populations.
4. **A New Intern.** We hired a new summer intern for 2014, an Environmental Studies student from NIU, Alyse Olson. Alyse has a very strong academic background, volunteer and work experience, and came highly recommended by her professors at NIU. Alyse grew up on a farm outside Maple Park. She begins her work with us in mid-May.
5. **Coordination & supervision of volunteer activities.** April saw several volunteer activities in addition to our regular stewards group. These included SEAYLP (Southeast Asian Youth Leadership Program, a cooperative program sponsored by the State Department and NIU), NIU Cares, a volunteer day for NIU students, and our annual public-at-large spring planting at Afton Forest Preserve.
6. **Stewardship activities.** After a lull during the first part of burn season, our regular stewards group kicked into high gear by assisting with the NIU Cares volunteer day at Russell Woods, plant divisions, the tree and shrub planting at Afton, and a plant inventory at Adee's Woods. One of our stewards, Jan Grainger, a retired Biology teacher from Kishwaukee College, helped interview intern candidates.

7. **NRCS site visit.** The Natural Resources Conservation Service will feature the South Branch Prairie as one of the “success stories” of cooperation between NRCS, private landowners and local government agencies for their Wetland Reserve Program. An article will appear in one of their publications this summer. Terry Hannan and Al Roloff met with their local staff, state biologist and publicist to provide information for the article.



Prescribed fire at the South Branch Prairie, April 5th, 2014.



NIU students dug planting beds at Russell Woods Resource Center on April 12th.



Volunteers and Stewards Plant trees and shrubs at Afton on April 26th.