

## Natural Resources Management Activities

### DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

August 2014

Primary activities for the month of August included:

1. **Continued invasive species control.** Our “weed season” slows down a bit, but continues in to August and September. Much of our herbicide application is now “clean-up”, revisiting the sites where we sprayed earlier in the season and treating those weeds that were missed or have re-emerged from roots or seeds. One increasingly problematic species is “Common Reed”, Phragmites australis, sometimes also called Pampas Grass. Until about five years ago, this tall grass was only known from a few places in DeKalb County, all along railroad right-of-ways where it was thought to be established after it had been used as bedding for cattle in rail cars that had come from Arkansas or Texas. For a long time, it was thought to reproduce wholly by vegetative sprouting, but its recent rapid spread in many small isolated patches is now undoubtedly by seed. It is resistant to normal concentrations of Roundup and other broad spectrum herbicides, so we use very strong concentrations and try to treat the patches as soon as they show up in new areas. We continue this process until the frost stops this season’s growth.
2. **Afton Wetland outlet structure upgrades.** We had a structural engineer assess the leaky outlet structures from the pools at Afton. He has advised that we install below-grade walls at the front of the inlet concrete pads on two of the structures, and use metal rather than wooden weir gates on the other two. We have the metal gates ordered, and since we are unlikely to see a sufficient seasonal “dry-down” during the remainder of this year, we are considering if we need to drain the pools to complete the upgrades. We will determine that during September.
3. **Seed collection.** As “weed season” winds down, “seed season” swings into high gear. Many pounds of bulrushes and sedges were collected by our volunteer stewards and staff during August. September and October will be the prime collection months for prairie forbs and grasses.
4. **Plantings.** Some of the plants that were grown from seed during spring and summer, by our staff and stewards, were planting during August as they became mature enough to be transplanted. These species included Early Meadow Rue, Graceful Sedge, Buxbaum’s Sedge and Wild Blue Iris.
5. **Lunch with Stewards and the Clean Energy Foundation representatives.** The Clean Energy Foundation grant provided half of the funding for the purchase of the Prairie Oaks Forest Preserve. The Chairman of their Board, their Executive Director and their Grants coordinator

asked to visit Prairie Oaks Preserve and meet with some of the volunteers who have worked there. We had a pleasant and interesting picnic lunch and discussion with our guests and stewards. Their board chairman, "Pete" Peters suggested that the stewards consider applying for additional grants that the foundation has available for special projects.



During a recent "weed pulling party" by our stewards at Prairie Oaks Preserve, we came across this interesting fossil in a dry waterway. It is a Halysites, an extinct species of chain coral from ancient Silurian period reefs that are now limestone deposits in the Chicago area. This one was likely dropped here by a glacier. The Silurian period lasted from 425 to 405 million years ago.