

Natural Resources Management Report

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

November 2015

Primary activities during the month of November included:

1. Fall burns and preparation for spring burns. We had our most successful fall burn season ever. We burned 6 units at the Afton and South Afton prairies, for a total of 16.4 acres. We also mowed fire breaks in some areas of the Afton Wetland Mitigation Bank and prairie buffers. All this fall work gives us a better head start on the spring burns, so we can get more done during the (usually) better weather at that time. Staff changes during 2015 added three much-needed members to our burn crew. Josh Clark is already a certified Burn Boss, and Scott Suida and Dale Harrolle, our new southern seasonal maintenance staff, will take burn training classes in February.

2. Final Processing and inventory of 2015 seed harvest. We finished the drying, milling, screening, winnowing, weighing and, finally, recording of all of the seed that we collected this year. Our stewards were again instrumental in a very successful harvest and processing season. From June through November, we collected 129 species of native prairie, wetland and woodland plant seeds with a total weight of over 207 pounds. If the weather holds, and we don't get much snow, we will plant most of this seed before the end of 2015.

3. Brush control season begins. November marks the end of our seed harvest season and the beginning of brush control season. Honeysuckle, Buckthorn, Autumn Olive and Multiflora Rose are the most common and formidable of the invasive woody shrub species, but White Mulberry, Burning Bush and an increasing host of others are not far behind. It seems like new invaders creep in to our flora every year. The frozen soil of winter will allow us to use heavy brush cutting equipment without damaging plants and their roots. Our staff and stewards have already cleared a nice segment of a former plant nursery at the Afton Preserve.

4. Visit by our Mitigation Bank Review Team (MBRT) leader. Gene Walsh, with the US Army Corps of Engineers, is coordinator and leader of the team that assesses the quality of our wetland bank. Gene and his team have been positively impressed with our Wetland Bank at Afton, so we invited him to the South Branch Prairie to see what a successful floodplain prairie restoration looks like. Gene was again impressed, and, based on the quality of this site, has asked if we would be willing to confer with others looking to do similar projects. The Corps is in need of additional wetland banks for their required wetland mitigation regulations.

5. Presentations and consultation. We are frequently asked to do presentations, educational programs or consultation related to the work that we do. We try to accommodate other governmental agencies, not-for-profit organizations, scouts and student groups if we can. During November, Al Roloff did a talk and power-point presentation for the Sycamore Historical Society regarding the Bill Miller family and the cabin and two mills that they built along the Kishwaukee River. About 70 local residents attended the presentation. Also During November, we provided some "been there, done that" consultation assistance to the Genoa High School Environmental Club regarding trails that they will build on city land that is adjacent to Russell Woods.



What's this? These are old wooden implements that Ed and Alice Paulsen, life-long DeKalb County residents, have donated to the forest preserve district to use during educational programs at the Miller-Elwood cabin. They also donated some interesting old iron pots. The box that these things are in is an old family heirloom – an onion drying rack. We are still soliciting appropriately old items and furniture to decorate the cabin during presentations and educational events. Got anything?