

Natural Resources Management Activities

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

December 2015

Primary Activities For the month of December included:

1. PDRMA seminar. PDRMA (Park District Risk Management Associates) is the Forest Preserve District insurance carrier. I must admit, an all-day “safety seminar” was not a gathering that I was over-enthusiastic about, and I needed some urging to attend. It was in Tinley Park, *well* over an hour away in heavy traffic. But I did go, and by the end of the day I realized that it was one of the best, most useful seminars I have ever attended.

The keynote speaker, a physician, discussed a topic that, at first, seemed unrelated to safety – *lifestyle choices* – diet, exercise, smoking, alcohol or drug use and a few others. He emphasized how choices in these areas impact both **on** and **off**-the-job functioning. Most importantly, he helped us improve our understanding that they are the primary criteria that determine not only our **lifespan**, but the **quality** of life we have. Another speaker discussed his personal experience with the life-long dramatic impact of having ignored a single, simple safety rule. And still another speaker was an attorney that, with a great deal of humor and charm, explained the rationale and importance of following the PDRMA guidelines for interacting with members of the public on our properties. I came away from this event convinced that all of our employees would benefit from attendance at these regular seminars provided by PDRMA. I will look forward to attending again.

2. Brush cutting and burn piles. As we discussed last month, winter is our brush season, the time when we get our saws and shredding equipment fired up and into the woods and prairies. Our targets are the invasive woody species that, if not controlled, can take over vast swaths of our remnants and restored plant communities. Winter, when the soil is frozen and the leaves and insects are gone, is the best time to attack these pernicious invaders. Early on, our staff and stewards have been working at Afton, mostly in the overgrown former nursery area east of the maintenance buildings. When working in close quarters, we cut the brush (by hand or with chain saws), drag it to piles and burn it. In more open areas we can use our mechanized BrushCat, which cuts off stems up to 4-5 inches in diameter and then shreds the trunk and branches. Heavy snow is our worst enemy during brush season. We are hoping that “El Nino” will limit snowfall this winter season.

3. Management schedules. Management schedules outline our objectives, activities and timelines for the work we plan to do in each forest preserve during 2016. They identify where we expect to do work, who will do it and when. Our management schedules help us budget our workload. We finished compiling our management schedules in December and will use them throughout 2016 to prioritize our daily activities. As an example, the 2016 management schedule and accompanying unit map for the *South Branch Prairie* is attached to this report.

4. The Kishwaukee River stone-toe streambank stabilization project. This month we received the final permit for the streambank stabilization project at the South Branch Prairie. We met with the excavator and finalized plans for installation of the stone. While the project may be completed during the winter while the soil is frozen, the excavator cannot begin construction until the water level in the river is low enough to see the river bed.