

## Natural Resources Management Activities

### DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

June 2016

Primary activities for the month of June included:

- 1. Weed control.** With all the good help this year, we were able to attack invasive weeds such as Reed Canary Grass, Canada Thistle, and Giant Reed with renewed gusto, more staff and new equipment. We continued some Reed Canary Grass spraying at the South Branch Prairie and treated Canada Thistle at Afton, Prairie Oaks, the South Branch Prairie and Merritt Preserves. We also treated Giant Reed at Merritt. Our methods included herbicide application by spot spraying, boom spraying, wicking and glove-of-death. We also mowed some large patches of thistles and will treat these by applying selective herbicides after the plants re-sprout and are more susceptible to the herbicide. Weed control with the use of herbicides is one of our most critical tasks during the spring and early summer.
- 2. Seed collection.** June is a busy month for collection of many *sedge* seeds. Sedges are plants that are somewhat similar to grasses, with long, generally thin leaves with parallel veins, small green flowers and small seeds. They are often found in wetland areas, but also occur in every other kind of plant community. They are primarily in the genera *Carex*, *Scirpus* and *Cyperus*. Unlike grasses, most sedges do not have any economic value beyond being a forage plant for livestock. But they are very important to us in our efforts to restore and recreate wetland plant communities. So we gather the seeds of many of them during the month of June, when the seeds ripen. Staff and stewards help with this activity.
- 3. Planting.** As in the past few years, we continue our planting into the summer as the plants that we and our stewards (or a nursery) have grown this spring. As their root systems fill the plug trays or pots, we plant them in the appropriate habitat (soil, moisture level, sunlight) in the various plant communities that we are re-constructing. Most of these plants are the rare or uncommon species that are difficult to establish from seed. By installing the plants in the correct habitat, we insure that they have the best opportunity to survive and persist.
- 4. Stewards.** Our stewards helped with the seed collection and planting noted above by collecting sedges at the Prairie Oaks Preserve, and Blue-eyed Grass at the Great Western Trail. They also planted Tussock Sedge in special tussock structures in the marshes at the South Branch Prairie, and planted rhizomatous sedges in a scour on the bank of the Kishwaukee River at the streambank stabilization project. Our stewards are a critical component of our restoration efforts.
- 5. The Swanson Grove Addition at the Prairie Oaks Preserve.** The Swanson Grove Addition to Prairie Oaks has surprised us with the observation of otters in the stream there, a population of rare *Cacalia*s, and a *Rush* species that was previously not recorded in the botanical literature for DeKalb County. It is a high quality savanna, wet prairie and sedge meadow. After a recent thorough assessment, we will develop a more detailed development plan during the month of July. At present, both staff and a contractor are working to control invasive species on this lovely site.



Restoration Ecologist Josh Clark examines a blooming Butterfly Weed in the Afton Prairie.



Interns plant sedges along the Kishwaukee River at the streambank stabilization site.



Over two hundred rare *Cacalia* plants bloom in the eastern wet prairie in the Swanson Grove at the Prairie Oaks Addition.



Marsh Phlox (*Phlox glaberrima*) bloom in the Larson Rd. Prairie on the Great Western Trail.