

Natural Resources Management Report

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

August 2016

Primary activities for the month of August included:

1. Continued invasive species Control. Our “weed control season” begins to slow down this time of year, but will continue on a selective basis until the hard frosts later in the fall. Part of our spraying this time of year is to kill weeds in the gravel lanes and trails throughout the preserve and trail system. Often, a grass and weed strip forms down the center of these trails where the tires of mowers and other vehicles don’t routinely knock down the vegetation. Also, we do a lot of “clean-up” spraying of weeds in infested areas that we previously treated in the prairies, marshes and woodlands. Some sites with heavier infestations are mowed and then sprayed with selective herbicides to target specific categories of invasive or adventive plants. Hoppe, the South Branch Prairie, Afton, the Great Western Trail, Sycamore Forest Preserve, Prairie Oaks and the new Swanson Grove addition to Prairie Oaks were all target sites for weed control during August.

2. Seed collection. September and October are the busiest seed collection months, but August is not far behind. Bulrushes, Sedges and wetland forbs were the main targets of our seed collection activities during this month; we will need lots of these seeds for the many plantings we will be doing during the next year or two. Our stewards and interns are critical assets for this labor intensive activity, as well as the Boy Scouts, Kish College, NIU groups and numerous individuals who assist us on a regular basis each year. Before the end of the year, we will compile an inventory of species, the amount we have collected and their estimated value.

3. Planting. For the second year in a row, high soil moisture that resulted from consistent rainfall allowed us to continue installing plugs of our high quality “specimen plants” from spring to late summer. These specimen plants are those species that are rare, or difficult to establish from seed, or quite expensive to establish from seed, or all of these issues. During August we planted rare Milkweeds, Mints, Sedges and several other high quality species. One Sedge “Palm Sedge”, *Carex Muskingumensis*, was a plant that was not recorded in the botanical literature for DeKalb County until last year when we found it growing in low, wet woods at the Sannauk preserve. We gathered the seed last July and had several hundred plants grown for us by a nursery. This past month we planted plugs of this fine sedge in low, moist woods in Russell Woods, Prairie Oaks, Shabbona, Potawatomie Woods, and in additional areas in Sannauk.

4. Consultation and coordination. This month we did consultation and coordination, including site visits, with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff regarding their new “Pollinator” Conservation Reserve Program. We also provided a job shadowing experience for one of their new staff members. In mid-August, we met with staff from an environmental engineering firm to begin the process of repairing or replacing the damaged water control structures at the Afton Wetland Bank.

5. Interns. August saw the departure of this summer’s interns, Nick Steijn and David Henderson. These biology students from NIU were two of the very best summer staff we have had. Smart, knowledgeable, hard-working and good-natured, these young men added immensely to what we were able to accomplish this year. We already miss them and wish them well in their future endeavors.



An uncommon hemi-parasitic plant, Mullein Foxglove, was identified at Russell Woods for the first time.



Our state butterfly. This is one of the dwindling Monarchs in DeKalb County this year. Current monitoring indicates that their populations are down 95% in the last 20 years.

Al Roloff, NRM Report, Aug 2016