

Natural Resources Management Activities

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

July 2017

Primary Activities for the month of July included:

1. Weed control. This was another wet July, with almost 14 inches in the rain gauge at Brickville Rd. Most of the plants in our restorations, including the weeds, grew lush and tall in July. We continued our invasive species control this month with herbicide treatments to invasive species targets including Canada Thistle, Cattail, Giant Reed and Sweet Clover. Some of the Sweet Clover we pull, some of the Giant Reed and Cattail we treat with the “glove-of-death” – a gentle but deadly swipe of the stem or leave with a glove soaked in Glyphosate (Round-up). In some areas we just mow, but mostly herbicide is our most effective strategy. Many sites where herbicide is used require some spot-spraying, and all require repeated sweeps through the site to control the re-emerged or previously missed sprouts.

2. Seed collection. More sedges, bulrushes and early prairie and wetland forbs were the focus of our seed collection efforts in July. Since all of our seed collection is done by hand, our summer interns and, especially, our stewards are critical to collecting plenty of seed for our expanding restoration projects. This month, Porcupine sedge, Spiderwort, Brown Fox Sedge, Canada Rush and Great Bulrush were species that were collected in bulk amounts. We got another dozen species in smaller amounts. They are now drying slowly in paper sacks on racks in our maintenance shed, where they will rest until late fall or winter planting.

3. Wildlife research. This summer’s wildlife research projects are in high gear. While impacted by the heavy rains and flooding, the two primary projects, snake board monitoring and mussel surveys, are progressing rapidly and producing data, which we will summarize, make conclusions, and report later this year. The bird predation research and Kestrel release projects are being carried out by other agencies who have committed to providing us with their results, too.

It is worth noting that the mussel survey work that we are carrying out this year, in cooperation with NIU and the Openlands Organization, is establishing a protocol and procedures that will be used by other forest preserve districts, conservation districts and other agencies as part of a long term research project on the dramatic decline of freshwater mussel populations.

Planting. As with last year, the wet summer weather has allowed us to continue to plant our rare and uncommon native plant species. This year we have had the good fortune to be able to plant these prairie state jewels not only in our fine native plant communities, but also in our new raised bed propagation plots at the Afton maintenance and plant nursery facilities. These will allow much easier care and harvest of the seeds and root divisions for future introduction or expansion in to the restoration areas. Some of the species that we grew or had grown for us this year included Turtlehead, Water Willow, Lizard’s Tail, Prairie Indian Plantain, Hop Sedge, Long-scaled Tussock Sedge, Swamp Oval Sedge, Purple-sheathed Graceful Sedge, Awned Graceful Sedge, and Leiberg’s Panic Grass. It is nearly impossible to find or buy the seeds of Leiberg’s Panic Grass, and now we have hundreds of plants in our propagation beds that should produce seed for us for years down the road.



The impact of heavy rains on the access lanes at the new Swanson Grove site.



The streambank stabilization project at the South Branch Prairie was a wonderful success.



Dr. Carl VonEnde from NIU collects data from volunteers searching for mussels in the Kish.



Stewards Jan G., Tom R. and Karen M. collect sedge seed at the South Branch Prairie.