

## Natural Resources Management Activities

### DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

January 2018

Just a few brief words about our transition. Al Roloff retired and I (Josh Clark) have taken his place as the Natural Resource Manager for the Forest Preserve District. We hired Patrick McCrea to take my place as Restoration Ecologist/Preserves Manager.

I'd like to say that it was a pleasure for me to spend the last several working with and learning from Al. His knowledge and understanding of our preserves, our flora and fauna, his story telling skills, and work ethic are second to none. Also his friendship and mentorship are dear to all of us at the DeKalb County Forest preserve.

Primary activities for the month of January included:

1. **Orientation.** Patrick McCrea was hired to take on the Restoration Ecologist duties for the District. Patrick brings experience, knowledge, and a great work ethic with him and we are thrilled to have him on the team. His first week was spent on paperwork and orientation to the preserves.
2. **Brush Control.** Early on this month we had a bit of snow that slowed down our brush control operations but since then the snow has been fairly light and we have been able to get quite a bit done. Most of the brush clearing has been done at Afton in some of the more heavily overgrown areas on the north end of the preserve. We have been removing honeysuckle and autumn olive both of which are invasive shrubs. Eventually these areas will be planted with native trees, shrubs, forbs, and grasses.
3. **Winter Seeding.** Winter or Frost seeding was done at Prairie Oaks. We have sprayed and tilled the prairie areas near the parking lot for the last 2 years in order to get the weeds under control. The next step in this process was to seed the ground with a diverse mix of native seed. These plantings ended up taking most of our staff and volunteer collected prairie and sedge meadow seed.

We also seeded propagation boxes which will go in the greenhouse at Afton once the winter weather breaks. Whatever plants we get to grow in the propagation boxes will be transplanted into pots and allowed to grow until they are ready to be planted out in the preserves.

4. **Wetland Bank Repairs.** The weir structure replacements in the Ideal Wetland and Phase 3 of the wetland bank have been in progress since late last year and should be wrapped up in early February. The new weir's are being constructed from concrete culverts which will make for a nice walking path and do a great job of controlling the water levels in both areas.

5. **Stewards.** Our Wednesday Stewards group have been a great help as usual. This month they helped burn brush mostly but on the Wednesday early in the month when the temperature was barely above 0 we had some fun in the shop at Afton. The idea was to build an “insect hotel”. (Here’s a link: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Insect\\_hotel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Insect_hotel)) The execution is where the fun came in. We drilled holes in the ends of small logs and stuffed old clay drain tiles full of sticks and debris. We will put this “hotel” together this spring near the propagation area at Afton hoping that the pollinators that we need to visit our plants will have a place to rest and live.

