

Natural Resources Management Activities

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

December 2017

Primary activities for the month of December included:

- 1. Fall burns.** The unusually dry November weather continued on and allowed, for the first time, prescribed fire in December. Many years we don't do any fall burns at all, but we were able to conclude this season with a prescribed fire on December first. Fall burns permit earlier and better herbicide control of invasive and exotic species in the following spring.
- 2. Brush control.** Four members of our staff spent several days cutting and clearing brush along a half mile of the new trail that will connect Sannauk Forest Preserve to the Village of Somonauk. Weedy trees and brush had grown out from the old fence lines and required quite an effort with the Brushcat, chain saws and pole pruners. This work will allow the large excavators, dump trucks and other equipment to work unimpeded once spring weather allows the trail surface work to begin. The largest portion of the new trail will travel adjacent to the south County Line Road, but this segment was along the old fence lines through farm fields from the forest preserve. Also, at the Swanson Grove west woodland, our stewards consolidated and helped burn half a dozen brush piles of woody debris that had been cut last winter and this spring.
- 3. Seed preparation.** Our stewards also helped us with the final processing of "odds and ends" of small batches of seed that had been collected this year. Mostly, they worked seed capsules through screens to separate stems and chaff from the actual seed. After the last of this seed was prepared, staff members mixed six barrels of seed that will be used in our "frost seeding" projects in various preserves this winter.
- 4. Wetland Bank water control structure rebuild.** One of the two water control structure replacements was completed during December before the bitter cold set in. Martin Construction, from Rochelle, was the successful bidder on this project, which provides much needed upgrades to the two damaged water control structures. When both are completed they will allow for easier control of water levels, better trail connections across the waterways, and access for maintenance equipment where there previously was none.
- 5. Winter tree identification workshop.** A cold December morning was the perfect time for a "winter tree ID" workshop at the Natural Resources Center at the Russell Woods Forest Preserve. Al Roloff presented our intrepid stewards group with a review of the characteristics of twigs, bark and other features that help distinguish different species during the winter when leaves are not present. A discussion and exercise in the use of binomial "keys" as a primary identification method kept everyone busy until lunch time that day.
- 6. Transition.** This is the 108th (and last) monthly report prepared by Al Roloff. Al spent some time this month before retirement preparing for the transfer of records, materials and responsibilities to Josh Clark, our former Restoration Ecologist and our new Natural Resources Manager. Al enjoyed this job and the people he worked with, and will participate as an active steward during his retirement.



Burning brush piles is one of the favorite winter activities of our forest preserve stewards. This one, composed of dry wood cut months before, sent flames 25 feet in to the air, with little smoke visible.

Al Roloff, NRM report, Dec 2017