

## Natural Resources Management Activities

### DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

April and Early May 2018

1. Fire Season wrapped up on April 24<sup>th</sup> at Afton. We had a very successful burn season. Many of the areas that we burned were either critical wetland habitat or had weed issues. Fire allows us to get into these areas early and start spraying weeds.

Our fire crew worked really well together this year. Patrick was a nice addition and was fantastic as a crew boss in some tough situations. Jeff Perry (Sycamore Forest Preserve Maintenance staff) learned a lot this year and progressed from a rookie to a great member of the crew. Dale Harrolle (South Maintenance staff) has become a great crew member in just a few years and had some excellent leadership on fires. Al Roloff and Terry Hannan joined us as they could and their wealth of knowledge and fire experience are great resources for the crew. We also had volunteers Tom Robbins, Greg Romeneck, and Chuck Walters join us on the lines. John Hennegin joined us as a volunteer. John has a ton of burn boss experience and his knowledge, mentorship, and input was greatly appreciated.

Thank you to all of the Fire Crew! It was a long burn season and they did a great job!



2. Immediately after we ended our last fire our minds turned to weeds. The Canada Thistle, Wild Parsnip, and Reed Canary were already popping up in the areas burned early in the season. In between other tasks we have been spending time hitting those burned areas hard. We have already sprayed at Afton, South Branch, and Potto. With lots of ground to cover we will spend the next several months spraying, mowing and spading weeds.
3. The hoop house and propagation beds at Afton are really popping this spring. We have several rare and hard to collect species of plants in the outside beds. Right now the Shooting Stars and Prairie Smokes are in full bloom.



Shooting Stars



Prairie Smoke

Some of the plants we have growing here will be planted out in the appropriate habitats and others will stay in the beds giving us a reliable seed source for future plantings.

4. Contractors were used to remove dead Ash trees from along the trails at Nehring Forest Preserve. Most of these trees were dead from the Emerald Ash Borer and had created a huge safety hazard causing the trails to be closed for much of the last year. The trail was cleared on both sides in order to make the trail safe. This work will allow us to open the short loop trail again. The back loop “river trail” will remain closed until staff and contractors can return this fall/winter.
5. We have been preparing for several school groups that will visit Afton this spring and for an Eagle Scout project that will plant 20 trees at Merritt Prairie. Pictures and details of those visits in next month’s report.

Waterman Cub Scouts came to Afton for a hike this April. Here is a photo of them on the big rock.



6. Patrick McCrea and Damon L. (returning student Intern) met with Rich King from NIU Biology Dept. Rich has been doing snake surveys at Potawotami Woods Forest Preserve sedge meadow for almost 10 years. They discussed doing more surveys of snakes, turtles, salamanders, and frogs in many of the other preserves throughout the county. These surveys will give us a baseline understanding of the reptiles and amphibians in our preserves and insights into how to better manage preserves for them.