

Natural Resources Management Report

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

Early Fall 2019

We have moved out of summer and into many of our fall activities. Fall is just as busy as the rest of the year but the pace tends to slow down just a bit. We have been focusing on touching up many of the areas we have been working to restore, putting away summer gear and cleaning up shop and greenhouse areas, focusing on projects that were put off during the busy summer months, and prepping for late fall and winter work.

Crew has been visiting sites that we cut brush in last winter and spraying out re-sprouts of the invasive species that survived our initial stump treatments. We use glyphosate this time of year. While it is a broad spectrum weed killer this time of year most of the desirable plants have gone dormant so we are able to spray the sprouts without much collateral damage. Seeding and adding new plants, trees, and shrubs are the next steps in restoration of these areas.

We have been doing quite a bit of seed collecting this fall. This is important as we can use the collected seed to supplement seed that we purchase to add to new plantings and overseed older plantings and recently restored areas. Our Wednesday stewards group has been collecting seed almost every week since mid-summer. We find it easier to collect a broad range of seeds out of a specific habitat than having them collect just one specific plants seed. I think they like it better too because it allows them to chat more and be a bit more random.

We also had a seed collection volunteer day on Saturday, October 19th. This volunteer day was geared towards people who may be working or in school when we have our weekly group, college students, and pre-retirees. One of our main goals was to spread the word to people who may be retiring in the near future and who may want to join our weekly group. While we currently have an excellent stewards group we need to continue to recruit new volunteers to this group so that it continues well into the future. We had 10 people show up on a beautiful morning at Afton. They collected a nice, diverse prairie mix.



On the 20th of October we continued our seasonal hike series with a fall hike at Chief Shabbona Forest Preserve. Park Manager Angus Clucas arrived to the preserve early and got a fire going in shelter #2 for the hikers. Thanks Angus! Once everyone arrived we had a total of 30 hikers. Hikers ranged in age from just a few months old to their 70's. Natural Resource Manager Josh Clark led the group through Chief Shabbona and pointed out many of the highlights of the preserve, discussed future plans for restoration, and future preserve improvements. At the end of the hike we warmed up in the shelter, had hot cider and donuts from Jonamac Orchard, and conversed some more about the park and a variety of other subjects. It was a great morning that was enjoyed by all.



Over the next few weeks we will wrap up our seed collection season and start preparing for fall burn season, winter brush season, and seeding this year's plantings. Winter, just like the rest of our seasons is busy. We do a bit more planning for the next year than we do in the other seasons and spend a little more time inside on the cold and snowy days; working on equipment, building bird houses, cleaning and organizing. Things slow down, we catch our breath, enjoy the quiet, rest and restore (kind of like the preserves do) and prepare ourselves for spring.



Gentianella quinquefolia (Stiff Gentian) blooming at South Branch Prairie.



Trametes versicolor (Turkey Tail Mushrooms) on a tree at County Farm Woods