

Natural Resource Management Report

Late Fall/Winter 2019

Late Fall and Winter tend to be just about as busy as the rest of the year. The major focus of our work is in the wooded areas. It is the best time to cut invasive woody plants like Buckthorn and Honeysuckle. Winter weather did come early this year with the Veteran's Day storm. Fall returned shortly after and NRM crews were able to get back into the swing of our fall work.

We took advantage of the few good burn days we had and were able to burn a few small units at Afton this fall totaling about 30 acres. Fall weather is unpredictable; burn season tends to be shorter with less fires completed but we are still ready to go when the conditions are just right.

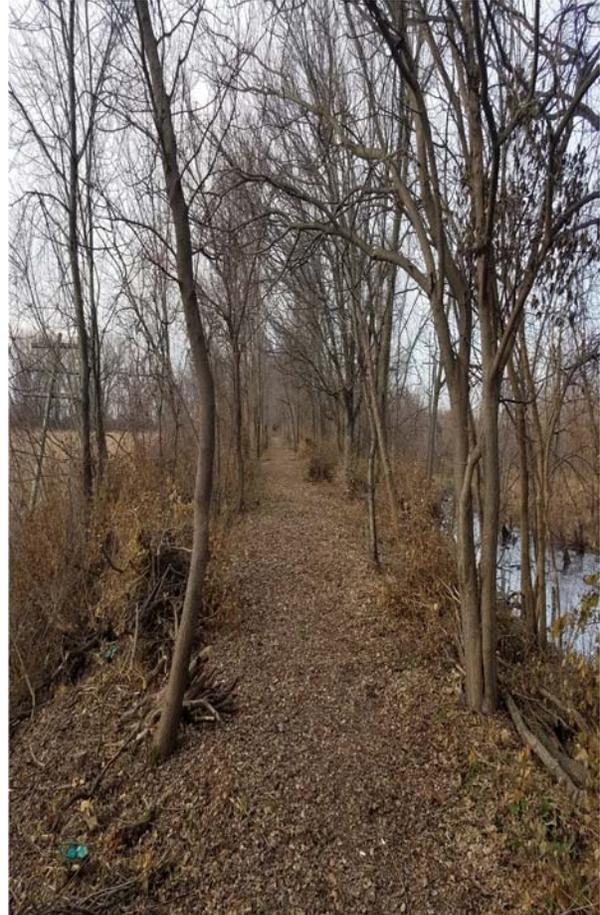


Fall fire at Afton Forest Preserve

Our brush clearing efforts have been at Afton, Knute Olsen, Wilkenson-Renwick Marsh and Chief Shabbona. At these preserves we have been focused mainly on removing Honeysuckle but we also remove the occasional Buckthorn, Multi-Flora Rose, and Autumn Olive. We cut the shrubs down to about an inch off the ground and then accurately treat the stump with herbicide to kill the roots. We stack the brush into piles and either burn it or leave it as bird and animal habitat.



Wilkenson-Renwick Marsh before clearing.



Wilkenson-Renwick Marsh after clearing.

We also mix the seed that we collected over the past year with the seed that we purchase and get ready to seed our new plantings. We try and wait for there to be snow on the ground to spread the seed. We also plant the seed that we want to grow in 2020 into propagation boxes. We have been able to spread some seed in a few areas but our major planting, which will be at the Chambers Property (Kishwaukee River Forest Preserve) will happen as soon as we get frozen ground a bit of snow cover. Hopefully early in January.



Sometimes we spread seed by hand.



Weighing seed before mixing.

Our stewards group was of for several weeks because Christmas and New Years fell on Wednesday. They returned on the 8th of January helping us cut, haul, and burn brush at Chief Shabbona Forest Preserve. As usual they were extremely productive. We are very thankful for all the work they do!



Stewards tending the burning brush pile at the January 8th workday.

Over the rest of the winter we hope to do brush clearing and invasive species removal in most of the other wooded areas throughout the district. Snow plowing and other weather related duties can sometimes take days away from our natural resource work, but we haven't been hit too hard yet this year. We have also been doing maintenance on equipment, cleaning the shop and yard, and planning for spring.