

Natural Resources Management Report

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

July 2016

Primary activities for the month of July included:

1. Planting. Consistent rains resulted in moist soil through the month of July, allowing planting to continue through the entire month. This is rather uncommon; we usually have a “brown-out” sometime during July, but not this year. We had a record planting month for July: almost 3000 plugs and pots of uncommon or rare plants were put in to the soil in the South Branch Prairie, Merritt, Russell Woods, Prairie Oaks and Potawatomie Woods preserves. Our two interns from NIU played a large role in making this happen. David Henderson and Nick Steijn were consistent in their positive, ‘can-do’ attitude when it came to carefully installing our plant stock, regardless of heat, insects, tough access and mud. Lots of mud. Kudos to these two young men.

2. Weed control. We continued weed control this month with back pack and boom spraying of Canada Thistle in the South Branch Prairie, Prairie Oaks and Afton preserves. We wicked Cattail at the South Branch Prairie and Afton Wetland Bank and we sprayed re-emerged weeds of various species at Prairie Oaks and the South Branch Prairie. Our contractor from *Catalpa Grove Restorations* cut Poison Parsnip and sprayed Canada Thistle and Reed Canary Grass at the Swanson Grove in the Prairie Oaks Preserve. We mowed patches of weeds in some sites in preparation for selective spraying on re-sprouts later this season.

3. Seed collection. Our stewards and our interns made July a banner month for seed collection this year. We not only need lots of seed for over-seeding in our established sites, but we will need even more seed for our new wetland bank and newly acquired properties as development continues next year. We were able to collect about two dozen species during July including Spiderwort, Sedges, Rushes and Bulrushes. We also collected two species of woodland grasses.

4. Mussel Inventory. Each year we survey and inventory sections of the Kishwaukee River to assess the population of mussels in our preserves. During July we looked at the section of the river just upstream from the streambank stabilization project in the South Branch Prairie. We found fewer mussels than in the past, but we did find live specimens of these species: Pocketbook, Mucket, Fat Mucket, Three Ridge, Pimpleback, Wabash Pig Toe, White Heelsplitter, and Paper Pondshell. We are concerned that we were unable to find any live Elk Toes as we did in the past at this site. It is listed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources as a “species of concern”.

5. Presentation. Al Roloff did a presentation about the South Branch Prairie and the Miller-Elwood cabin for the Genoa Garden Club. The cabin and prairie have become a focal point of interest for many local organizations.

6. Miscellaneous. Also this month we coordinated restoration activities with excavation and restoration contractors, reviewed and updated management schedules for the remainder of the year, began site preparation for the new wetland bank, and hosted an appreciation picnic for the stewards group.



A butterfly perches on a Purple Coneflower at the Afton Forest Preserve. Some butterfly populations have declined by 90% in the last 15 years.



The rare Mullein Foxglove (*Dasistoma macrophylla*), a semi-parasitic plant, was found in the Russell Woods Preserve this month. We had not previously recorded this plant in our preserves.