

Natural Resource Management Activities

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

April 2017

Primary activities for the month of April Included:

1. **Prescribed Fires in the Forest Preserves.** 2017 was an erratic spring fire season. January had almost no snow, and in February, for the first time, the frost went out of the soil completely. We did our first fires in February and most of the rest in a rather rainy, windy March. We were able to do another day of burning on April 7th for a total of about 67.5 acres this season, about half of what we would have liked. Some years the weather is just not what we would prefer.
2. **Plant divisions and transplanting.** Plant division (digging, dividing roots and re-planting elsewhere) is another of our April activities. Sedges, Indian Plantains, Prairie Sundrops, Shooting Stars and native Lilies were among the species we dug and divided. These were all potted in plug trays or pots for planting later in the season. As always our **stewards** were a major asset in this year's plant division work.
3. **Weed Control.** We began our spring weed control early this year. It has been a wet, but early growing season, so we got after the early weeds sooner, too. Reed Canary Grass is usually or earliest target; we sprayed it in the Afton Wetland Bank, the South Branch Prairie, Merritt, Prairie Oaks and Swanson Grove. This year we are using a different grass-specific herbicide: Clethodim, a chemical that is less photo-sensitive than what we have used in the past. We expect good results.
4. **Spring volunteer plantings.** April saw several volunteer activities in addition to our regular stewards group. These included: (1) SEAYLP (Southeast Asian Youth Leadership Program, a cooperative program sponsored by the State Department and NIU) whose twenty members planted prairie seed at Afton, (2) NIU Cares, a volunteer day for NIU students. Twenty four students planted 2000 Blazing Star bulbs at the west sedge meadow in the Swanson Grove, and (3) our annual school group visit from Chicago sponsored by science teacher Celia Guzman, a former NIU student and forest preserve volunteer. Each visit includes a description of the site, our restoration work there, and our mission.
5. **Miscellaneous activities.** In addition to our usual April activities, other activities included flagging encroached field margins at Afton South Prairie, coordinating chisel plowing at the new wetland bank site, coordinating with neighbors at Prairie Oaks to help relieve drainage problems on adjacent land, as well as carrying out weekend projects involving an Eagle Scout project, the NIU Cares volunteer planting, and a tour of plant communities for an NIU geography *Ecosystems* class.



An NIU Geography class studies plant communities on a tour of Prairie Oaks and Swanson Grove.



NIU Cares, an annual volunteer day for students, planted 2000 Blazing Stars one Saturday morning.