

Natural Resources Management Report

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

November 2013

Primary activities for the month of November included:

1. Fall burns and preparation for spring burns. Prescribed fire is a key management practice for preservation, protection and restoration of our native plant communities. Each year we identify priority areas in our preserves for the narrow windows of opportunity to carry out our prairie and woodland burns. During November we cut fire breaks and burned portions of prairie and wetland units at the Merritt Prairie Forest Preserve.

2. Wetland bank activities. The public notice and comment phase of our new wetland bank application was posted this month by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). During this process, neighboring landowners, regulating agencies and the public-at-large are notified of the application and the construction plans for our project. All comments will be recorded by the ACOE and provided to us for response and/or amendment of our application. It has been gratifying that, after having met in October with our new Mitigation Bank Review Team Chairman, Gene Walsh, our application has progressed quickly through the next stages of the application process. Also this month, the data collected from the monitoring transects in the existing wetland bank was prepared for inclusion in the new format for the annual report that is provided to the ACOE. This report describes the ecological condition of the wetland bank, and is critical for maintaining our ability to sell shares of the bank.

3. Seed collection, processing and planting. While the bulk of our seed collection took place in September and October, a few of the late ripening species were gathered in November. Mostly, we were processing seed this month, with lots of help from our volunteer Land Stewards Group. Last year we collected about 50 species of native plant seeds. This year, with the help of our Land Stewards, interns and seasonal volunteers, we have gathered over 80 species.

4. Adzing cabin logs. An adz (or adze) is a long-handled tool with a wide, curved blade that is used to trim and smooth wood. It is somewhat like an ax, but with the blade at a right angle to the handle. The Miller-Elwood cabin advisory committee determined that a small cast iron stove, rather than a fireplace, was the historically accurate heating component for the cabin, so a dozen additional logs are being “adzed” to fill in the south wall and under the window openings on the cabin. As demonstrated by our previous repairs on the cabin, when cut properly, these new adzed logs will be indistinguishable from the originals.

5. The beginning of “brush season”. November is the beginning of our brush removal season, which can continue until the spring fire season. Our efforts in November began in the Knute Olson Preserve, with the removal of Honeysuckle, Buckthorn and Multiflora Rose. This year, our work has been greatly enhanced with the help of our volunteer land stewards group. We will continue invasive brush removal in this and other preserves as winter conditions permit.

6. Presentation to Genoa Garden Club. Our education and public relations activities continue in the colder months with programs such as this one for the Genoa Garden Club. We have several power-point presentations that we adapt for presentations to community groups. Each presentation is related to some aspect of natural resources management.



Terry Hannan lights a back-burn fire line in a prairie area at the Merritt Forest Preserve.



Steward process tubs full of prairie and wetland seed on a chilly November morning.