

Natural Resource Management Activities

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

February 2015

Primary activities during the month of February included:

1. Completion and approval of the Wetland Mitigation Bank Instrument. Much additional “tweaking” was required, but we finally received approval of our Mitigation Bank Instrument for the newest component of our wetland bank complex at the Afton Preserve: the *Afton South Prairie Wetland Bank*. Al Roloff and our consulting engineer met several times each week during the first two weeks of February to “dot the i’s and cross the t’s” in response to comments from the review team (Army Corps of Engineers, USEPA, IEPA, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Illinois Department of Natural Resources) that reviewed our application. Our wetland banks are a win-win situation for all involved: we are able to re-establish native wetland habitat on our lands, we supply much needed wetland acreage for mitigation of wetlands impacted elsewhere, and we provide a revenue source for our district.

2. Wetland Bank Monitoring Report. Just as the application for establishing a wetland bank has become more complex, so has the process of monitoring and reporting the results of our efforts. This past fall, we began transitioning to the process of having certified wetland scientists do the most technical work that is required by changes in the monitoring and reporting protocols that are mandated by the Corps. Much has changed since our 1998 wetland bank application was approved. During February, we worked with the senior scientist from the environmental firm GeoThink LLC to prepare and submit the 2014 report in the new, standardized format.

3. South Branch Prairie steam-bank stabilization project. We continued our research on the state-of-the-art techniques for stream-bank protection and stabilization for the project at the South Branch Prairie. This is a particularly critical project, since it is immediately upstream from one of the richest and most diverse mussel beds in northern Illinois. We have discussed the project and received guidance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) staff. The NRCS provides technical standards for stream bank protection; staff members of INHS are the state’s experts on protection and preservation of mussel s and mussel habitat.

4. Stewards activities. For the first time, our core group of stewards helped us review and consider our 2015 preserve management schedules. We looked at each schedule where the stewards would be involved in a significant activity in that preserve sometime during the year. They provided thoughtful and important suggestions, and, as a result, we will begin scheduling an additional weekly session to do inventory, assessment and “floral enhancement” work in the preserves. Our stewards are energetic, dedicated and provide a collective *wisdom* to the work we do.

5. Additional activities during February included snowplowing, frost seeding, assessment and planning for expanded forested wetland components, preparations for burn season and establishing a Natural Resources Management work station in the Russell Woods Resource Center.