

Natural Resources Management Report

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

September 2015

Primary activities for the month of September included:

1. End of season plantings. In general, grasses sedges and forbs (non-woody plants) can be planted through mid-September and still be expected to “root in” well before the killing frosts. Rooting in is necessary because smaller plants can frost heave during the freeze-thaw cycles of winter and spring. We planted the last of our sedges, grasses and forbs in the sedge meadow and marshes at the South Branch Prairie. As has been our practice this year, we planted mostly the rare and conservative species that are difficult to establish from seed.

In October, we will continue our planting of woody plants: native trees and shrubs in several sites at the Afton, Prairie Oaks, Merritt and Hoppe forest preserves. Our stewards and the volunteers at our Saturday volunteer events will provide most of the “elbow grease” for these events.

2. Seed collection and inventory. September and October are our most intensive seed collection months. And as usual, our stewards are critical to the process of gathering large volumes of a great many species. Mother Nature ripens the greatest share of her bounty in the fall and we focus much of our effort on the plant species that are expensive to purchase, hard to find in commercial markets, or those for which we will require LARGE amounts of seed for particular plantings.

We also begin our inventory this month by recording the collection site, date, genus and species, common name, weight and coefficient of conservancy (on a scale of 0-10) for each species that we collect.

3. Streambank stabilization on the Kishwaukee River at the South Branch Prairie. We met with the Conservationist and Engineer from the Natural Resources Conservation Service at the site on the river where the stabilization project will take place. Final plans and specifications are expected to be ready by mid-October when stone placement and grading can be completed.

This project will improve water quality and reduce erosion just upstream from one of our most heavily fished segments of the river, as well as the high quality mussel bed in the Russell Woods Forest Preserve. 50% funding was provided by a grant from the Illinois Small Mouth Bass Alliance.

4. Late season weed spraying. The re-emerged weeds that germinate from the seed bank in the soil at the savanna site at the South Branch Prairie and the Prairie Oaks Preserve were sprayed to prevent *them* from going to seed. Phragmites (Giant Reed) was sprayed in the sites where it pops up from seed that blows in to our plantings or is spread by birds. Weed control is a year-round activity. In the winter we just switch to brush cutting or basal bark treatment of non-native woody weeds.

5. Miscellaneous activities included meetings/consultation/audits with our Mitigation Bank Review Team, our insurance carrier representative, a citizens’ park planning group from Waterman, and NIU Biology Department staff.



Emmylou Studier, one of our regular Stewards, collects prairie plant seeds at Afton.



A group of Stewards just completed a planting at the South Branch Prairie sedge meadow.