

Natural Resources Management Activities

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

August 2013

Primary activities for the month of August included:

1. Late season spraying as a part of invasive species control. Invasive species don't quit growing when it's hot or dry; they just slow down a bit. We used various methods during the dry periods depending on the species and situation. Sometimes different concentrations of herbicides are more appropriate, sometimes different methods. During August we used wicking (brushing the plants with an herbicide) and the "glove of death", (touching the plant with an herbicide soaked glove) to control invasives such as Cattails and Giant Reed. We also re-treated some areas with the boom sprayer, where we want to remove all the weedy vegetation and just start over. As the weather cools, we will switch to cutting woody invasive species, and treating their stumps with herbicide. Most grasses and forbs have no live parts above ground after the frosts, so we get what we can during the fall while they are still green, then we have to wait until spring.

2. Mowing the new prairie plantings. During the first year or two of a prairie plant seeding, we sometimes mow the area to keep fast growing weeds and/or the nurse crop from going to seed. This technique also keeps those plants from shading out the small prairie seedlings. We mow fairly infrequently, usually about every other week, depending on how fast the weeds and nurse crop grow. We stop when the frosts slow down the growth rate significantly.

3. Education and community relations. During July, Al Roloff met with the new NIU professor who will be teaching the Conservation Biology course, Holly Jones. This is the course in which to students make visits to various sites where scientific land conservation and management principles are put in to practice at the local level. We have assisted with this course for 15 years; this will be the 4th professor who has taught the course during that time. Also during July, Al did a tour and presentation for the local Soil and Water Conservation Board about the South Branch Prairie and how the land was developed and is being managed. Board members were interested and enthused to learn about this Wetland Reserve Program site.

4. Stewards activities. During August our regular Stewards group collected prairie and wetland seeds, they monitored the mussel population in the Kishwaukee River at Russell Woods, and they learned how to track the rare Blandings Turtle who has made himself at home in the Afton Preserve. This is an active, very knowledgeable group of Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists who like to assist with many of the tasks that we have. They are a valuable asset to our Forest Preserve District.

5. Seed collection. August is the transition from occasional seed collection to the more regular seed collection activities of the fall. We have been gathering reasonable amounts of seed, (much of it from wetlands) so far this summer, but now the larger batches of seed becomes ripe and are ready to pick. We gathered many pounds of Bulrush seeds in August, as well as some of the early prairie seed. We got lots of woodland grass seed this month, too. As more seed is collected, we will schedule more time to properly dry and process this seed, and prepare it for planting, most of it in late fall or early winter.

