



## Natural Resource Management Department Memorandum

TO: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director  
FROM: Patrick Chess, Director of Natural Resources  
RE: September 2025 Department Monthly Report

### LAND MANAGEMENT

#### NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

##### Restoration

##### Weed Management

Staff continued to focus primarily on Chemical Weed Management at nearly every preserve in September, totaling numerous hours of work across a variety of invasive species. Work was heavily geared towards the control of common reed (*Phragmites australis*), a very tall invasive grass that can dominate wetland communities. By targeting populations when they are small, staff works to contain outbreaks and preserve biodiversity.

##### Seed Harvesting

Seed collection continues with many species including compass plant, butterfly milkweed, and nodding onion. Weekly volunteer seed collections continued this month and were held at Big Rock, LeRoy Oakes, and Hannaford Woods Forest Preserves. We have about 20 regular volunteers and several partner agencies that come out every Wednesday to assist us with seed collection. Seed collected from both staff and volunteer harvest this year will be planted at Johnson's Mound and Rutland North Forest Preserves in a continued effort to plant 250 acres of new tallgrass prairie from agricultural land on an annual basis.

##### National Public Lands Day

The District joined forces with Toyota on National Public Lands day for an event held on September 26<sup>th</sup> at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. Volunteers helped harvest native seed, focusing on rosinweed (*Silphium integrifolium*). Additionally, the volunteers helped to paint the wooded fence surrounding the historic Sholes School. This one



*Volunteers paint the fence during National Public Lands Day event with Toyota at LeRoy Oakes.*



*Volunteers pick seed during National Public Lands Day event.*



*Restoration Technician Justin Lechner collects pasture thistle seed.*

room country school dates back to the 1870s when it was built in Burlington Township prior to being moved to LeRoy Oakes for preservation in the 1970s.

### **Wildlife**

#### **Avian Research**

District staff worked with state biologists to capture and band wood ducks at the Donahue property. Banding is needed to estimate duck survival to ensure the conservation of this once-rare duck. District and IDNR staff banded 71 ducks in 2025, far exceeding the number captured in recent years.

Fall migratory surveys began at Muirhead Springs as staff continues to track the presence of shorebirds, waterfowl, and other water-related bird species at the site. Staff also obtained raptor banding permits, bands and sampling equipment to begin our own county raptor banding program and studies.

#### **Mussel Conservation**

Freshwater mussels are one of the most imperiled groups of animals in North America. They provide critical filtration and nutrient cycling within streams and rivers. District staff has been working with staff at the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County Urban Stream Research Center to propagate and release mussels in District owned streams since 2021. Staff conducted a post-release survey in Blackberry Creek to document the presence of marked mussels that were released after propagation efforts. Conditions made it difficult to see much of the creek bed, but multiple marked mussels were located during the survey. In October staff will be releasing our first cohort of Ellipse mussels, USRC has not previously propagated this species.

#### **Deer Management Program**

Participants in the District's 2025-2026 Deer Management Program were given access to scout their hunting zones and prepare for the upcoming management season at all sites, except Big Rock. Staff prepared and mailed neighbor notices for properties adjacent to preserves included in the program. The season will officially begin on 10/1.



*IDNR staff determine the age and sex of a wood duck before banding.*



*Female American Kestrel caught in a bal-chatri trap with Millikin University. The bird was banded with both federal bands and plastic color bands.*



*Previously released mussels are documented for growth at Blackberry Creek.*