



Natural Resource Management Department Memorandum

TO: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director
FROM: Patrick Chess, Director of Natural Resources
RE: December 2024 Department Monthly Report

LAND MANAGEMENT

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Restoration

Fall Prescribed Burn Season

The District burned over 120 acres across 9 units this fall season. This represents a very weak fall burn season, primarily due to heavy rains throughout November. The District will look to the Spring Prescribed Burn Season to help make up acreage for the season.

Seed Preparation & Planting

During the month of December, staff spent numerous hours cleaning and preparing approximately 2,062 lbs. of harvested native seed which yielded over 1,005 lbs. of clean seed. Staff will be busy sowing seed in January as winter conditions set in. Staff plant seed using hand broadcasting and hopper broadcasters and have approximately 200 acres of new prairie to plant.

Tree & Brush Clearing

On the freezing days last month, the Natural Resource field staff began tackling invasive tree and brush throughout forest preserves. Targeted species to remove included buckthorn, honeysuckle, and other weedy brush. As frozen ground conditions continue to develop, staff can begin tackling larger clearing projects. Staff has begun a 20-acre tree clearing project at Burlington Prairie in preparation for a Ducks Unlimited project being funded by a NAWCA grant.

Employee Recognition & Holiday Banquet

We are very proud of our department and their accomplishments and service this year.



A male American Kestrel.



Twenty acres have been cleared at Burlington Prairie FP, in preparation for a Ducks Unlimited grant project.

Restoration Crew Leader Pete Dall was awarded the Going the Extra Mile Award for conducting a public prescribed burn. Agricultural Coordinator Michelle Blackburn received the Environmental Hero Award for all of her efforts throughout the year including introducing the District's first organic farming license.

Wildlife

Mussel Conservation

Staff released giant floater mussels in Blackberry Creek. These mussels were propagated from females collected in Kane County streams and reared at the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County Urban Stream Research center. The mussels were marked with glitter to help staff identify propagated mussels in future surveys and document their presence in future years. In 2024, staff released 1,102 marked mussels and approximately 8,000 small unmarked mussels into Blackberry Creek.

Deer Management Program

The 2024/25 Deer Management program ends on January 19th, with the close of the archery deer season. Program participants will have one week to remove their equipment from the preserves. On 12/31 harvest numbers were: Bruner/FRS (28), Freeman Kame (13), Lone Grove (7), Binnie (4), and Needham (3).

Avian Surveys and Studies

Wildlife staff participated in raptor banding & handling training with Millikin University. Staff successfully banded & drew blood samples from Red-tailed hawk, Red-shouldered hawk & American Kestrels primarily. Additionally, staff conducted American Kestrel color banding within Kane Forest Preserves as a continuation of the ongoing color banding project.

Owl surveys continued this month as well as various Christmas Bird Count surveys at Rutland, Grunwald Forest Preserve and Raceway Woods. Highlights from these surveys were Eastern screech owls, Trumpeter Swans, Purple finch, Merlin, Hermit thrush & Yellow-rumped warblers. Only



A banded Red-tailed hawk being held by Wildlife Technician Daiko.

Natural Resource Management Department Memorandum

December Report

one Muirhead waterfowl survey was conducted this month as ponds were frozen over and therefore had little to no waterfowl presence. All waterfowl sightings during this survey were flyovers and consisted mostly of Canada geese & mallards.