



Natural Resource Management Department Memorandum

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

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Restoration

Earth Day Special Event

This year's volunteer tree planting event took place on Saturday, April 26th at Freeman Kame Forest Preserve. This event was very well attended and volunteers helped plant 500 shrubs in just over an hour. Those shrubs will help create a diverse understory following the planting of 500 oaks in that area in 2018.



Chemical Weed Management

Invasive weeds have begun to sprout and our crew has been working hard to combat a whole suite of pernicious pests including wild chervil, reed canary grass, and fig buttercup, among others. Widespread selective herbicide applications were conducted across the county at over 50 preserves.

Wildlife

Avian Surveys and Nest Structures

Wildlife staff have begun annual migratory bird surveys at Big Rock and Fabyan Forest Preserves. A few highlights thus far have been multiple grasshopper sparrows, American bittern, Hooded warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Mourning warbler and several White-eyed vireos. Staff have also started American kestrel adult banding. Nesting adults have been banded at Brunner and Big Rock. Staff is working with Cook County and staff veterinarians to collect a variety of samples to get a baseline analysis of American Kestrel health in the Chicagoland region. Staff continue to monitor avian activity at Muirhead Springs. The majority of duck species have decrease since March and we are starting to see some shorebird migration.



Reptile Surveys

Staff have started initial wildlife surveys at the recently acquired property in Rutland township. So far, there appears to be thriving populations of common snapping turtles and painted turtles. Marsh bird and snake surveys are also being conducted at this location to acquire baseline wildlife information.



Top: Kestrel banding

Bottom: Caspian terns at Muirhead Springs

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Snake surveys were conducted by checking artificial cover objects that were placed in March and April. Four locations are being surveyed by staff and 4 additional locations are being surveyed by a contractor.

Beaver Flooding Monitoring and Mitigation

Staff monitored and worked to mitigate water levels at the following preserves: Aurora West, Chicago Premium Outlet, Mill Creek, Lake Run and Virgil. Flooding at these locations is impacting neighboring properties or preventing sufficient drainage and access to several District owned farm fields.



Top: Juvenile red-bellied snake, held by the finger tips

Bottom: Wildlife Biologist Graser holding a snapping turtle