



## Natural Resource Management Department Memorandum

TO: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director

FROM: Patrick Chess, Director of Natural Resources

RE: March 2025 Department Monthly Report

### LAND MANAGEMENT

#### NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

##### *Restoration*

##### Spring Prescribed Burn Season

The 2025 Spring Burn season began in full force during early March. While the fall burn season was a disappointment, this spring rebounded with very strong numbers. Combined with the results from last fall, this combined burn season represents a fairly typical season, at over 50 units burned and over 1,600 acres burned. The goals of prescribed burning include rejuvenation of native species and control of invasives.

##### Mechanical Weed Management

March marks the end of the dormant season and the start of the growing season. This spring has started in fairly typical fashion with herbaceous plants just now beginning to emerge. Staff has taken advantage of the later spring to continue invasive brush removal, targeting prairies burned this spring. By walking the burned fields, staff are able to easily locate the brush and remove them without fighting the tall grasses present in the summer.

##### *Wildlife*

##### Avian Studies & Nest Structure Program

Staff have begun field work for this year's American Kestrel monitoring project. This includes cleaning, installing, repairing, replacing or relocating nest boxes in preparation for the next season. Of the 26 boxes in the county, two were newly installed in 2025 with four relocations within the same preserves. Sadie presented at the Wild Things Conference on March 1<sup>st</sup> to discuss the Muirhead Springs mitigation bank and bird migration. Muirhead Springs bird surveys continued once the ice thawed, marking the start of spring migration. In March, there have been high counts of Greater white-fronted geese, Canada geese, Ring-necked duck, Mallard, Green-winged teal, American coot, Blackbirds (Red-winged and



*Prescribed burn last month at Burnidge FP.*

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Common grackle) and Wilson's snipe. There was a bonus group of four Horned grebe in the most recent survey as well as the first group of shorebirds in 2025 (Lesser yellowlegs).

Snake monitoring

Staff began setting up to conduct snake surveys in 2025. These surveys are conducted by placing artificial cover objects (ACO) of wood, metal or carpet in grassland and wetland areas. In 2025, 8 preserves will be surveyed by staff and a contractor. Over 112 ACOs were placed and will be checked throughout the Spring and Summer to learn more about snake diversity at the 8 sites. An emphasis will be placed on detecting the smooth green snake, which is under consideration for state listing.



*Wildlife Technician Sadie Dainko presenting at Wild Things Conference about the Muirhead Springs Wetland Mitigation and bird migration.*