Volume 11 Issue 3 Fall 2016

The Voice for Illinois Forests

Acting on issues that impact rural and community forests and promoting forestry in Illinois

Inside this Issue

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Message from the President

By Mike McMahan

Where has the time gone?!! It seems like just yesterday that I was honored to be elected as the IFA President - not once, but TWICE! Now THAT is truly a compliment, and I want you to know how much I have appreciated the trust and confidence placed in me by the IFA Board and members like you.

Now that my term as President is almost over, I'm having thoughts quite similar to the ones I have when I think about "Who will care for my woods and ground when I am not here anymore?" In the case of the IFA, I'm confident that the short-term is in good hands. My thoughts travel out 3 years, 5 years, 10 years and beyond. Who will be there when the short-term ends and the long-term kicks in?

Like many of you, I have concerns about my personal situation. I struggle from day to day thinking about it and trying to find the answer. Fortunately, my two children are starting to "come around" a little. They're beginning to understand why I do all this work to improve land that will someday belong to somebody else. I'm going to nurture their seedling-like interest by buying them membership in the IFA so they can "see for themselves" how many people care for the land they own by commiting to learning more, connecting to others with similar interests, and becoming advocates for better management. We shall have to wait to see if anything comes of my efforts to pass it on – wish me luck!

I think most people want to leave behind a legacy of their time here on this earth. We invest in conservation and hope those who follow will do the same. Maybe not the exact way we did it, but in a way that is far better than doing nothing at all. We invest our time in volunteer causes like the IFA, and hope that others will continue to step up and carry the torch when we move on.

I'm confident that your collective spirit of volunteerism, combined with the quality of what the IFA has to offer will produce what is needed: a steady stream of members who "get it" and step up to serve the cause. My experience on the IFA Board has not only been helpful to the association, it has given value back to me in so many ways. I have learned a great many things that I can apply to my land, and I've enjoyed the challenge of working with our board to see what kind of legacy we can leave for those who will follow.

I believe in my heart that the quality of what the IFA is doing and the programs it is offering will keep attracting new members and the cycle will repeat – over and over, and I will rest easy and be even more proud of our organization than I am today. Thanks so much for the opportunity!

Mike McMahan

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IFA SPONSORS AISWCD'S OUTSTANDING FORESTRY CONTRIBUTION AWARD

by Dave Gillespie, IFA Secretary

The recipients of the Association of Illinois Soil & Water Conservation Districts' (AISWCD's) Outstanding Forestry Contribution Award this year are Ed and Elizabeth Anderson. The Illinois Forestry Association has sponsored this award for the last 10 years.

On July 25, 2016 at the AISWCD's Annual Conference, IFA Secretary Dave Gillespie presented the award to Mr. and Mrs. Anderson. Ed and Elizabeth attended Iowa State University with majors in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology, with minors in Chemistry and Education. After college and teaching in Australia, Ed worked for the Iowa Conservation Department on various projects. In 1974, the Andersons decided that their work had many similarities to farming, and decided to return to Ed's grandparents' family farm. After considering their options, they decided on minimum tillage and no-till methods for soil conservation benefits. Ed then returned to the classroom and farmed evenings and weekends.

After 15 years they decided to cease farming row crops. In 2010 they retired and began pursuing their other interests, primarily forest management. They attended some Illinois Tree Farm meetings, and decided to become active members. The Andersons joined the IFA in 2012. They now have 70 acres in a forestry management plan. They have done timber stand improvement as well as removing invasive species. This spring they planted 2100 trees, and will add another 1100 trees this fall and the coming spring. Their timber also provides wood for Elizabeth's carvings and Ed's furniture.

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ILLINOIS Forestry Association

11th Annual Meeting

Restoring Illinois Oak Forests

2016 Fall Meeting

ILLINOIS SAF

Sponsored by...

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29th

12:00 p.m. Registration Opens - SIU's Touch of Nature Center
1:00 p.m. ABC's of Forestry for Landowners
5:00 p.m. Adjourn - Evening fun on your own -

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30th

9:30 a.m. Walk in the Woods - Outdoor Morning Session
10-Noon Silent Auction and Exhibit Set-Up
Noon Box Lunch - Friends Room - Touch of Nature
Noon Registration Opens
1:00 p.m. Conference Begins
Let the Sun Shine In! - TSI, prescribed fire, and invasive species control
Working Together on Adjacent Lands
The Natives are Restless: Impact of Oak Restoration on the Flora and Fauna of Illinois
5:00 p.m. Social Hour
6:00 p.m. Buffalo Tro - A Touch of Nature Center Tradition!
7:15 p.m. Silent Auction Closes
8:00 p.m. Fireside Forestry - "Managing Forests for Wildlife"

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1st

8:00 a.m. Business Meetings (IFA and IL-SAF concurrent)
9:30 a.m. Check Out & Depart for Trail of Tears State Forest
10:30 a.m. White Barn - Meet for Field Tour (box lunch in field)
2:00 p.m. Happy Trails... Enjoy the rest of your weekend!

OAKtober

Learn more and register online at: http://ilforestry.org/event-2306885

Registration deadline September 23rd • Silent Auction Items Needed!

For more information, call 618/949-3699 or email: ilforestry@gmail.com

Online and In-Person Classes in Natural Areas Restoration from The Morton Arboretum

by Megan Dunning

The Morton Arboretum is rolling out a newly updated curriculum for volunteers and landowners who manage natural areas. Since 2008, the Arboretum has offered classes in ecological restoration through the Woodland Stewardship Program. Volunteers and landowners interested in woodland, wetland, and prairie conservation have been coming to the Arboretum to learn about restoration ecology, plant identification, invasive species management, land use history and site planning, managing workdays, and more. Thanks to funding from the Tellabs foundation, the Arboretum is currently taking that curriculum and updating it as a blended program, where classes can take place both in-person and online.

The Morton Arboretum's Woodland Stewardship Program trains professionals, volunteers, and interested citizens to manage and restore natural areas including woodlands, prairies, wetlands, and other habitats of the Chicago region. Through classroom study, online interaction, and field experience at the Arboretum, the program provides the essential knowledge and practical experience necessary to be a thoughtful forest caretaker, as a landowner, professional, or as a volunteer. The program is open to anyone involved or interested in the stewardship of our natural heritage, regardless of prior experience.

The soft launch of online classes began in spring 2016, with classes in basic plant ID, ecological restoration, woodland wildflower identification and invasive species management including online components. This fall, the Arboretum will be rolling out a wider variety of offerings, including classes on woodland tree identification, restoration and wildlife, fire ecology, and tool management, in addition to the classes repeated from spring and summer. The Arboretum has also partnered with Chicago Wilderness to be the host for Chicago Wilderness Prescription Burn Crew Training. The next sessions will take place on October 6 and 7 or October 8 and 9, 2016, from 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Interested in honing your plant identification or woodland management skills? Registration is open now at http://www.mortonarb.org/learn-experience/adults/conservation-and-restoration/woodland-stewardship-program. Classes in the program can be taken as needed based on the skills you want to develop, or can be combined for certification from the Arboretum as a Woodland Steward or Steward Supervisor. Don't see the course you are looking for? The Arboretum is working with regional stakeholders to develop online resources that meet their needs. If you are interested in working with the Arboretum to create educational resources that support woodland conservation and management, please contact the Manager of Adult Learning Programs, Megan Dunning, at mdunning@mortonarb.org.

State Forester Update

by Tom Wilson

The Mason State Nursery is still open, and we are hopeful it will remain so, though budgets for IDNR and the Forestry Division remain an issue through this December. At some point soon DNR leadership expects more fiscal information for the remainder of FY2017. Our nursery is poised and proactive to conservation needs and market demands as well as emerging markets for urban trees and pollinator habitat.

The Illinois Wildland Fire Crew (pictured below) was dispatched August 1st for seventeen days and just returned safely from USDA Forest Service coordinated fire-fighting efforts in the Northern Rocky Mountains. The highly trained individuals on this dispatch included five Division foresters, other DNR staff and others. The Illinois crew remains properly staffed and ready for service when requested for dispatch all year each year.

Conservation World (CW) was open at this year's recent Illinois State Fair. Forestry manned a tent full of forestry exhibits and information for adults while making games and fun for kids! (Picture below) Thousands of people come through CW on the fairgrounds where each division of the IDNR is represented. Foresters were on hand daily to answer always interesting questions from the public and landowners. Please drop in our tent and see us next August.

Stewardship of the State's forest resources from our most rural areas to our biggest cities, and the interfaces where they meet, remain our highest priority. Though programs like wood utilization, forest health, fire and others help facilitate healthy and manageable forests; it is our Forest Stewardship program, where forestry management plans for Illinois forestland owners are developed and implemented, and our Urban Forestry Program, where Illinois cities participate to monitor and manage their street trees, park trees and forests, which insure and expand the presence and benefits of forests.

Illinois forests continue to produce much more wood than is ever harvested. Wood utilization, markets, mills and timber buyers do remain an important driver of forest stewardship. Without markets for the wood, logs and products Illinois forests produce; foresters and others have very limited options for managing forests. Though huge issues such as high business taxes and workers compensation insurance rates hamper mill and factory investments here; the Forestry Division remains committed to increasing and expanding the markets for, and utilization of, Illinois forest products. Wood utilization expands our economy and favors forestland retention.

The Illinois Division of Forest Resources appreciates the cooperation and support of all individuals and organizations who value our mission and efforts statewide.

Legislative/Policy Report

by Stephanie Brown

Passage of the "stop gap" budget on the last day of FY16 provided relief to some, but fell far short of restoring confidence among the agencies and organizations dependent on state funding.

In forestry, we had some good news. The Forestry Development Act (FDA) Fund remained intact - the IFA was among several groups writing letters to ask that the fund not be swept. The Forestry Development Council was retroactively restored, but little money had been committed or spent, leaving $108,000 in FY16 funds on the table that would have benefitted Illinois Forestry if a state budget had been in place.

For Soil & Water Conservation Districts that were able to keep staff on board, the stop gap reimbursement was a welcome relief. However, the proportion of Operating Expenses to the Cost-Share Funds they also administer was changed to reduce the support to districts for overhead - an already lean item for these local government operations. Work is still needed to help the Governor's staff and state legislators appreciate the value of what SWCD programs and staff bring to the State of Illinois at the local level.

The IFA has accepted an invitation to join the IL Environmental Council as a non-voting affiliate member. That means we are plugged into a coalition of organizations that regularly follows, shares, and advocates for legislation - some of which impacts Illinois forests. Working together, we are a stronger voice in favor of SWCDs and the state nursersies, and this will also help us more closely monitor bills like the Wrongful Tree Cutting Act (WTCA) amendment. It will most likely be next spring before the WTCA amendment is reintroduced.

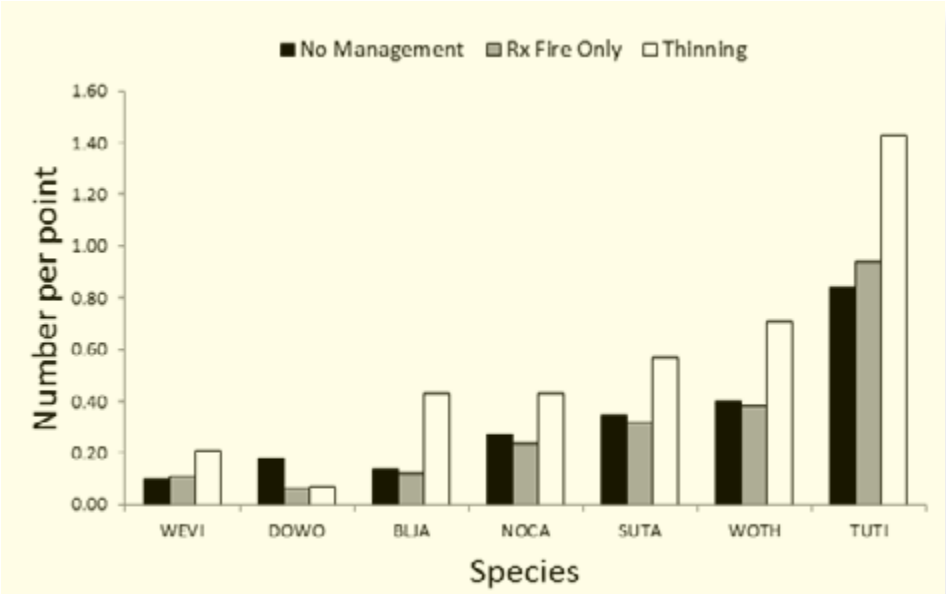
Oak Forest Management: Is it for the birds?

by Jeff Hoover, Illinois Natural History Survey

The Forests and Woodlands Campaign (Forest Campaign hereafter) is one of the important campaigns outlined in the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan and Strategy (wildlife action plan). There are many current conservation issues involving Illinois' wooded habitats including the alteration or loss of natural disturbance processes, changing composition of forested habitats away from oak-hickory dominance to maple dominance, and general decline in forest quality caused by increasing numbers of invasive exotic plant species. Since 2011, the Forest Campaign has been monitoring the effects of forest management activities on Illinois' wildlife, to document whether or not forest management activities are successfully promoting populations of focal wildlife species and meeting the goals of the wildlife action plan. A main focus of the Forest Campaign has been to measure the response of forest-dependent songbirds to various forest management tools that include, but are not limited to, thinning, fire, re-forestation, and the removal of invasive exotic plant species.

Wood thrush. Photo credit: Michael Jeffords and Susan Post

Breeding forest songbirds in Illinois include more than 100 different species that fall into various guilds (e.g. nesting on the ground, in shrubs, sub-canopy, or canopy; foraging in leaf litter, on bark, on shrub or tree foliage; nesting on or near the ground, in shrubs, or in the canopy; etc.), making them highly responsive to changes in forest structure and composition and, therefore, a great group to monitor in association with various forest management practices. Over 20 of these species are on the list of Species in Greatest Need of Conservation (SGNC) for Illinois.



Relative abundance of various bird species at Trail of Tears State Forest. Positive response to forest management is indicated for a species when abundance is higher in one or both treatment categories compared to no management category. Species codes are: WEVI white-eyed vireo; DOWO downy woodpecker; BLJA blue jay; NOCA northern cardinal; SUTA summer tanager; WOTH wood thrush; TUTI tufted titmouse.

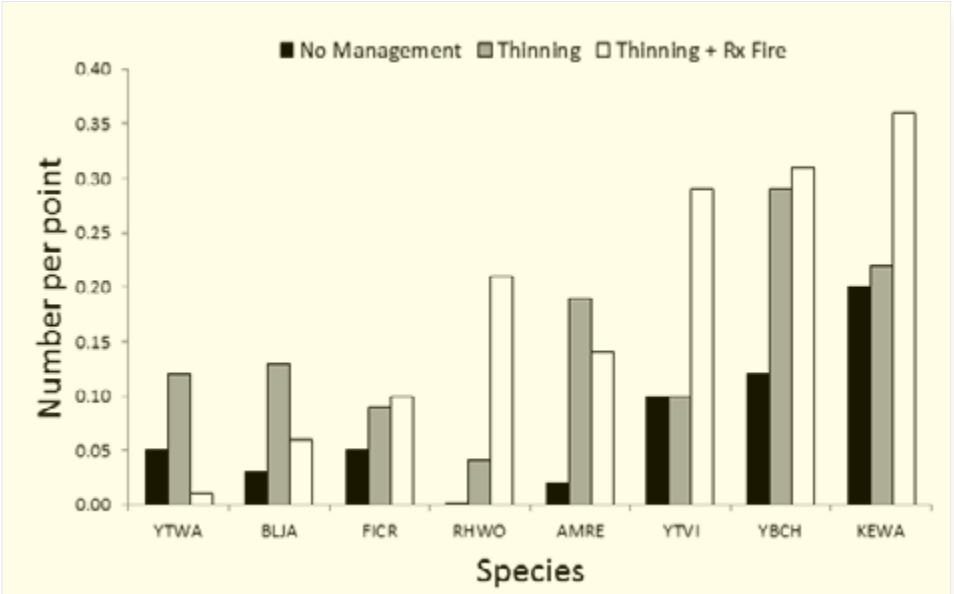
Several attributes of forest songbirds make them particularly well suited for studying responses to forest management. One is that most if not all of these species are territorial during the breeding season and their territory sizes are typically between 1-3 acres in size. Therefore, local forest management activities done at scales of 1, 5, 10, 50, or 100 acres are all highly relevant to these birds that occupy a relatively small area throughout the breeding season. Another attribute of songbirds is that several species are known to return the next breeding season to places where they reproduced successfully, and to move away from those areas where they failed to reproduce. This behavior leads to an increase in densities in the "better" habitats and a decrease in densities in the "poorer" habitats. In this regard, relative densities are a good predictor of habitat quality with densities being

highest in the best habitats. These two attributes in combination should make the songbirds highly responsive to the various types of forest management being done, and changes in their densities tell us whether the forest management is having a positive, negative, or neutral effect on their local populations.

Much of what we know about habitat requirements and habitat use in songbirds comes from observational studies documenting attributes of the forest where songbirds set up their territories. This has led to recommendations to manage forests for songbirds by achieving a particular tree species composition or vegetation structure and complexity, but the actual responses of the songbirds to the management have usually not been measured.

Presently we are collecting data on songbirds breeding in the forests at various sites around Illinois including Oakwood Bottoms Greentree Reservoir, Trail of Tears and Hidden Springs State Forests, Siloam Springs and Stephen A. Forbes State Parks, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' land at Lake Shelbyville. All of these areas have various forest units that are being actively managed as well as forests that are not being managed. This allows us to make comparisons and determine what effects the management is having on different species of songbirds. Forest management in these units is typically some type of mechanical thinning of trees, prescribed fire, or both. At each study site we visit bird survey points located in each category of forest management and also at locations in non-managed forests. Over the course of a breeding season our bird surveys typically record from 45-75 breeding songbird species per study site. We compare their relative abundances between the managed and non-managed forest categories to determine if the management is having a positive, neutral, or negative effect on each species and then draw general conclusions about the effects of the forest management on breeding forest songbirds.

Red-headed woodpecker. Photo credit: Michael Jeffords and Susan Post



Relative abundance of various bird species at Oakwood Bottoms. Positive response to forest management is indicated for a species when abundance is higher in one or both treatment categories compared to no management category. Species codes are: YTWA yellow-throated warbler; BLJA blue jay; FICR fish crow; RHWO red-headed woodpecker; AMRE American redstart; YTVI yellow-throated vireo; YBCH yellow-breasted chat; KEWA Kentucky warbler.

Results from multiple study sites support the conclusion that, in general, the types of forest management being used to improve forest "health" in Illinois are also having mostly positive or neutral effects on breeding forest songbirds. For example, at Oakwood Bottoms the relative abundance of 42% of songbird species responded positively, 44% neutrally, and 14% negatively to forest management. At Trail of Tears 24% of songbird species responded positively, 59% neutrally, and 17% negatively to forest management. At Lake Shelbyville 46% of songbird species responded positively, 44% neutrally, and 10% negatively to forest management. At Forbes 29% of songbird species responded positively, 58% neutrally, and 13% negatively to forest management. Some examples of species on Illinois' SGNC list that respond favorably to thinning include the red-headed woodpecker, yellow-breasted chat, Kentucky warbler and wood thrush. It should be pointed out that so far these are short-term (e.g. 1-5 years after management has occurred) responses of songbirds to forest management. As we continue to collect more years of data it is likely that some of the species initially responding negatively to forest management could ultimately respond neutrally or positively as more time passes after management. This is particularly true regarding prescribed fire for species like ovenbirds and worm-eating warblers that nest near

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Birds - Continued from Page 7 -

the ground and avoid forests the first summer after a prescribed fire but move back into those same forests in subsequent summers.

A concern for breeding forest songbirds when thinning is used to open up the forest canopy is the potential for increased brood parasitism of songbird nests by Brown-headed Cowbirds. Female cowbirds may cue in on or use more heavily areas of the forest where the canopy has been opened up. The more-open overstory may make it easier for female cowbirds to view the nest building and mating activities of potential hosts while the cowbirds are searching for nests to parasitize. This could lead to higher rates of cowbird parasitism in forests that are thinned than those not thinned. Our results suggest that this is not the case and cowbird detections were not higher in any particular management category compared to non-managed forests. Therefore, it is likely that the current forest management practices will not increase cowbird parasitism.

This data on songbird responses to different types of forest management (e.g. prescribed fire, thinning, re-forestation, etc.) being collected as part of the Forest Campaign will add valuable and much needed information to the conservation of forest songbirds. In addition, in the next few years we hope to determine which species of songbirds respond positively to forest management in parallel with positive responses of wild turkeys to the same management. In this way, there may be several species of breeding forest songbirds that could serve as indicators of higher and lower quality forest habitat for wild turkeys. Our goal is to use these results to contribute substantially to the growing body of research associated with the effects of forest management on populations of wildlife, and to use the data collected in Illinois to reinforce existing or establish new approaches to forest management that are applicable to forests throughout Illinois and other states in the Midwest.

Dr. Jeffrey P. Hoover is an Avian Ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey at the Prairie Research Institute, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

LESSONS LEARNED: Revisiting oak plantations 15 years after planting

by Eric Holzmeuller and Josh Nickelson, SIU Department of Forestry

Heavy autumn olive cover in failed oak planting at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge

Conversion of agricultural land to oak forest, oftentimes through the Conservation Reserve Program, has resulted in the addition of thousands of acres of hardwood plantations in Illinois over the past few decades. However, these plantings can vary widely as there are multiple factors that can influence the success, e.g. initial planting stock, herbivory, planting technique, etc. More recently there is concern that invasive, exotic plant species, such as autumn olive, stifle long term growth and development of forest plantations.

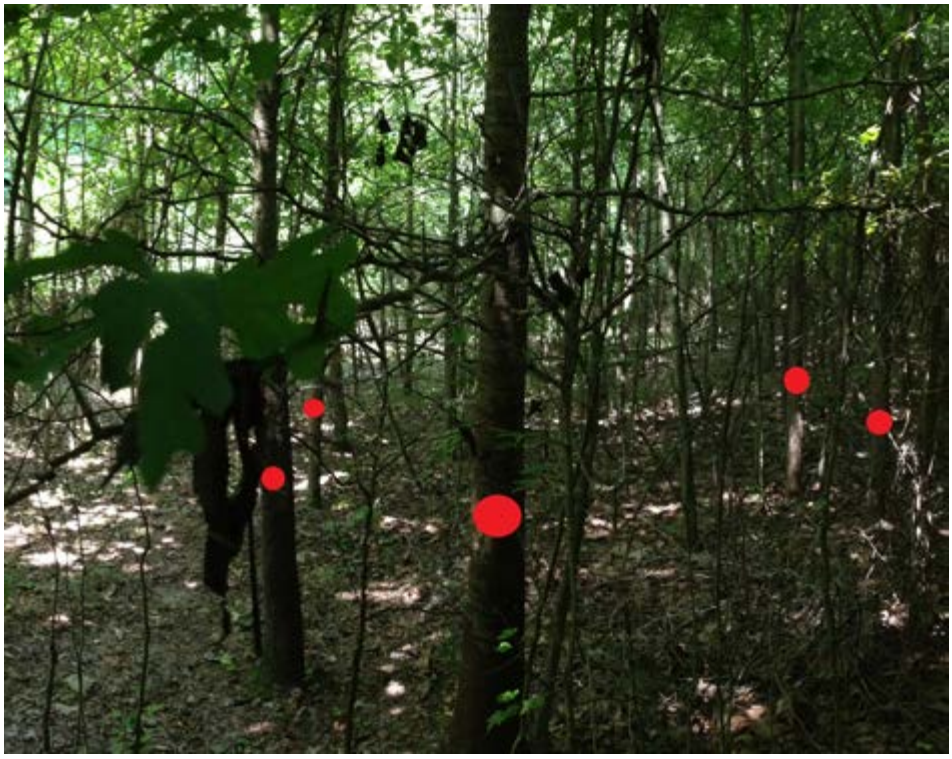
In order to investigate some of the factors of long-term plantation success, we utilized a series of oak plantations that were established on the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in the late 1990s. Plantations were planted with oak seedlings on an 8' x 12' spacing and ranged in age from 15-18 years at the time of our study. Pre-planting land use included ground that was previously in clover, soybeans, woody brush, or herbaceous weeds. Woody brush sites were dominated with early successional, native volunteer hardwood tree species

and autumn olive. Herbaceous weed sites were dominated by fescue and goldenrod. Prior to planting, the woody brush and herbaceous weed sites were mowed and/or treated with herbicides. No follow up treatments were implemented following planting.

Across all sites, there were many native hardwood tree species (sycamore, ash, poplar, elm, etc.) that naturally established via windblown seed following the planting of the oak seedlings. These native volunteers are common in tree plantings in Illinois and historically were thought to be the primary competition/threat for more desirable planted oak seedlings. However, we observed a negative relationship between tree density and invasive cover (as tree density increased, invasive cover decreased). When we looked closer at the influence of pre-planting land cover we saw a higher incidence of successful stocking on soybean and clover sites (80% stocking success) compared to sites that that had woody brush or herbaceous weeds prior to planting (20% stocking success).

Overall, our results suggest that there is a potentially beneficial role of volunteer native trees as suppressors of invasive species that can compete with planted oak seedlings as stand development progresses. In addition, sites should be planted as soon as possible following agricultural abandonment in order to prevent invasive plant species, such as autumn olive, from becoming established. If autumn olive becomes established on a site it may overtop and outcompete all other vegetation, including trees. We surveyed several plantations where autumn olive cover was nearly 100% and tree density (both oak and other hardwood species) was close to zero. In today's environment, successful forest plantation establishment requires continued effort, nullifying the convention of planting followed by passive management. Sites should be monitored to identify any potential threats to the long-term success of established goals and objective and post planting treatments, such as herbicides or crop tree release, may be needed to achieve desired levels of favored species.

Dr. Eric Holzmeuller is a Professor in the Forestry Department at Southern Illinois University - Carbondale. Josh Nickelson is a former SIU Graduate Research Assistant, now Forester Specialist with Indiana Department of Natural Resources.



Successful 15 year-old planting at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge

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Prescribed Burn Association and Cooperative Weed Management Area Join Forces

by Kevin Rohling and Jesse Riechman

In the fall of 2013, the River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area (RTR-CWMA) and the organization then known as the Southeastern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association (SIPBA) (soon to be known as the Southern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association) met with conservation partners from southernmost Illinois to brainstorm project ideas for an upcoming grant proposal to the US Forest Service. The group had been discussing their options, and an epiphany of sorts had been arrived at. Two pillars of the regional conservation community, the RTR-CWMA and SIPBA had been working in much the same area on restoring the natural communities of the southernmost Illinois region, but had not coordinated their efforts. What could be accomplished if these two organizations were to join forces, so to speak, and put their combined resources to task on two of our most pressing conservation needs, invasive species management, and prescribed burning? The answer, we would come to find out, would be significant impacts on both the human and natural communities of the region.

One part of the proposal would expand SIPBA, from focusing on the southeastern portion of the region, expanding to cover the same area already served by the RTR-CWMA, the southernmost 11 counties of Illinois (cleverly avoiding a change in the SIPBA acronym, by changing Southeastern to Southern, to accurately describe the new coverage area). By expanding the area served by SIPBA to mirror the area covered by the RTR-CWMA, the stage was set for collaboration.

Before getting into the collaboration, it will be best to describe the two organizations, and their roles in the regional community. First, the RTR-CWMA was founded in 2006, and is a partnership of 13 federal and state agencies, organizations, and universities. The area covered by the RTR-CWMA includes the southernmost 11 counties in Illinois and is a region rich in natural resources and public and private natural areas. The RTR-CWMA is an arm of the non-profit Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development Area (SRCD) and has a Memorandum of Understanding with the 13 main partners to work cooperatively to address invasive species issues across the region. This partnership has served the area well over the last 10 years, with numerous projects ranging from support of the Southern Illinois Invasive Species Strike Team, contracting with agencies and contractors on invasive species control on both public and private lands, advising landowners and land managers on invasive species control, prevention efforts, early detection and rapid response to new invaders, and countless educational events, workshops, and volunteer days. The work of the RTR-CWMA is grant-funded, and has included funding from a variety of sources over the years, especially the US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and IDNR. This track-record has been matched in successes only by the SIPBA.

The Southern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association was incorporated as a nonprofit in 2006 as a partnership between private landowners, government agencies, and conservation groups who share the goal of using prescribed fire to restore native plant and wildlife habitat within the southernmost 11 counties of Illinois. Grant funding support has come from Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Forest Service, and National Wild Turkey Federation, with support from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Shawnee Resource and Conservation and Development Area, and University of Illinois Extension. SIPBA was designed to overcome liability concerns and provides training and equipment to crews of volunteers who assist their neighbors with prescribed burns on private land. SIPBA now averages over 1500 acres of prescribed burning each year and has successfully partnered with state and federal agencies to burn across private land boundaries, bringing a landscape perspective to local burn activities.

In addition to a shift in regional participation for SIPBA, the RTR-CWMA also shifted, from more public projects, working with state and federal conservation organizations to combat invasive species across political and property boundaries, to serving more private landowners. Although the RTR-CWMA had worked with private landowners in the past, it had been a relatively minor part of the organization's role in conservation across the region. Now, with this new partnership, the CWMA would complement the work of SIPBA on private lands throughout the region.

As most of us know, invasive species are a major problem for both natural areas managers, and private landowners alike. Invasive plants can reduce productivity of timber stands, prevent regeneration of trees and other native plants, lead

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to soil erosion, lead to changed soil chemistry, pollute water, and much more. In addition, the lack of fire in large part over the last century or so, has altered forest conditions, leading to shifts in forest communities. Both prescribed fire and invasive species control are now necessary to manage forests for the greatest native species diversity and forest health, but landowners may not know where to start.

That's where the partnership steps in. Under this project, the RTR-CWMA and SIPBA joined forces to create, train, and guide the Forest Restoration Support Team (FRST). The FRST is a joint program of the CWMA and SIPBA. The RTR-CWMA developed and delivered a series of trainings for those participating in FRST. The "Core" training is mandatory for those wanting to participate in the program and can include anyone from the public, as well as other groups such as the Master Naturalists, who want to help out. The "Core" training includes courses in invasive species identification, ecology, and control as well as a field portion to demonstrate tool use. For those wanting to learn more, there are additional FRST coursework, including Integrated Pest Management, where volunteers learn how to minimize negative impacts on the environment while managing for invasive plants. Another FRST course developed with the support of UI Extension Forestry was Forest Stand Improvement, a short-course on how foresters survey and determine the optimal tree densities for forest production and health. These courses are offered multiple times throughout the year.

The work of FRST is accomplished on SIPBA members' lands, with the idea that those that are members in the SIPBA will have a strong land ethic and management history and will also continue to manage their land appropriately in the future to assure the work of the FRST is not lost in subsequent years. In addition, we have brought homeowner's associations into the program to promote contiguous treatment areas. Many of these lands also abut natural areas, including Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge and Shawnee National Forest, leading to even larger blocks of managed forest.

Over the first two years, the joint project has achieved significant outcomes, and greater successes are assured in the future.

Just a few short years ago SIPBA was striving to reach an annual average of 1000 acres of prescribed burning, a number that seemed challenging, but within reach. Since our expansion in 2014 SIPBA has grown from just over 100 to more than 160 members representing nearly all 11 southern Illinois counties, and these volunteers have worked hard each burn season to bring our annual average to over 1500 acres of habitat restored by fire. Perhaps even more valuable are the members themselves, who attend trainings, workshops, and workdays on each other's land. These are the stewards who will carry on the management of southern Illinois and help to communicate its importance to their friends, family, and neighbors. In this way, SIPBA measures success not just by acres treated, but by landowners involved. It is this purposeful involvement that the SIPBA/CWMA had in mind when they recently approached several homeowners' associations in the region. To date, Union Hill Homeowners Association, Midland Hills Country Club, and Tacoma Lake Subdivision have joined the effort to practice prescribed fire and invasive species management. A multitude of training workshops and workdays have already benefitted these communities and momentum is growing.

Since the summer of 2014, RTR-CWMA held over 30 training events with more than 500 participants covering invasive species identification and ecology, herbicide safety, control methods, integrated pest management, and much more for participants in the FRST. We also organized over 40 work

Continued - bottom of the next page...

Starting from Scratch

Have you got a plan?

by David Gillespie, IFA Secretary

Before any undertaking, a plan must be developed to guide in carrying out that endeavor. This is especially true for the management of forest land. So many factors come into play that can affect a person's goals for their forest.

Forest management plans describe the current forest conditions, such as the tree species present, soil types and other information that can affect the management of the forest. The plan is based on the objectives of the forest landowner, and includes strategies to implement management activities over the next 10 years or so. It will guide you from the current forest conditions toward a healthier and better forest in the future.

Other factors that should be noted in a forest management plan are the health of the forest, threatened or endangered species present, fire and grazing, and invasive species present. Specific management activities might be needed to address all factors that help or hinder the forest from achieiving its potential.

The key to the development of a sound management plan is to first select a professional forester who can meet with you to evaluate your land and learn more about your objectives. I have heard it said a number of times by some forest landowners that they can develop their own forest management plan. With all due respect, no they can't. And why should they when there are many qualified public and consulting foresters in Illinois. A person would not develop a plan for their personal health without the advice of a doctor – the same applies with the health of Illinois' forests. Plus, to qualify for any cost share assistance and tax incentives, a forest management plan must be developed and approved by the local district forester with the IDNR.

So, if you don't yet have a plan to meet your objectives for your forest land, get started. Contact your local IDNR district forester, your local NRCS office, or the IFA. All of these agencies can help you find a forester in your area who can work with you to develop your forest management plan.

Tune in next time for more advice about "Starting from Scratch."

Help is Available

IDNR District Foresters

Click HERE for the latest map that provides contact info for the District Forester serving your county. If you don't have access to a computer, call 217/785-8264 to get it by mail.

Illinois Consulting Foresters

Click HERE for the latest directory prepared by U of I Extension Forestry, or visit the Illinois Consulting Foresters Association website for an interactive map to find a forester near you.

Illinois Forestry Association

Need a quick and handy way to find a forester any time of the year? Check the home page of our website: http://ilforestry.org under ***Find a Forester***.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

A great general resource for one-on-one assistance with conservation planning is found at your local USDA Service Center. Click HERE for an interactive map, or find your local office in the phone book.

Joining Forces - Continued -

days, treating over 300 acres of invasive species on priority private lands with over 300 participants. Participation in the FRST continues to climb and is complemented by additional projects of the RTR-CWMA and SIPBA.

It is fitting, perhaps, that these two organizations were both founded 10 years ago, and will soon be celebrating that milestone together. Over the years, many thousands of acres have been impacted by the work of these two groups, and working together, the impact will be broader and more lasting.

Kevin Rohling is Coordinator, River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area, and Jesse Riechman is Coordinator for the Southern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association.

TSI Primer: How timber stand improvement can be a part of your forest management activities

by Chris Evans, Extension Forester, University of Illinois

More and more landowners realize the benefits to managing their forests beyond simply occasionally cutting the larger timber. Sound forest management can not only help increase the quality, value, and amount of the timber that can be removed but also shorten the time between harvests and improve the health of the forested ecosystem to the benefit of the native plant community and wildlife.

Timber Stand Improvement practices, often shortened to simply TSI, are a critical part of forest management that is often overlooked by landowners. TSI practices are a set of actions taken to improve the growth of desirable trees. These actions are non-commercial thinnings, meaning that the material removed has no timber value, either from lack of quality, wrong species, or, more commonly, lack of adequate size. You may hear foresters refer to TSI practices as 'intermediate stand treatments', meaning that they happen between planting/establishment and harvest.

TSI practices should follow a set of specific prescriptions that were developed based upon the individual stand characteristics and the landowner's objectives. Often TSI is combined with prescribed fire and invasive species control.

The premise behind TSI is simply to remove undesirable trees to make more room for the desirable species to grow. This release from competition can increase their growth rates, create the right conditions for seedlings to establish, alter the species composition of the stand and improve habitat for wildlife.

An example of a common TSI practice for forests in Illinois is the removal of beech and maples that are occupying the midstory of an oak-hickory forest. These trees can cast heavy shade, limiting oak seedlings from establishing. Removing the maples, through cutting or girdling, opens the midstory up and provides more light to developing seedlings. Another common practice is to 'release' desirable trees by removing other trees that are in direct competition with them. These release cuts allow the desirable trees to fill out their canopy and grow faster and can help push the stand composition to a higher percentage of desirable species.

TSI practices are also used in wildlife management. The increase in light condition that reaches the ground layer in a forest after TSI promotes the growth of understory plants, increase forage availability. As the canopy of released oaks and hickories develop, they increase nut production. Girdled trees create snags which are great habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Regardless of a landowner's reasons for managing their forest, TSI may be an important method to meet those objectives. Having a current Forest Management Plan and working with a district or consulting forester is a great way to determine what type of management is needed for your forest and if the time is right to implement TSI practices.

Shade tolerant species, like beech or maple, cast heavy shade that can restrict the growth of oak seedlings. In this picture, beech saplings are the dominate feature in the midstory.

Small diameter wood cut during a TSI can either be left standing to create snags, dropped on the ground and left in place, or utilized for firewood or log-grown mushroom cultivation.

Walnuts & Acorns

by Lee M. Rife

A few weeks ago I got an important lesson in tree planting. What I am about to say might be "old stuff" to many of you, but still. It never hurts to be reminded.

I was visiting with my next-door neighbor and she asked about the soft maple tree in my front yard. I was aware of smaller than usual leaves, but wondered just why she was concerned. She pointed to the top and asked if it had some sort of disease, or if it had been hit by lightening. I looked and saw that the top of the main stem was completely bare of any leaves for about the upper six feet or so. Let me say that this part of the tree is not visible from my front porch and unless I am looking upward at it when coming home from the east, I don't see the top of the tree. However, I did look and see the die back.

I will be the first to admit that I know next to nothing about tree disease, so I called a fellow IFA member and he came over to take a look. One of the first things that he pointed out was that the roots of the tree were girdling, indicating that the tree when planted some 40+ years ago was not planted deep enough to force the root structure out in a circular pattern. Instead they have wound around the stem (and like many soft maples and sugar maples, taken the path of least resistance and moved to the top of the ground) and are now slowly strangling the tree. In addition, those on top of the ground have suffered much injury from lawnmowers set too low by those of us who prefer a neat looking front yard rather than one which resembles a hayfield. The small leaves were apparently caused by a drought a few years ago. The combination seems to be creating a problem for the tree which will probably need to be removed in a few years.

What are the lessons learned here. First, when planting trees in a yard, make the hole plenty deep. It does not hurt to plant a tree three or four inches deeper than it was planted in the nursery. Also make sure that the new hole is sufficiently wide enough for the roots to spread out properly. The old adage of "for a five dollar tree, dig a ten dollar hole" applies. Second, when the dirt from planting settles, put additional dirt around the tree to assure that water is being directed away from the stem and toward the feeder roots. This applies to all trees, not just maples.

Many of you probably already know that, but sometimes we all need to be reminded. I know that I had forgotten some of that advice.

Follow this link to a great tree planting guide: https://www.arborday.org/celebrate/tree-planting.cfm, *and don't forget to Just Say No to Mulch Volcanoes!*

History of Conservation in Illinois

by Dave Gillespie, IFA Secretary

This account of the history of conservation in Illinois was written by Joseph P. Schavilje in 1941. This 17th installment begins where #16 ended, in Part II - History of Forest Conservation

In the bottomlands of the southern part of the State a belt of cypress and mixed hardwood extended down the lower Wabash and Mississippi valleys and along the Ohio. Extending along the flood plains of the larger streams was rich hardwood forest. Early records show that the Wabash and Ohio regions produced the finest hardwood trees found anywhere in the country. All flood plain forest was luxuriant with the predominant species varying some from north to south. The mixed hardwoods extended out along the lesser streams and here black walnut made its greatest development. The upland forest varied considerably in different regions of the State. The best upland forests were in the Ozark region and on bluffs boarding the Wabash, Ohio, Illinois and Mississippi rivers. These were characterized by fine stands of oaks and hickories with a wide mixture of other hardwoods. In the poorly drained area of south-central Illinois the forest was generally poor. Post oak occurred in pure stands, while mixtures on better-drained souls were hickory and black oak. The remaining upland forest were largely mixtures of oaks with some hickories. Along the prairie the forests thinned out into grove-like conditions and pioneers recorded that these border forests were badly damaged by fires from the prairies.

(To be continued in the next issue)

Featured Tree: Post Oak

(Quercus stellata)

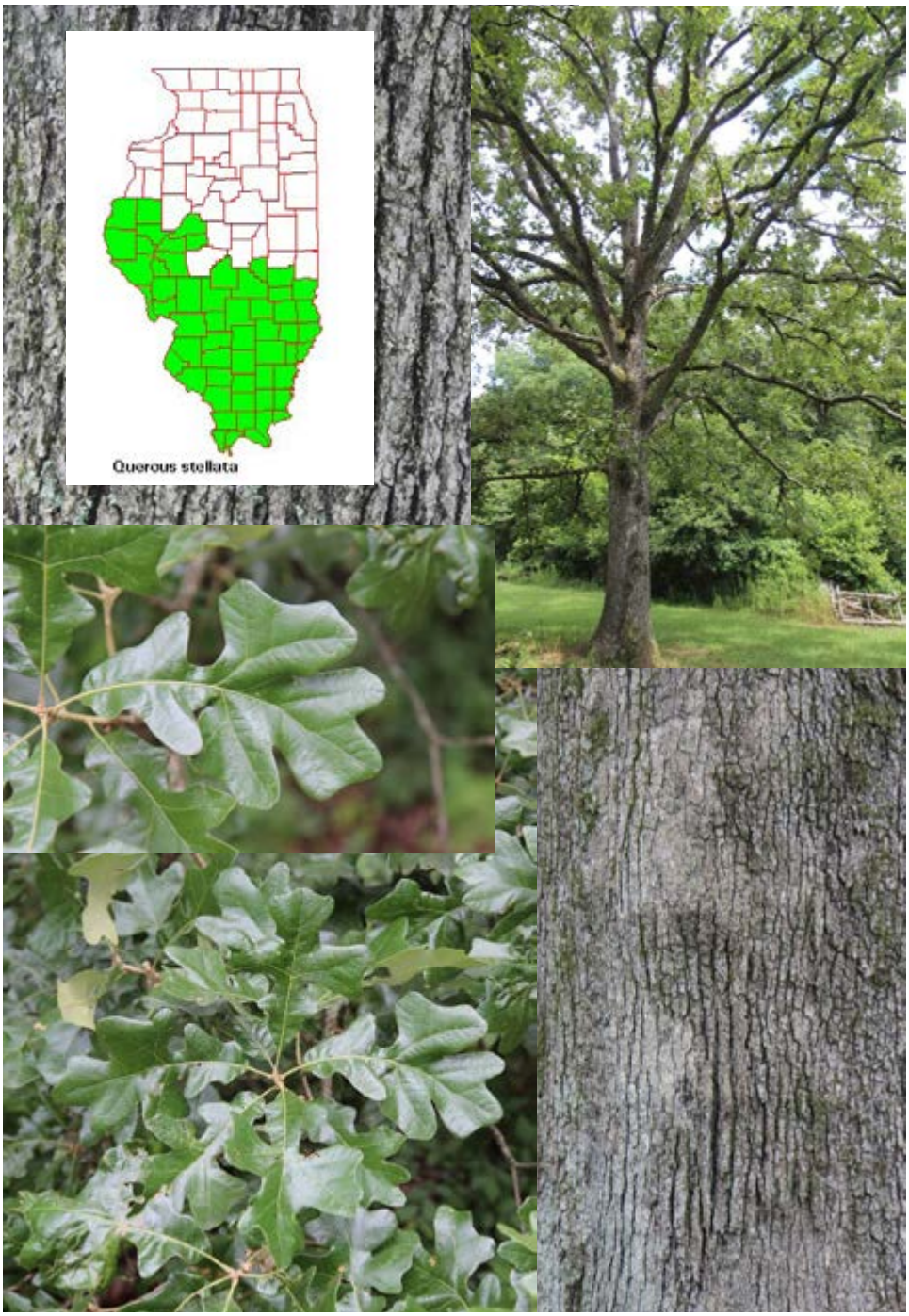
State Champion - 65" DBH, 73' height, 99' spread (Washington County)

Post oak is a large, deciduous tree that grows in a variety of habitats in Illinois. Post oak in one of a few trees that have a bimodal distribution, meaning that it is mostly found at two ends of a gradient, but not in the middle. For post oak, it is a moisture gradient. They are often found on drier, upland soils or very wet bottomland soils and can be found in the southern half of Illinois

Post oak is the anchor of a very rare community type in Illinois called Post Oak Flatwoods. The flatwoods typically have flat topography and soils with high clay content. These sites can be very wet with ponded water or extremely dry.

Post oak is a member of the white oak section, with rounded lobes on the leaves that lack bristles. The leaves have blocky, rounded lobes that are usually arranged in a cross or 't' pattern, making this tree easily recognizable. The bark is light gray with long narrow ridges that often break into small square rectangles. The bark of older trees often has large patches of darker and lighter areas.

Featured Trees and Invasives are authored by Chris Evans, Extension Forester at the University of Illinois. If you're on Facebook, check out www.facebook.com/IllinoisExtensionForestry, and get Tuesday Trees and Wednesday Weeds in your news feed every week. We'll continue to publish a sampling quarterly. Thanks, Chris!



Helpful Resources...

Invasive Plant Species Regulated by the Illinois Exotic Weed Act
University of Illinois Extension Forestry Technical Bulletin NRES-1601

Oak Problems
University of Illinois Plant Clinic Report, S-417 Turner Hall, 1102 S. Goodwin, Urbana, IL 61801, (217) 333-0519, web.extension.illinois.edu/plantclinic

Invasive Species Phenology Report
Available monthly from Chris Evans, Extension Forester, University of Illinois, cwevans@illinois.edu

The Gradual Oak Decline Brochure
Department of Forestry, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

How to Identify, Control, and Prevent Oak Wilt
US Forest Service, Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry

How to Recognize Common Diseases of Oaks in the Midwest
US Forest Service, Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry

Thousand Cankers Disease Website
http://www.thousandcankers.com/
Links to many resources are found here.

Thousand Cankers Disease and the Walnut Twig Beetle
Illinois Department of Agriculture, Environmental Programs, PO Box 19281, Springfield, IL 62794-9281, 217-785-2427

Word Search Challenge

Oaks of Illinois!

OAK	QUERCUS
BLACK	VELUTINA
BLACKJACK	MARILANDICA
BUR	MACROCARPA
CHERRYBARK	PAGODA
CHESTNUT	PRINUS
CHINKAPIN	MUEHLENBERGII
NORTHERN RED	RUBRA
OVERCUP	LYRATA
PIN	PALUSTRIS
POST	STELLATA
SCARLET	COCCINEA
SHINGLE	IMBRICARIA
SHUMARD	SHUMARDII
SOUTHERN RED	FALCATA
SWAMP WHITE	BICOLOR
WHITE	ALBA
WILLOW	PHELLOS

D P U Q E P R I N U S A S C S C B K Y J I C B A T
Q U E R C U S K K G G B C H L D A I E C O L E T S
V R Q F F P A L U S T R I S U O R H C C O C S A O
P T P D H Z S N J T B K D M C M N A C O B A I R P
R I N D V K W J O Z J U I D A P A I M I L M J Y C
I Z N S A N A F F R P A I W J Z N R U U B O F L S
G S F C P Y M W V P T R G Q I E W V D R H N R G M
B T K A I A P C O G H H R R A L A Z I I I S A P F
F E G R T H W T U N T S E H C O L C P P I D T H D
Q L N L O S H X Z V H G B R B L A O A X O I K A S
J L U E J L I G H P T Q N L N R N K W G F P O I K
I A Q T L D T F F Q C Y E M I R N N A Q H Y Z W Q
X T K B C P E K D U D F L A Q I E P K L H O B Z N
Q A B Q O N F O V E D T H J H F Y D C Q U W P C O
P M A P R A C O R C A M E C J A P N A E N L V S R
S Y R V L F W N A T K B U R X U R I J A F V I J K
Q W W C S P R R N O Q R M B C H T S K N A W U P M
K S A Q M E L G N I H S A R Q W S R C I X W S B I
Q T O N H D W Z X E J Y E B F B U O A T O H X T I
A G T T U V A T E Q D V C J Y B T V L U E I W L P
Q A U M S T L H X O O C O U R R C G B L B T Q V P
N O B M A R I L A N D I C A S F R X N E E E A M K
S I H L A E G A M E G B P J N I A E S V P H Q M E
S B F G A D H L D A H M B M K S W U H L B W P X C
P W D U M K C A L B O K N B Y G B F J C O N B N E

Purple Paint Sign Order Form

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City/State/Zip Code _____

E-Mail Address _____

# of Signs ____ x $12 (Member Price) _____

# of Signs ____ x $18 (Non-Members) _____

Shipping & Handling _____

TOTAL _____

Shipping: 1 sign - $8.00 | 2 signs - $9.00 | 3 signs - $9.00 | 4 signs - $10.00 | 5 signs - $11.00
Orders in excess of 5 signs must be shipped in two mailers

Mail Order Form to: (Check or Money Order made payable to ***Illinois Forestry Association***)

Stan Sipp
Director, Region 3
P.O. Box 111
Mansfield, IL 61854

Signs are shipped via U.S. Postal Service
Invoice will be included with signs

Questions? Contact Stan by email at sksipp@illinois.edu