

# BRUSH PILES

NORTH BRANCH RESTORATION PROJECT

SUMMER 2007

## THE RETURN OF BUNKER HILL SAVANNA

by Jane Balaban

Last November, Cook County Board President Bobbie Steele lifted a moratorium on land management activities that had been imposed ten years earlier at the five Forest Preserve District sites south of Dempster. In preparation for resuming management, District staff and volunteers distributed information about the goals, purposes and techniques of habitat restoration to all households within a quarter-mile radius of these preserves. The moratorium had resulted from poorly informed criticism of ecological restoration. Two glorious workdays took place in March to begin removing brush that had overgrown the oak savanna, choking the sun-loving wildflowers that grow here.

During "the moratorium," all management was stopped for several years. Then volunteers and staff were eventually allowed to pull such weeds as garlic mustard. But the greater threat, particularly to the savanna, was the excessive growth of woody brush, including buckthorn but also green ash saplings, dogwood and several other species that, while native to the region, become invasive in savannas that were impacted by lack of periodic fire.

In January of 2003, six years into the moratorium, a Forest Preserve District Ecologist did a study of the woody vegetation – shrubs, small saplings and

saplings – in the 6 ½ acre savanna area. Based on the data, there were an estimated total 890,000 woody stems, almost ten times the 90,000 stems pre-moratorium.

Here are some conclusions from the District's study: "The original, indigenous ground layer plants are overwhelmingly adapted to open or mostly open structural conditions... Allowing Bunker Hill Savanna to develop into a green ash dominated area will result in the elimination of 128 native, remnant species – 75% of the existing flora... *If nothing whatsoever is done, then one of the most diverse assemblages of native plants will become lost to Cook County*" (italics added).

While those numbers are staggering, it's also compelling to think about some of the actual species that would be lost without stewardship: several kinds of orchids, wildflowers such as Sand Violet, Turk's Cap Lily, Bottle Gentian and Marsh Blazing Star, and many beautiful native grasses. As these natives disappear, so will many birds, butterflies and other animals that depend on semi-open or open habitats. As John Muir wisely observed, "When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world."

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In some areas, the brush had grown too dense.



Thinning the brush restores the habitat of threatened plants and animals.

# NBRP Workday Schedule - Summer 2007

## JUNE

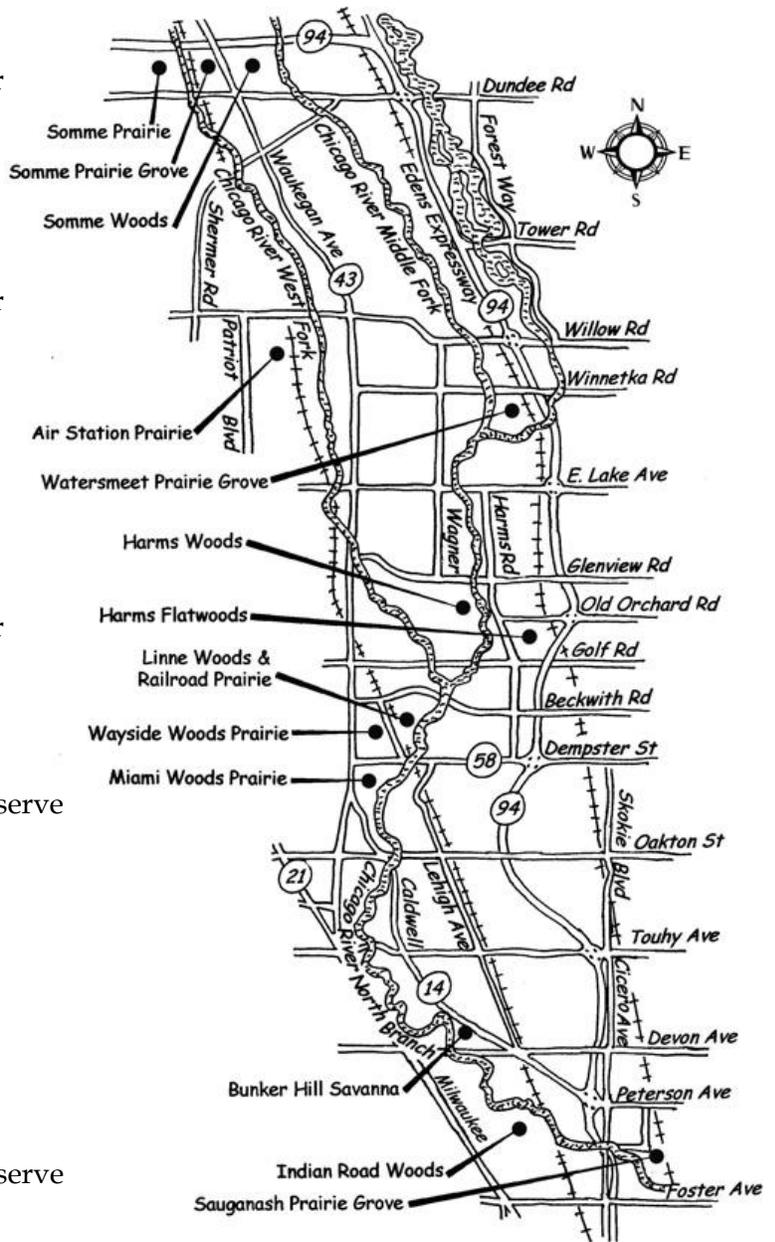
3	Sunday	9:00-noon	Sauganash Prairie Grove
6	Wednesday	5:30-8 pm	Volunteer Resource Center
9	Saturday	9:00-noon	Linne Woods North
10	Sunday	9:00-noon	Somme Prairie Grove
16	Saturday	9:00-noon	Somme Prairie Grove
17	Sunday	9:00-noon	Oxbow (See Bunker Hill)
20	Wednesday	5:30-8 pm	Volunteer Resource Center
23	Saturday	9:00-noon	Somme Prairie Grove
24	Sunday	9:00-noon	Wayside Woods Prairie
30	Saturday	9:00-noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove

## JULY

1	Sunday	9:00-noon	Harms Woods
8	Sunday	9:00-noon	Air Station Prairie
11	Wednesday	5:30-8 pm	Volunteer Resource Center
14	Saturday	9:00-noon	Linne Woods North
		9:00-noon	Oxbow (See Bunker Hill)
		9:00-noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
15	Sunday	9:00-noon	Somme Prairie Nature Preserve
21	Saturday	9:00-noon	Linne Prairie
22	Sunday	9:00-noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
29	Sunday	9:00-noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove

## AUGUST

4	Saturday	9:00-noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
5	Sunday	9:00-noon	Miami Woods Prairie
12	Sunday	9:00-noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
18	Saturday	9:00-noon	Somme Prairie Nature Preserve
19	Sunday	9:00-noon	Sauganash Prairie Grove
25	Saturday	9:00-noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
26	Sunday	9:00-noon	Somme Prairie Grove



### ***BUFFALO GROVE PRAIRIE***

**Sundays, 9:00 am - Noon**  
**June 3, July 1, August 12**  
**Bev Hansen, 847-272-6211**

Work on Sundays at this piece of virgin prairie located on Hastings Road. It is off Lake-Cook about a mile west of Milwaukee (watch for Hastings on the north after going west over the railroad overpass). Turn north on Hastings, then right into the second parking lot. The prairie is under the Com Ed power lines.

### ***SKOKIE LAGOONS***

**Saturdays, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm**  
**June 9, July 14, August 11**  
**Jerry Garden, 773-545-4632,**  
**jerrygarden@sprynet.com**

Meet at the Tower Road parking lot (east of the lagoon bridge - not the boat launch). There will be a sign with directions to the work site in the picnic field adjacent to the parking lot. Come dressed for the weather. We will provide waders, gloves and tools.

### ***GLENBROOK PRAIRIE***

**6:00 pm to dark**  
**June 14, July 12, August 9**  
**Rob Sulski, 847/337-0471**

The prairie is located at the northwest corner of the Glenbrook North High School property, north of Willow Road on the west side of Shermer Road. Follow the north parking lot past the tennis courts and walk along the north side of the football field until you see us.

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# NBRP Site Directions and Stewards

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## **DIRECTIONS:**

### ***Air Station Prairie, Glenview***

**Kent & Jerry Fuller** – From the Edens Expressway; go west on Willow Road, past Waukegan Road and over the RR overpass. Turn south at the new traffic signals for Patriot Blvd. (The new main road through the redeveloped Naval Air Station). Turn east on Compass to the gate at the south end of the prairie. Patriot Blvd. is also accessible from the south via Lake Ave.

### ***Bunker Hill Savanna/Oxbow, Chicago***

**Jane & John Balaban** – Off Caldwell between Devon and Touhy; entrance located just opposite Tonty Street. For Bunker Hill Meet in first section of parking lot; for Oxbow, follow road until it turns north, then park along the west side.

### ***Harms Flatwoods, Glenview***

**Neil Peck & Terry Schilling** – Meet at the Forest Preserve Grove parking lot on the west side of Harms Road, directly west of Old Orchard Road.

### ***Harms Woods, Glenview***

**Jane & John Balaban** – Meet at the Forest Preserve Grove parking lot on the west side of Harms Road, just south of Glenview Road and north of Old Orchard Road.

### ***Linne Prairie, Morton Grove***

**Mary Busch & John Thill (847-966-0231)** – Meet at the Wayside Woods Prairie parking lot on Lehigh Ave, a few blocks east of Waukegan Road and just north of Dempster.

### ***Linne Woods North, Morton Grove***

**John & Marian Thill (847-966-0231, mjthill@icsp.net)** - From Edens go west on Dempster street about 1.5 miles. The forest preserve entrance will be on the north side of the street directly across from McDonalds. Follow the winding road all the way back until it dead-ends at the turn-around circle.

### ***Miami Woods Prairie, Niles/Morton Grove***

**Kent & Jerry Fuller** – Located on the east side of Caldwell, two blocks north of Oakton. Meet in the parking lot for Miami Woods.

### ***Prairie View Nature Preserve, Morton Grove***

**Kent Fuller** – From Dempster, 2 blocks east of Waukegan, turn north on Oak Park Ave. Turn left on Churchill and drive to the end. Park in the parking lot on the north side.

### ***Sauganash Prairie Grove, Chicago***

#### **Larry Hodak & Pete Leki**

**(watersschool@yahoo.com)** – Meet at the edge of the Forest Preserve along the south side of Bryn Mawr at Kilbourn, which is south of Peterson and east of Cicero.

<p><b>Note: there are two meeting places for the three <u>Somme</u> Preserves. Carefully check which one is scheduled.</b></p>
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### ***Somme Prairie Grove, Northbrook***

**Stephen Packard (www.sommepreserve.org)** – **PARK AT SOMME WOODS FOR THIS PRESERVE.** Park near the entrance and follow orange flags marking the new trail. From the Edens Expressway, take Dundee Road two miles west and turn right into Somme Woods parking lot (just before the light at Waukegan Road).

### ***Somme Prairie Nature Preserve, Northbrook***

**Laurel Ross (312-665-7432, lross@fieldmuseum.org) & Christiane Rey (773-478-2019)** – From the Edens Expressway, take Dundee Road 2½ miles west (past Waukegan) to Western. Turn north and park in the post office parking lot.

### ***Somme Woods, Northbrook***

**Linda Masters (847-509-0431, masters2001@comcast.net)** – From the Edens Expressway, take Dundee Road two miles west and turn right into Somme Woods parking lot (just before the light at Waukegan Road).

### ***Watersmeet Prairie Grove, Northfield***

**John Berg (Kerg111@aol.com)** – From Lake Avenue and Wagner Road, turn north on Wagner to Winnetka Road. Turn east on Winnetka for ¾ mile. Park on the north side of the street or a side street.

### ***Wayside Woods Prairie/Linne RR Prairie, Morton Grove***

**Gladys Bryer & Larry Hodak** – Meet at Wayside Woods Prairie parking lot on Lehigh Ave, a few blocks east of Waukegan Road and just north of Dempster.

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## **BUNKER HILL CONTINUED . . .**

So it is that the North Branch volunteers celebrate the chance to once again help the District care for Bunker Hill and the plants and animals that find their home there. This beautiful preserve is just one example of the rich diversity that once was the vast Illinois landscape. It richly deserves our commitment and stewardship.

## **RESTORATION SEED GARDEN**

**Wednesday, June 6, June 20, July 11, 5:30 - 8 pm**  
**Volunteer Resource Center, 6100 N. Central,**

On three Wednesday evenings we will be watering, weeding, planting plants and hanging out. Come early, late, or anytime in between. Most tools will be provided but bring small trowels if you have them and gloves. All levels of gardening. For more information, give Ken Schaefer a call at 847-803-1665.



North Branch Restoration Project  
P.O. Box 2154  
Northbrook, IL 60062-3707

The North Branch Restoration Project is a cooperative effort involving the Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society, and the Sierra Club. We manage the sites as volunteers for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and other local agencies. The Project works to restore and manage the few remaining woodlands and prairies along the North Branch of the Chicago River. Our goal is to restore conditions that will allow these natural wild communities to flourish as a permanent part of the metropolitan area.

[www.northbranchrestoration.org](http://www.northbranchrestoration.org)

**Paperless option** - If you would like to download a pdf version of Brush Piles from our website, we will send you an email letting you know when it is posted.

Sign up by sending an email to [publications@northbranchrestoration.org](mailto:publications@northbranchrestoration.org).