

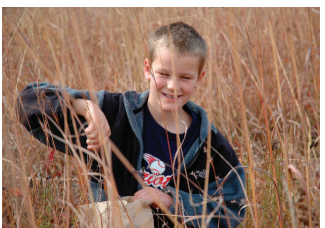
What You Can Do

We welcome new volunteers. No experience is needed. Come to any workday—every Sunday and many Saturdays. It's fun, it's educational, and it's good exercise! Stewards and crew leaders will provide tools and explain the work procedures. In addition to workdays, volunteers are needed for a wide variety of other activities:

- Study populations of plants, birds, butterflies and other animals;
- Photograph workday activities and other events;
- Write articles and help publish brochures, newsletters, and other materials;
- Be a "wild gardener" (plant rare native plant seedlings in your garden and then collect their seed for restoration areas);
- Promote public awareness of prairie, savanna, and woodland restoration.



Volunteers cut brush, mark plants, take a well deserved break and collect and process seed.



North Branch Worksites

Northbrook

Somme Prairie
Somme Prairie Grove
Somme Woods

Northfield

Watersmeet Prairie Grove

Glenview

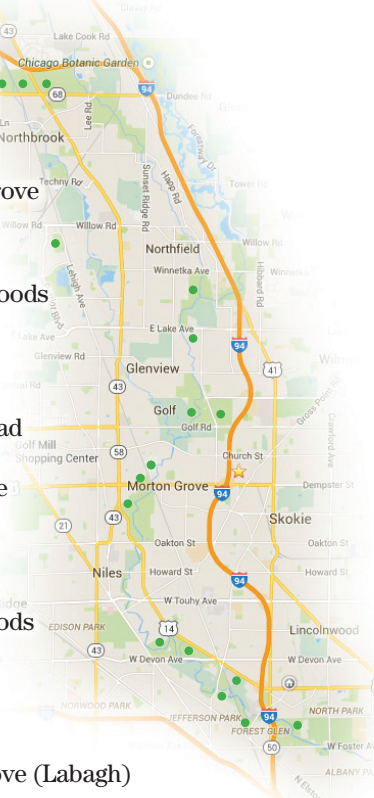
Air Station Prairie
Blue Star Memorial Woods
Harms Woods
Harms Flatwoods

Morton Grove

Linne Woods & Railroad
Prairie
Wayside Woods Prairie
Miami Woods Prairie

Chicago

Oxbow Prairie
Clayton Smith Flatwoods
Bunker Hill Savanna
Spicebush Woods
Indian Road Woods
Forest Glen Woods
Sauganash Prairie Grove (Labagh)



For more information about worksites and workdays, visit us at www.northbranchrestoration.org.



Douglas Sherman

OTHER RESOURCES:

Plants of Concern

www.plantsofconcern.org

The Nature Conservancy:

www.nature.org,
Chicago Field Office
(312) 580-2100

Cook County Forest Preserve:

www.fpdcc.com

Chicago Wilderness:

www.chicagowilderness.org

www.northbranchrestoration.org



North Branch Restoration Project



Our Native Landscape

Early explorers and settlers marveled at the splendor of the mosaic of grasslands and woodlands that once covered much of the Midwest. But grazing, plowing, development, and fire suppression have dramatically altered the Midwestern landscape.

Remarkably, the Chicago metropolitan area contains some of Illinois' largest and best remnants of our native ecosystems.

These remaining natural lands are precious and irreplaceable, but they need our help to survive and prosper.

The North Branch Restoration Project

In the 1960's and 1970's, pioneering ecologists such as Floyd Swink, Bob Betz, and Ray Schulenberg inspired a growing interest in the ecology of the native prairies of Northeastern Illinois.

In 1977, a group of enthusiastic citizens volunteered to help rescue several small remnants of native prairie that still survived in the Forest Preserves of Cook County along the North Branch of the Chicago River.

Working closely with the Forest Preserve District, these citizens removed the invasive brush that was killing the native prairie plants. They collected native seeds and planted them in the areas where brush had been removed. And, most importantly, they helped bring back the fire that had shaped the Illinois landscape for one hundred centuries prior to European settlement.

The ecologists expanded their studies to wooded landscapes and learned about the natural processes that shaped the Illinois woodlands and savannas. They found that dense brush and thick understory were diminishing the biodiversity of our woodlands and needed to be removed. It became clear that fire was an important natural process for maintaining a healthy woodland ecosystem also.

The results have been spectacular. Areas under management are increasingly rich with a great diversity of rare animals and plants of the prairies and woodlands. In prairies, plants such as cream false indigo, purple prairie clover, rattlesnake master, and bottle gentian have reappeared and are thriving.

With the return of sunlight and fire, grasses, sedges and wildflowers once again carpet the woodland floor. The rare great spangled fritillary and the Appalachian brown butterfly flit through sun-dappled woods. Animals such as the Coopers hawk and the Edward's hairstreak butterfly are back from the edge of local extinction. And the eastern bluebird has returned to nest once again in our savannas.



Photo: Lisa Culp

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Our Purpose And Work

Our primary purpose is to work with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and other agencies to protect and restore our Illinois natural heritage. We are advocates for these cherished lands, speaking for their preservation, and educating our fellow citizens about their value through tours and presentations.

Every weekend, in all kinds of weather, volunteers gather at scheduled sites to cut brush, weed, burn, seed gather and sow. Citizen scientists collect important information about the plants and animals, monitoring changes in sites as restoration proceeds and adding to the knowledge of local ecosystems.

This is a new way to interact with nature—helping to restore health and vigor to damaged natural areas through stewardship. Today, many groups in the Chicago area and the rest of our country are involved in the restoration of native habitats. Among these groups, the North Branch Restoration Project has been called a model for volunteer stewardship and ecological restoration.



Photo: Paul Dako



Pond at Somme Woods.