

To: Town of Middleton, Park Commission
Prepared by: Stacey Marion, Adaptive Restoration LLC
Re: Parks and Conservancies Management Activities Update
February 9, 2017

Look ahead

- ▶ Expect continued decrease in prairie maintenance costs per acre Town-wide. Acres restored are static or slightly increasing, while total budget costs are reducing.
 - 2017 approved budget: \$37,090
 - 2018 approved budget: \$29,500
- ▶ Recommend pursuing grant funding and supporting partnerships with Friends groups and neighborhood associations to assist with stewardship of Town parks and conservancy areas
 - New in 2018:*
 - ▶ We are in the process of applying for Dane County Environmental Council small grants for each conservancy area; up to \$1000 value each grant.
 - ▶ We are partnering with Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy (FOPFC) to interseed native prairie/savanna species in the Town's conservancies. The FOPFC donated seed was collected at Pope Farm and totals 6 species, 2.5 lbs at a value of \$1475
 - ▶ We are formally requesting native seed from Dane County Parks. The seed will augment seed donated by FOPFC and seed collected by AR by increasing the quantity and diversity of seeded species
 - ▶ We are partnering with the FOPFC to investigate methods of control for pale indian plantain at Pope Farm in areas where protecting the viewshed is a stated goal and objective. The Friends have volunteered to cut stalks where views are impaired; Adaptive Restoration will conduct mini-experiments testing methods of control, with coordination with the Friends
 - ▶ Consider impacts of new developments and trails on Town's open space (e.g. Usage of Cherrywood Forest likely will increase due to adjacent development. Connection to green corridors is an incentive to continue management of the area, and may increase stakeholder engagement and opportunities for education/volunteering)
- ▶ Increase environmental education and volunteer opportunities residents
 - ▶ Improve advertisement and optimization of timing of volunteer work sessions
 - ▶ Lead public tours/interpretive walks

Management Activities Update

Cherrywood Forest

Completed in 2017:

- Monitored site for land stewardship needs
- Conducted controlled burn April 24, 2017
- Treated, removed and/or mowed garlic mustard, Canada thistle, Queen Anne's lace and burdock with available budget
- Hosted 1 volunteer work session

Activities planned for 2018:

- Monitor and control invasive species in woodland

- Interseed oak woodland to increase species diversity and quality of wildlife habitat
- Manage the park under budget
- Investigate grant opportunities for restoration and development of interpretive signage (in progress). Investigate supporting partnerships with neighborhood associations to assist with stewardship
- Host volunteer work sessions and/or interpretive programs

Goth Conservancy

Completed in 2017:

- Monitored site for land stewardship needs
- Conducted controlled burn of northwest and northeast prairies April 7, 2017
- Treated, removed and/or mowed garlic mustard, Japanese hedge parsley, reed canary grass and wild parsnip in the prairie and woodland areas
- Removed (cut and treated) invasive brush encroaching into woodland areas
- Cleared non-savanna trees from west fenceline area (west of grape arbor) that was previously harboring invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle
- Collected native seed
- Hosted 3 volunteer work sessions

Activities planned for 2018:

- *Monitor and control invasive species throughout Goth*
- *Interseed west fenceline area (west of the grape arbor) to increase species diversity and improve wildlife habitat*
- *Work with Town staff to remove heavy downed fuels from the woodlands*
- *Work with Town staff to recommend management of the south grassland*
- Investigate grant opportunities for restoration and development of interpretive signage (in progress)
- Host volunteer work sessions and/or interpretive programs

Noll Valley Conservancy

Completed in 2017:

- monitored site for land stewardship needs
- Conducted controlled burn April 10, 2017
- Treated invasive brush resprouts following spring controlled burn
- Treated, removed and/or mowed garlic mustard, Japanese hedge parsley, birdsfoot trefoil and reed canary grass
- Collected native seed
- Hosted 2 volunteer work sessions

Activities planned for 2018:

- Monitor and control invasive species
- Interseed conservancy to increase species diversity and improve wildlife habitat
- Collect native seed for use in Town conservancies
- Manage conservancy under budget
- Investigate grant opportunities for restoration and development of interpretive signage (in progress)

- Host volunteer work sessions and/or interpretive programs

Pope Farm Conservancy

Completed in 2017:

- Monitored site for land stewardship needs
- Continued partnership with the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy (FOPFC)
- Performed controlled burns in the North Prairie, South Prairie, and Ravine.
- Performed burns for the FOPFC in the Hillside Savanna (North half) and Blackhawk Prairie
- Treated, removed and/or mowed herbaceous weeds and brush re-sprouts in the Ravine, North Prairie, and South Prairie
- Collected native seed
- Hosted 4 volunteer work sessions

Activities planned for 2018:

- *Monitor and control invasive species*
- *Conduct controlled burns of native plantings to improve conditions for native plant establishment (Ravine, Blackhawk Prairie, Hillside Savanna)*
- *Host volunteer work sessions and interpretive programs*
- *Continue partnership with the FOPFC*
- Investigate grant opportunities for restoration and development of interpretive signage (in progress)
- Collect native seed for use in Town conservancies
- Host volunteer work sessions and/or interpretive programs

Settler's Prairie

Completed in 2017:

- Monitored site for land stewardship needs
- Treated, removed and/or mowed garlic mustard, burdock, crown vetch, and other herbaceous weeds in the prairie and north woodland
- Removed (cut and treated) buckthorn resprouts in the oak woodland to promote regeneration of oaks. We will continue to monitor weeds throughout the site, and remove and/or spray weeds as needed

Activities planned for 2018:

- Controlled burn of prairie and north woodland
- Restore old fenceline to the east of the existing prairie (include site preparation, seeding and weed management)
- Request seed from Dane County for interseeding prairie (including the old fenceline) and north woodland (in progress)
- Interseed prairie and north woodland (including the old fenceline) using seed donated by the Friends of Pope Farm
- investigate grant opportunities for restoration and development of interpretive signage (in progress)
- assess site for secondary trail development
- Host volunteer work sessions and interpretive programs

General comments and recommendations

- ▶ Recommend hiring seasonal park ranger(s) with experience/interest in native plant identification and ecological restoration, to assist with weed management and monitoring
- ▶ Recommend pursuing grant funding and supporting partnerships with Friends groups and neighborhood associations to assist with stewardship of Town parks and conservancy areas
- ▶ Expect reduced frequency of prescribed burns as prairies become fully established
- ▶ Expect continued decrease in prairie maintenance costs per acre Town-wide.