

ParkLands Foundation

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Find us on the web at:
www.parklands.org

Newsletter October – November 2006

Annual Meeting - A Reason To Celebrate

Despite the dreary weather, thirty of our members gathered at Sugar Grove Nature Center on September 17th for some great food, conversation, and a presentation by Elizabeth Cisar. A special note of thanks to Angela Smith for coordinating our meeting!

During the meeting Pres. Capparella spoke of several important topics including the acquisition of 141 acres in southeastern Woodford County along the Mackinaw River. This purchase was made possible by a \$454,500 grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. This purchase will help interconnect 1,120 acres of existing conservation lands owned and managed by ParkLands Foundation and 52 acres owned by a conservation owner, providing ParkLands with a perpetual conservation easement. This property will henceforth be known as the Letcher Basin Preserve. Restoration work is scheduled to begin next spring. A note of thanks to Matt Fraker, Sherri Thornton and the Kennetts for their contribution to this acquisition.

Roger Anderson updated the group on progress being made to have the Merwin Nature Preserve designated as an Illinois Nature Preserve under the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act. The final approval for this property is scheduled for October 24th in Kankakee, Illinois. A local dedication will be held next spring in which all members of ParkLands will be invited. Details will be forthcoming. At the same time a separate section of the Merwin preserve is scheduled to be dedicated as an Illinois Land and Water Preserve. I'd like to recognize Roger Anderson, Eric Smith, Guy Fraker and Angelo Capparella for their work on this project.

The guest speaker for our meeting was Elizabeth Cisar from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. She shared a Power Point presentation with our group that highlighted properties throughout Illinois that are currently being managed for conservation. She also spoke about the history and challenges of private land conservation in Illinois including recent tax changes as they apply to easements.

It was a thought provoking presentation.

Finally, three directors were approved to serve for the next three years. They are Christie Kennett, David

Jeffries and I. Officers for the next year are: Mary Horgan, President; Angelo Capparella, Vice-President; Martha Phares, Secretary and Barry Brenneman, Treasurer (the latter two continuing in office).

Mary Horgan, President

Restoration Grant Received

ParkLands Foundation has received a \$15,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to help us restore tall grass prairie at our new 141-acre Letcher Basin Nature Preserve in southeastern Woodford County along the Mackinaw River. This will just be a start because prairie seed is expensive and our goal is to establish a high-quality prairie restoration with a wide diversity of native species. With this funding, we should be able to purchase enough to restore 30 acres of the site. Additional acreage will be restored using funds that ParkLands receives from member donations.

The grant was secured through IDNR's Natural Areas Acquisition and Stewardship Fund, which supports the stewardship of critical habitats in Illinois. In addition to providing a site for prairie plants, we hope that the large scale of the restoration will provide nesting habitat for threatened grassland bird species, including those that require large areas such as the Northern Harrier and Short-eared Owl.

The property was purchased by ParkLands earlier this year through a \$454,500 grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and will be enrolled in the Illinois Land and Water Reserve program. The restoration of tall grass prairie at the Letcher Basin Nature Preserve will extend ParkLands Foundation's nature preserve system along the Mackinaw River and provide public access for education and the enjoyment of nature.

Calendar of Events

Seed Collection @ Cayuga Ridge (no. of Pontiac), Sat., Oct. 28, 9:00 a.m. Roger Anderson, leader, 452-5728.

Prescribed Burn @ Moon Prairie, Lake B'ton, Sat., Nov. 4, noon, (*alternate Nov. 11*) Tim Lindenbaum, 531-7065.

Annual Doe Hunt, preserves closed, Nov. 17-19.

Seed Cleaning @ Bloomington Parks Maintenance Building, Sat., Dec. 9, Tim Lindenbaum, 531-7065.

NOTE: Dates are subject to change. To receive up-to-date information, ask Tim Lindenbaum to put you on the email contact list. Tim can be reached at tlindenbaum@prairieinnet.net or 309-531-7065.

Phytophthora ramorum & Sudden Oak Death—Update

In the last issue I wrote about the potential threat to oak forests in eastern US as well as the current devastation of California live oak forests from the introduced pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*, sudden oak death. One of several *Phytophthora* blight diseases in the US, this one has so far has not been found in Illinois, but the threat persists. In July 2006, the pathogen, commonly referred to as *P. ramorum*, was found on *Viburnum* plants at a hardware store in Portage, Ind. It arrived on plants shipped from Oregon. The sample was identified as suspect and sent to various labs for identification. Infected material was destroyed and clean-up practices put in place, but some plants of the infected shipment had already been sold to unknown customers. Could this happen here? Absolutely.

P. ramorum kills several species of trees, red and live oak group species especially, beech, horse chestnut, and other native and horticultural species. In addition it can live on numerous native understory herbaceous and shrub species, and many popular nursery shrubs and landscape plants. The world wide horticultural trade is responsible for importation of the species from Europe to the US, and, most likely from its unknown place of origin to European horticultural gardens. *P. ramorum* blight is not established in wild forests in the eastern US and the only possible way it can invade at this time is through shipment of plants from an area where it occurs to a new site – like Indiana, Florida, New York—all places it has been found in nursery stock—or potentially, Illinois.

What measures are attempting to prevent this? An extensive network has been established to prevent the spread of this disease and if necessary, eradicate it where it crops up. Nurseries with established *P. ramorum* are quarantined and others in the defined “established” region may not ship nursery stock without inspection. Sales records help trace contacts after infectious material is found. Cooperative plans between various agencies in all states are established to inspect nursery stock to prevent invasion. The Univ. of Illinois, Illinois Dept. of Natural Resource Forestry Division, Dept. of Agriculture, Illinois Nurserymen Association, Morton Arboretum, Illinois Forestry Development Council, and USDA State Plant Health Inspector have formed the Illinois Sudden Oak Death/*Phytophthora ramorum* Blight Detection and Response Plan (http://www.ncipm.org/suddenoakdeath/IL_ramorum_plan_3_05.pdf). Funding for efforts include USDA funds through APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection service). Activities include outreach and education of first-line defenders, including extension specialists, agency inspectors, district foresters,

arborists, master gardeners, nurserymen, screening of submitted samples of suspect plants, and monitoring of susceptible areas, including forests. At this time, the only route of infection to the state would be through horticultural specimens, so focus is on areas adjacent to horticultural activities.

Several horticultural plants with the possibility of spreading *P. ramorum* grow in the Midwest. A screening tool has been developed for determining if suspect plant samples should be submitted for more expensive testing:

1. Is the plant a camellia, rhododendron, viburnum, pieris, kalmia or lilac purchased since 2002? Or is the plant adjacent to one of those? If yes to either, go to question 2.

2. Is the plant known to be a host for *P. ramorum* (www.aphis.usda.gov/ppg/ispm/sod/)?

3. Is the plant a member of the oak family (red oak, pin oak, beech, chestnut, chinquapin)? If yes go to question 5.

4. Does the plant display foliar symptoms of leaf spots, defoliation, or stem dieback similar to those shown on the photos of plants infected with *P. ramorum*? (www.ncipmc.org/sod/images.html)? If yes, contact your Univ. Extension office for digital image submission. The Bloomington office is at 663-8309.

5. If the plant is a member of the oak family, does it display the following symptoms: bleeding from the bark without wounds, cracks, or insect holes. More information and photos are present on the web. Photos are at www.ncimc.org/sod/images.htm and more information is at www.suddenoakdeath.org.

Management of forests can make spread less likely should the disease arrive in Illinois. Researchers have found that burned forests were less likely to become infected than unburned forests. Likely, burned forests are less dense allowing airflow to dry bark after rain or fog, and fire destroys pathogens on infected litter.

Homeowners can reduce the likelihood of spreading a pathogen. Check the list of susceptible plant species (www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/ispm/sod/index.html). Ask your nursery about their inspection practices. Let them know it matters to you. Don't do landscaping work in wet weather, as the pathogen spreads in water. Keep tools clean. If there is any doubt about contact with any pathogen, sanitize tools and boots with Chlorox or Lysol. Don't plant susceptible shrubs and herbs under or too close to susceptible established tree species. If you have already established trees, assure good airflow to allow drying of tree bark after rain. Not a rule, but my favorite – landscape with prairie plants, they are not susceptible as far as we know. *Becky Anderson*

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