



Burn Workshop Debrief
by Jennifer Abraham-White

Saturday, November 3rd was a great day to learn about prescribed fire. Here at SIOSA we are always happy to see familiar faces in the workshop crowd; a sign of a burgeoning community of landowners forging deeper connections with fellow prescribed burners. It was also a pleasure to greet newcomers of all ages from different corners of the region, we had a fellow join us all the way from Kansas City and a few students from Graceland University in Lamoni.



Workshop veterans and newcomers alike started off that Saturday morning with discussions on the topic of fire ecology, ignition and safety, among other related topics. Fire tools were on site to help landowners familiarize themselves with basic prescribed fire equipment. Demonstrations and discussions were led by Gregg Pattison

of the U.S.F.W.S. as well as Rich Erke of the Decatur County Conservation Board... A friendly reminder, the majority of the equipment from the workshop (fire brooms, fire retardant clothing, helmets, spray pumps and units...etc. are freely available to SIOSA members and non members may also rent the equipment for a small fee.

The afternoon sun shone upon the group as we trekked across the road from the Little River Watershed campground area to a patch of reasonably dried out grass. A few observant attendees commented on the shorter height of the vegetation this year, a possible outcome of many dry months.



And just like that, the short dry patch of grass burned away in no time at all. Shortly thereafter attendees and organizers keenly parted ways, eager to get home in time to burn some of their own property for what remained of the Saturday sun.



Please visit www.prescribedburning.org if you would like to connect with other landowners in the southern Iowa and northern Missouri region who are looking to lend a hand to help burn your land! Email Jen at admin@siosa.org to register to make full-use of the resources on the website.



Little River Lake Restoration by SIOSA Board Member Rich Erke

By now most everyone in the area has heard about the restoration of Little River Lake near Leon, IA. What a lot of people don't know is what is actually being done to "renovate" the lake. The following is a brief synopsis of what is being done and what we hope to accomplish to improve the lake and keep the same problems from reoccurring.

For roughly the last eight years the water quality of Little River Lake has gotten progressively worse. Water clarity went from 5 - 10 feet when the lake was new in 1986 to less than 6 inches in 2012. This in turn had a negative effect on the fisheries and water based recreation on the lake. The causes were many, including soil erosion in the watershed, shoreline erosion in the lake and an overabundance of carp.

Some 4 years ago the lake sponsors began meeting to discuss the problems and develop a plan to improve the water quality in the lake and ensure that it would remain a quality recreation lake for many years to come. Sponsors of the lake include: Decatur County

Board of Supervisors, Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR), Decatur County Conservation Board (DCCB), Natural Resources Conservation Service, Southern Iowa Rural Water and the City of Leon. The sponsors secured a number of grants to improve the watershed by working with landowners to build sediment structures, terraces, ponds and buffer strips. Many landowners in the watershed have agreed to change their grazing and farming practices to reduce runoff.



Meanwhile, the Iowa DNR agreed to work with the sponsors to improve the lake itself. They earmarked 1.4 million dollars to rip-rap the shoreline and improve fish habitat within the lake. Additionally, the Decatur County Conservation Board received a grant to purchase Rotenone to kill the fish and remove the carp. In August of 2012 the gate was opened and the lake was lowered some 20 feet. Rotenone was applied and all the fish were killed. During the winter of 2012 the contractor started to place rip-rap and construct fish habitat structures. The unusually warm winter slowed the placement of rip-rap by the contractor and has extended the completion date.

To date 50% of the rip-rap has been placed and all the fish habitat work has been completed. The contractor now has until the end of March 2013 to complete the project. The gate has been closed and the lake was allowed to fill and is being held at 12 feet down to allow completion of rip-rapping this winter. All species of fish, Large-mouth Bass, Bluegill, Crappie, Catfish and Walleye have been restocked and are growing at a very fast rate.

It was also noted by the sponsors that a majority of the public land surrounding the lake had gone from largely grassland to thick tangles of Eastern Red Cedar, Honey Locust and brush. With the absence of grass these areas showed the most soil erosion and seemed to be a large contributor of sediment into the lake. The DCCB, DNR, Soil Conservation Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) have implemented a plan to construct a fire break around the entire boundary of the lake. The DCCB working with the other agencies will be doing prescribed fire on the public ground. The plan is to burn sections of the public land each year to promote native grasses and control the brush and undesirable species. The goal is to have all the public land around the lake burned every five years. The DCCB is also working with the FWS to hire contractors to mechanically remove undesirable trees and promote native grasses as well as oak savanna.



River point in background (1986). Note the amount of grass



River point in background (2011). Note the amount of brush

When this renovation is complete, Little River Lake will once again be one of Iowa's premier recreational lakes.



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A warm holiday season thank you to our supporters!

Contact us: admin@siosa.org