

Searls Park Prairie Nature Preserve Buffer Restoration,
T-67-D-1
Rockford Park District
State Wildlife Grant Final Report Grant ending December 31, 2014

Submitted by:

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Narrative:

In the past three years the Natural Areas and Horticulture staff of the Rockford Park District accomplished the objectives set forth in the grant. Removed 24.7 acres of brush and trees. Collected 497 lbs of native seed used to restore the areas where tree removal occurred within the nature preserve. Reduced the population of Reed Canary Grass by about 50% within the nature preserve with only some smaller isolated patches remaining. Purchased native seed mix and planted the cleared areas within the buffer. We are currently in discussions with John Nelson with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission to discuss Nature Preserve Buffer status for the entire field south of the NP.

We completed work on the following grant objectives:

Remove invasive plants from 26 acres south of the Nature Preserve

- 2012 - Seasonal Natural Areas Staff spot sprayed Reed Canary Grass, Canada thistle, spotted knapweed and re sprouting brush. Mowed entire buffer to prevent reed canary grass seeding and allow for easier spraying. Contracted boom spraying of reed canary grass.
- 2013 - Sprayed 10 acres of reed canary grass and patches within buffer area. Mowed the entire buffer area to prevent weeds from seeding and allow for spraying and over seeding. Spot sprayed re sprouting brush.
- 2014 - Spot sprayed Canada thistle, reed canary grass and re-sprouting brush with back packs. Boom sprayed larger patches of reed canary grass.

Remove 25 acres of invasive brush and trees

- 2012 – Removed 9.5 acres
- 2013 removed 7.1 acres
- 2014 we removed 8.1 acres
- Total of 24.7 acres of brush and trees removed.
- Annually treated re-sprouting brush with basal bark and foliar herbicide.
- Cut larger stumps and hauled logs and brush out of nature preserve with Bobcat.
- Contracted log removal.

- 2013 and 2014 Rented Bobcat stump grinder and removed 100s of stumps to allow for mowing.
- Cut and treated large patches of willows around the wetland with basal bark herbicide.
- Mowed large patches of grey dogwood and sand bar willow.
- Mowed clearing areas 2 times during the growing season with JD 7330 Tractor.
- Purchased a tree sheer for Bobcat and batwing mower.

Over seed 12 acres of the tree clearing area within the nature preserve

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Figure 1 - PT 3 Looking North 2011



Figure 2 - PT 3 Looking North 2014



Figure 3PT 3 Looking South 2011



Figure 4 PT 3 Looking South 2014



Figure 5 PT 3 Looking East 2011



Figure 6 PT 3 Looking East 2014



Figure 7 PT 3 Looking West 2011



Figure 8 PT 3 Looking West 2014

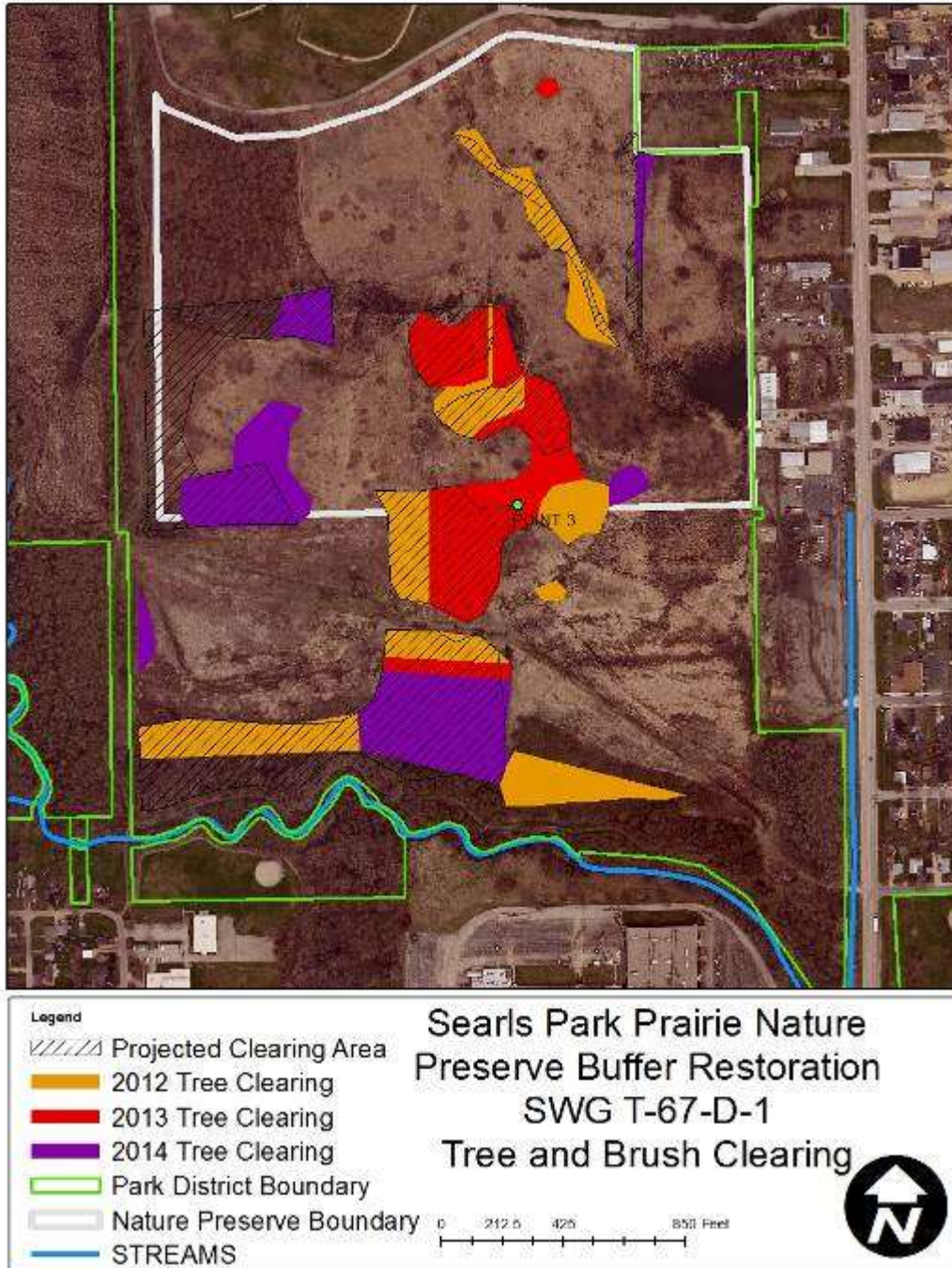
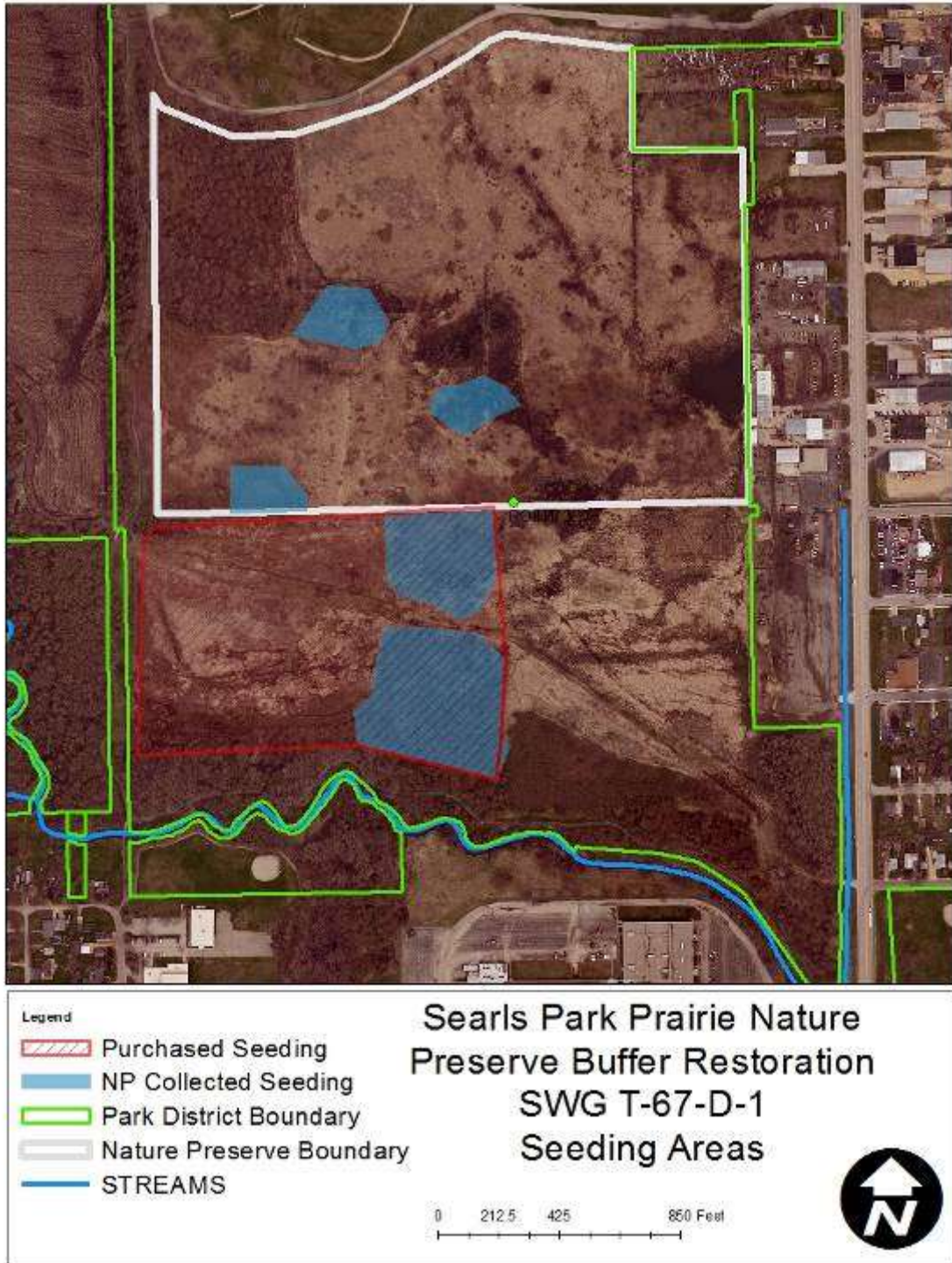


Figure 9 - 2014 Winter tree clearing and planting area in buffer (panoramic photo)

Over seed 12 acres of the tree clearing areas within the nature preserve and collect 250 lbs of native seed annually

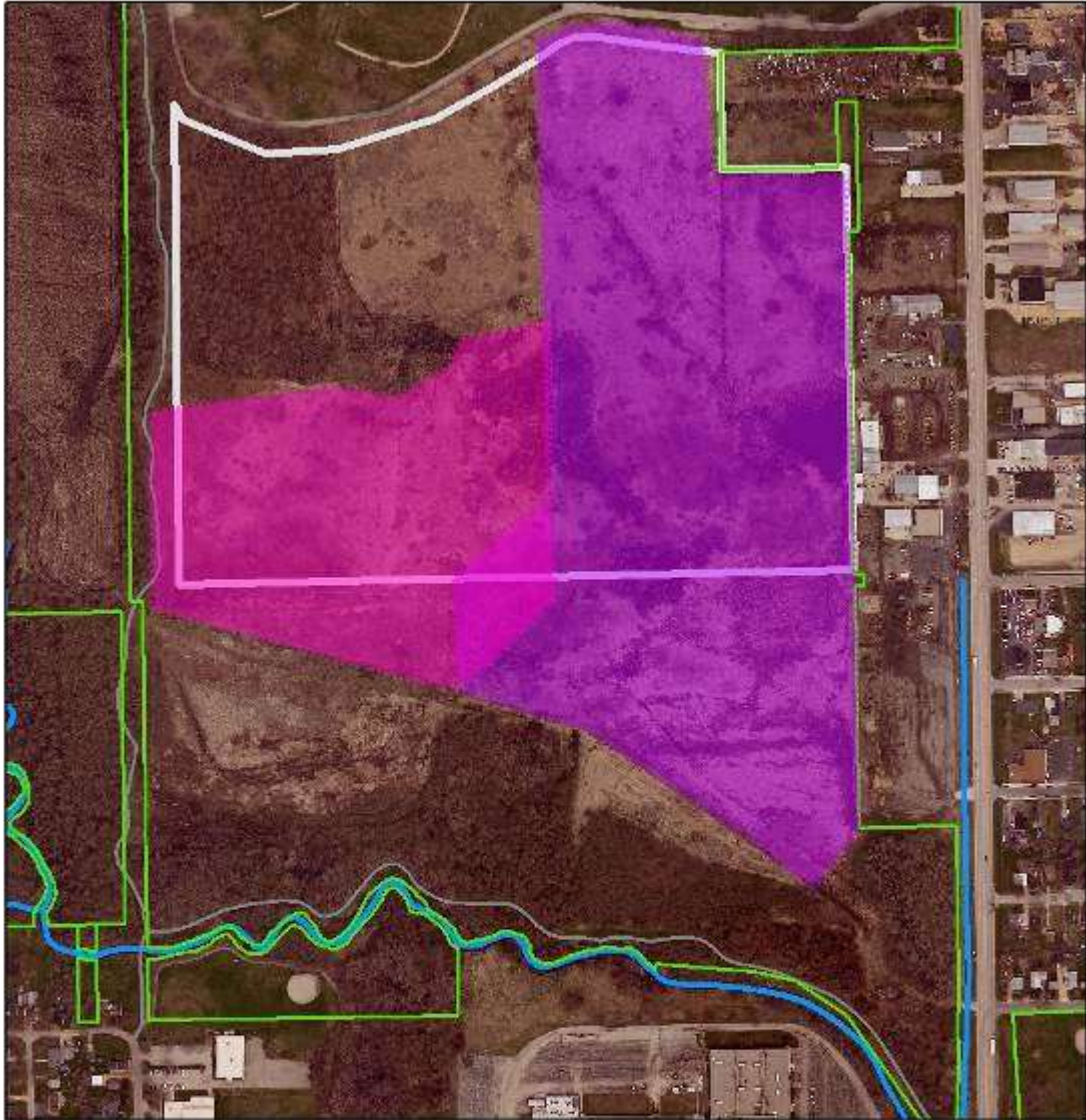
- 2012 annual seed collection – 167 lbs from 40 species
- 2013 annual seed collection – 180 lbs from 47 species
- 2014 annual seed collection – 150 lbs from 43 species
- 11 acres of cleared area were over seeded with collected seed.
- Purchased native seed and planted the 24 acre field spring 2015.



Continue to restore and manage area with prescribed fire

- 2012 – 23.12 acres burnt in spring
- 2013 - no fire weather was not within prescription
- 2014 – 50.15 acres burnt in spring – No fall burn fire weather was not within prescription.





Legend

-  2012 Bum
-  2014 Bum
-  Park District Boundary
-  Nature Preserve Boundary
-  Rec Path
-  STREAMS

Searls Park Prairie Nature
Preserve Buffer Restoration
SWG T-67-D-1
Prescribed Fires

0 212.5 425 650 Feet



Eradicate reed canary grass in Nature Preserve:

- Contracted with Tallgrass Restoration Inc to spray 9 acres of Reed Canary Grass in Nature Preserve. They completed one spraying spring 2013 and one spring 2014.
- Annually Seasonal Natural Areas staff sprayed RCG in the Nature Preserve and spot sprayed patches not included in the contracted areas.
- Annually purchased herbicides needed for the season.
- Mowed large patches of reed canary grass to prevent seeding and allow for easier spraying.
- Contracted boom spraying Reed Canary Grass field in 2012 as well as in house boom spraying in 2013 and 2014.



Figure 10 - 2014 Contracted chemical application on RCG





Expand existing prairie and create a contiguous 90 acre open prairie habitat for prairie dependent wildlife specifically grassland birds outlined in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.

- In 2012 – about 29 acres of contiguous prairie.
- In 2015 – about 72 acres of contiguous prairie.

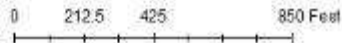


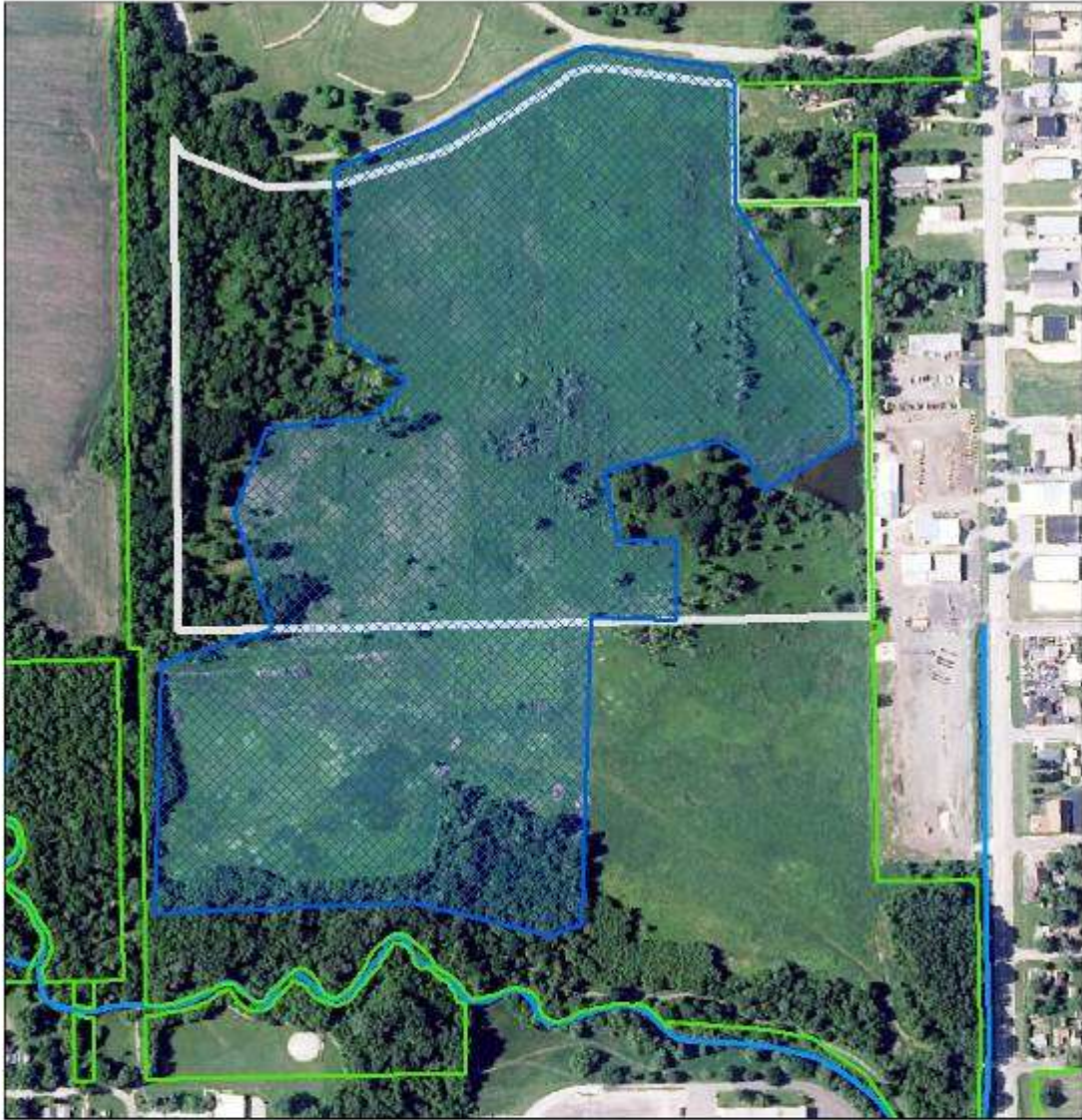
Legend

Contiguous Prairie

-  Before Grant
-  Park District Boundary
-  Nature Preserve Boundary
-  STREAMS





Searls Park Prairie Nature
 Preserve Buffer Restoration
 SWG T-67-D-1
 Contiguous Prairie 2012





Legend

Contiguous Prairie

-  After Grant
-  Park District Boundary
-  Nature Preserve Boundary
-  STREAMS

Searls Park Prairie Nature
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Contiguous Prairie 2015

