

## **Friends of the Preserve Eastern Bill's Woods Project**

Permit 2003-12

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### **Primary Aim of the Project**

The Friends of the Campus Natural Areas (FCNA) Eastern Bill's Woods Project is a continuation and expansion of the "FCNA Entrance Project," begun in the spring of 2002. Its purpose is to restore the native diversity of the easternmost section of Bill's Woods. This project has been combined with the "Upper Bill's Woods Planting Project," begun by Glenda Denniston and Roma Lenehan in 1999 (final report submitted to the CNAC files by Glenda Denniston on December 31, 2004).

In 2003, the CNAC approved a five-year permit for the "FCNA Eastern Bill's Woods Project" (May 1, 2003 to April 31, 2008). The 6.5-acre area of this combined woodland restoration project encompasses the southeastern corner of Bill's Woods, the area west of the main service road, south of the road to the present Grounds Storage and Holding Area, and east of the fire lane. It also includes the strip of woodland along the decorative stone wall which is south of the main area. The project has seven elements, each of which is discussed below.

### **Results/Accomplishments**

(March - December, 2005)

#### **1) The update of the signs that inform the public of the purpose and progress of the restoration.**

The informative sign at the southeastern corner of Bill's Woods and another across from the Grounds Storage and Holding Area have been kept up to date. They will be updated again in the spring of 2006.

#### **2) The keeping of a detailed inventory of all the plants now present in the project areas.**

The list of plants recorded for the project area is updated regularly. Records are submitted periodically to Cathie Bruner.

#### **3) The selective and gradual removal of non-native invasive European buckthorn, Japanese honeysuckle, garlic mustard and Norway**

We have continued to cut and pull many buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) saplings and seedlings and removed the Japanese honeysuckle in a large part of the project area. We were helped tremendously by a very hard-working LTE student worker, Joe Scott (hired by FPM and paid for by the Friends). During much of the warm season, Joe worked in coordination with FPM-hired contractors, who treated cut stumps and chipped the massive piles of brush. The chips will be used to mulch Preserve trails. Cathie Bruner,

Joe Scott, Glenda Denniston and Rebecca Kagle loaded and moved larger tree trunks to the Muir Woods area. There, Rebecca and volunteers used them to line the paths she renovated. (See section 6 below for more about LTE and contract workers).

Garlic mustard is still a problem, especially on the northern edge of Bill's Woods, but we are continuing to pull and dig the plants to keep it under control. This is done not only in the major eradication season, but year-round whenever the ground is workable. Japanese lilac is becoming invasive (spreading from the landscape plantings near the Picnic Point entrance) in the southeastern-most part of Bill's Woods as well as the base of Picnic Point. Seedlings and saplings of these trees are being removed as found.

#### **4) The selection and purchase of appropriate native understory plants to replace the non-native species.**

The FCNA purchased and volunteers again planted thousands of understory trees, shrubs and forbs, from the plant list previously approved by the CNAC. In addition, smaller numbers of other plants were obtained from FCNA members' private woodlands.

Thousands of native, local-ecotype wildflowers, ferns and shrubs were obtained from native plant nurseries (Enders Nursery, Agrecol, and Woods' Edge, and Great Lakes), which use seed from southern Wisconsin to produce their stock. All of these nurseries are recommended by the DNR for our area. We also added more savanna seeds (bottlebrush grass seed obtained from Agrecol and the remainder a cleaned and prepared mix of forbs and grasses generously contributed by Tom and Kathie Brock from their Pleasant Valley Conservancy savanna in Mt. Horeb (see <http://www.savannaoak.org>).

#### **5) The planting and care of the replacement plants.**

Beginning with a few large work parties in March of 2005, volunteers planted all of the purchased and donated plants. Mary Trewartha and Glenda Denniston oversaw the planting, and they and a few other volunteers added a smaller number of plants throughout the season (list of all volunteers at the end of this report). We were able to concentrate on weeding and monitoring our plantings this year, as we had sufficient and well-spaced rains especially in the spring.

#### **6) The Use of hired L.T.E. students to help with the project.**

As previously mentioned in section 3 above, we made great progress in the control of invasives using a few hired workers. Our experience this year has convinced us of the tremendous advantage to be gained by hiring LTEs and contractors to do major work in controlling invasive trees and shrubs. This work continued into the fall, but Joe Scott was forced to stop cutting because management was uncertain as to whether funds remained to cover the cost of treatment and chipping. We still have to work through administrative problems connected with budgeting and coordination of the needed workers, but cooperation on the part of management was excellent for the better part of the summer.

#### **7) Continuing documentation of and communication about the project.**

Careful records, written and photographic, of both plant and animal life in the area are continuing to be kept as the landscape changes. These records are sent periodically to Cathie Bruner, CNA Manager. A report on the progress of the Eastern Bill's Woods Project was published in the *FCNA News*, Volume 4, Number 3 Fall, 2005.

## **Plans for 2006**

Work will continue throughout the 5.6 acre FCNA Eastern Bill's Woods Project area in 2006. More plants are being ordered in early January for planting in both the spring and the fall.

We will continue to remove invasives throughout Eastern Bill's Woods. We hope to work closely with management and FPM to coordinate the cutting of large invasives (by volunteers and LTE student workers) with herbicide trunk treatment. This treatment could be provided by Grounds, a hired contractor, or some other qualified and management-approved individuals. The FCNA is able to finance part of this cost if CNA Management needs our help.

Native plants from the list previously approved by the CNAC will be added to all parts of the project area as each section is cleared of buckthorn and other invasive species. Volunteers from the FCNA as well as University students will also be spreading seeds and dividing plants in the project area as native plants become better established. Our aim is to restore a rich and diverse woodland groundcover and shrub layer, and to contribute to the health of native canopy trees that are in the project area.

Beginning in the spring of 2006 we will again carefully inventory the plantings that have survived the winter and continue to keep records, written and photographic, of both plant and animal life in the area as the landscape changes. Our plantings have begun to spread noticeably, and their seeds are being used both in Eastern Bill's Woods and in other parts of the Preserve.