

August 20, 2009
Bob Devries, President & OWA Board
Chuck Dickerson, Conservation Comm. Chr.

OWA MEADOW RECOVERY - PHASE 1

Our first phase of the recovery effort carried out August 10 -11-12 was enormously successful! Thanks to a wonderful core of volunteers, we exceeded our expectations. Good progress was made on opening up the clearings, rerouting and opening the walking trails and marking some lost lot lines. Phase 1 also came in below budget with expenditure of ~\$2100.

VOLUNTEERS

We would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the volunteers. They were outstanding.

Dusty MacDonald
Bob Krist
Jim Miller
Chuck Dickerson
Lin Emmert
Kim Kemper and Linda's sons Will and Ward
Bruce Balas and grandson Sam
Marlin Bussey

A special thanks to non-member volunteer Jim Charter who worked the entire three days with his tractor and brush-hog.

We also brought in Kal Excavating for one day with their chipper and operator. Jack Squires did a great job for us.

Our college student employed for one day was Ryan Korson of Lake Leelanau.

Each day two or three chain saw teams tackled the clearings and trails. These teams consisted of a chainsaw operator, a cut-stump herbicide applicator, and a person removing cut brush and trees. Additionally, we had two brush-hogs operating pretty much full time.

WHAT WAS DONE

We opened up the north clearing (70% done), the south clearing (90% done), the southwest clearing (70% done) and a small clearing between the north and south clearings (80% done).

We rerouted and cleared the main N/S trail all the way from the driveway at Omena Point Road (near the gravel pit) to the power line easement at Omena Heights Road. We also configured and cleared a second trail (Trail B) from the south clearing west to the southwest clearing, then to the shore of Moughey Lake and circling back to the south clearing along the high ridge.

Wherever shrubs or trees were cut by the chainsaw teams, the cut stumps were treated with herbicide to prevent resprouting. We used Pathfinder II (triclopyr).

In at least three places, where it wasn't obvious where the OWA lot lines were, we located and marked them.

Although the clearing effort accomplished a lot, it remains a work in progress. Additional portions still need clearing and the areas cleared need grubbing and fine tuning. We encourage OWA members to walk the trails and observe the progress to date.

Attached is a rough sketch of the clearings and the main trail. It would be great if an OWA member has connections with someone who could produce an aerial photo.

WORK YET TO BE DONE THIS YEAR

We anticipate that a significant portion of the shrubs cut with the brush-hogs will resprout yet this year. When this occurs, a couple of volunteers will foliar spray these with herbicide (glyphosate). A few additional lot line posts still need to be put up and we will clear the parking area. We will also, with recommendations from Kay Charter, do some limited native flower seeding and/or planting this fall and next spring. Finally, according to the plan, we need to erect four bird nesting boxes.

There are a couple of jobs that volunteers could carry out that are not currently planned for this year. One is to work on tidying up the trails by removing some cut stumps and trimming. Another job is to work on trail signage and a third is to spray for poison ivy (not in the plan). We have poison ivy spray on hand (Ortho Poison Ivy and Brush Killer).

NEXT YEAR

Another volunteer effort will be organized for next August. We expect to complete clearing of the openings we made good progress on this year, fine tune the trails, perhaps create a few sub-trails, carry out more native plantings, add more bird boxes, and further address signage. This effort will be as outlined in the three year Plan prepared for OWA by Saving Birds Thru Habitat.

DETAILS

Clearing: Most of the offending shrubs in the clearings and trails were Sumac and Juniper. We found the Sumac went easily and the Juniper was a bear. Where the Junipers were mowed down with the brush-hogs, we have residual branches and stumps that in many cases will require some grubbing and cleaning up.

Invasive Species: We encountered dozens of Autumn Olive (a few over 10' high), one Multiflora Rose (over 10' high), and three Tartarian Honeysuckles. These were cut and treated except where the brush-hogs cut Autumn Olive. We will foliar spray these when they resprout. There is still a lot of Autumn Olive that we won't get to until next year.

Purchased Supplies and Total Expense: Herbicides are Pathfinder II, Razor Pro, and Ortho Brush Killer. These herbicides are based on either glyphosate or triclopyr. They tend to be safer to use, effective, and with low to non-existent environmental impact. We also bought chemical resistant gloves, indicator dye, herbicide sprayers (disposable), gas for the brush-hogs; and steel posts, ribbon and marker spray for the lot-lines. We rented two brush-hogs. We will purchase the native flower seeds and bird nesting boxes in the coming months. In summary, \$1755.88 has been spent to date and an additional \$320 is committed for specific remaining work to be done.

SIGNAGE

Although the main trail and a secondary trail have now been cleared, it is still not obvious to the casual walker exactly where they connect and how they cross the clearings. We need signage also for the entrance at the north driveway and for the parking area. We strongly recommend that the Conservation Committee come up with a design for the signs that could be submitted to the Board for their endorsement. A plan for how many and what type signs are needed, and a cost estimate, should be worked up. In that there is ~\$400 remaining of the budget committed for this year's work, we believe this money should go toward the signage. We recommend that the signs be attractive (probably wood) and durable. Many of our OWA members, several serving as docents, have seen good examples at various Conservancies and Nature Centers.

Project Co-Chairs

Bruce Balas
Marlin Bussey

cc: Kay Charter, SBTH