



1967-2013
**Shawnee Resource, Conservation,
& Development**
2012 Annual Report

March 26, 2013
The Field of Dreams, DeSoto, IL

A Year of Change

Glenn Seeber, Chairman

The 46th year of Shawnee Resource Conservation & Development Area Inc has just been completed and we continue to grow stronger as a stand-alone not-for-profit corporation. Federal budget cuts led to separation from our long and very beneficial relationship with NRCS. Not all RC&Ds survived this separation. However, with the dedication of excellent staff and volunteers we are a strong survivor and will continue to work in our 16 county area to continue the fine work of the organization.

Two years ago, major bylaws revisions were made in order to best guide the new Shawnee Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc. Such major changes do not happen rapidly especially in a pre-dominantly volunteer run organization. The first year saw the design of a new logo, printing of a new promotional brochure and the design of a new web site along with the normal programmatic efforts. Cathy Poshard was hired as our very capable half-time Program Manager. Tabitha Ayres just finished her first year as half-time Executive Director. We now have some much needed staffing stability.

This year we continued to bring the organization into line with the new bylaws. The new website has been launched and is now being refined and new content added. Electronic banking is being used and has greatly reduced valuable volunteer time formerly used just to secure signatures. The new system provides for easy monitoring of accounts by the treasurer, chair and staff members.

In order to further strengthen our fiscal accountability, a new accounting firm is now under contract that requires a completed audit by the annual meeting and timely filing of required tax documents. Further, all active grants will be individually audited on an annual basis. Finally, insurance coverage has been secured to adequately cover sponsored events as well as provide needed coverage for officers and directors. By early summer, revisions will be completed for both the Operations and Personnel Manuals.

With the help of Jody Shimp, IDNR, grants have been secured to continue the employment of Tracy Boutelle Fidler and Chris Evans as contract employees for at least three more years. With Chris's contract extending his duties state-wide, Karla Gage started on January 1st as a third contract employee and is covering the tasks formally taken care of by Chris. Chris is now housed in the IDNR office in Benton and Karla is located at the Crab Orchard Wildlife Refuge office in

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Marion. Other grants are continuing, some of which have reports elsewhere in this document.

The current challenge for Shawnee RC&D is the cash flow for our grants. Many of our grants require us to spend first and be reimbursed later. Sometimes the later is quite a bit later. This causes cash flow problems. We are successful in securing grants. However we are at the point where we may have to restrict grant requests to those that pay the money up front. One alternative may be to consider a finance campaign to raise funds to use as sort of a revolving loan fund.

Thanks to all that provide support to our efforts. We look forward to another great year!

Shawnee Forest Fish Habitat Grant Summary

Shawn Hurst—Project Coordinator

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) cooperated with the Shawnee RC & D, Shawnee Forest Service and the Golconda Job Corps to purchase and place fish habitat in 10 Forest Service lakes and 5 Forest Service ponds. The Department of Natural Resources provided equipment and personnel to place the habitat in the lakes and ponds mentioned above. Personnel also assisted tracking our grant match. Shawnee RC & D managed the grant funds.



A total of 1800 PVC porcupine fish attractors were purchased and placed as fish habitat. Habitat structures were placed in lakes according to size, estimated angler use and habitat need. Cedar and Kinkaid lakes received the most with 565 at Cedar and 450 at Kinkaid. The remaining porcupines were distributed as follows: Dutchman lake – 95, Little Cache – 25, Lake Glendale – 125, One Horse Gap lake – 90, Tecumseh lake – 50, Pounds Hollow lake – 150, Sugar Creek lake – 100, Bay Creek lake – 125, and 5 each in 5 Centennial ponds.

In addition to the PVC porcupine habitat structures, Cedar trees were placed as natural habitat. Approximately 1000 Cedar trees were taken from unwanted areas on the Shawnee Forest in Pope County and transported to area lakes. Due to transportation issues, Kinkaid and Cedar Lakes did not receive Cedar tree natural habitat. The remaining lakes received approximately 125 trees each.

All of the habitat placed has been recorded with GPS locations and is available from the Shawnee Forest Service and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Maps and GPS coordinates are also available on the Shawnee RC & D web site. This project provided much needed habitat and will provide additional angling opportunities for years to come.



Restoring the Cache River

Tracy Boutelle-Fidler—Project Coordinator



This grant concludes having made considerable progress in defining how to restore a more natural hydrology to the lower Cache River. The key piece of research completed is a hydrologic and hydraulic model of the Cache River, which was updated with information collected during the 2008 and 2011 floods. These water flow studies resulted in information that will guide the project into formal design and planning. Additional ecological information still is being collected, specifically as it pertains to fish, which will aide in the improvement of the project's design as it relates to fish passage.



The most significant work accomplished in 2012 was the completion of a science-driven process to develop conservation targets. Through the process, land managers and scientists increased communication and formed new ideas about how to approach conservation work, as well as generating research ideas. In addition to providing a tool to assess conservation action, the conservation targets document also provides a roadmap for future conservation efforts.

Much of the ecological research work supported through this grant has taken on a life of its own, which will continue to reward the Cache River Watershed with new findings.

Focusing on Southern Illinois' COAs

The Illinois Wildlife Action Plan establishes a common vision for the conservation of Illinois' wildlife and habitat. The plan identified a variety of components, from biologically-diverse hotspots in the state to specific conservation goals. As a way to tackle the awesome conservation task before the residents of Illinois, the plan identified Conservation Opportunity Areas or COAs. These are areas where "partners are willing to plan, implement and evaluate conservation actions ... and where conservation is motivated by an agreed-upon conservation philosophy and set of objectives."



Shawnee RC&D kicked off a new, three-year grant in 2012 that will establish a framework for focusing the broad conservation actions outlined in the Wildlife Action Plan. For example, the plan calls for land in the

Cache River-Cypress Creek COA in public ownership to increase from about 32,000 acres to 60,000 acres but says little about how this goal should be achieved, or where target land acquisition. Our work will focus on Southern Illinois' three COAs – Cache River-Cypress Creek, Larue-Pine Hills-Western Shawnee-Trail of Tears and the Eastern Shawnee.



Tracy Boutelle Fidler served as the Restoration Coordinator for the Cache River work for the last five years. Now, she joins us as the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan's Southern Illinois – COA Coordi-

to



Sustainable Living Expo Attendance Soars in 2012!

By Stephanie Brown

Good Choices. Smart Living. *Help Yourself*. That was the theme of the 2012 Sustainable Living Expo held October 27th at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center (DSAC) in Pope County. The Expo attracted participants from 35 Illinois counties and 7 other states, with attendance increasing to 2133 in the event's third year.

The program included informative sessions and ongoing demonstrations in tents and outdoor learning stations scattered across the grounds of DSAC – an outlying field research and education center of the University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES).

The Main Tent was filled with 30 booths hosted by agencies, organizations and local businesses providing products, services and programs consistent with the event theme. The Artisan Tent showcased local creativity and ingenuity, with 24 different artisans demonstrating talents in Native American crafts, basket weaving, wood lathing, wool and alpaca spinning, gourd art, jewelry making, landscape painting and more.

The Expo leveraged the strengths and limited staff capacity at Dixon Springs with the overlapping interests of partner organizations sharing similar challenges. Together in this united effort, the necessary financial, physical, and intellectual resources were brought to bear on a timely set of needs in the region. A welcome addition to this year's program was the US Forest Service's local incident team, who helped manage the many logistics associated with hosting the event.

Major sponsors of the Expo included the Shawnee RC&D Area, Connect SI Foundation, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Illinois ACES Office of Research, Shawnee Communications, WSIU Public Broadcasting, Southeastern Illinois College, Shawnee Community College, and the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education program. The Illinois Forestry Association sponsored the Expo at the Bronze level (\$500), as did the Illinois Tree Farm Committee.

Program tracks included Conservation, Local Foods, and Energy. Some of the topics covered at the Expo were: hade tree care and removal; building an ATV spray rig; beekeeping; chainsaw maintenance and safety; forestry and organic incentive programs; prescribed burning; rainfall simulator; managing forests for wildlife; basics of freshly planted trees; native American artifacts; repairing old wooden handle tools; cover crops; high tunnels for season extension; saving seeds; raising chickens, goats, and sheep; basic gardening; container gardening; cooking with in-season produce; mushroom hunting and production; solar energy; home energy conservation; geothermal systems; spray foam insulation; energy saving audits; severe weather preparedness; fire-starting skills; water purification; and more!

For a complete listing of sessions visit the Expo's official website: www.SLExpo.org and download the 2012 program. The tentative date for the **2013 Sustainable Living Expo is Saturday, October 26**. Continuation of the program will depend upon availability of funding.



Featured Presenters

Chris Evans, ISC Coordinator and Karla Gage, CWMA Coordinator



Karla Gage, CWMA



Chris Evans, ISC

2012 Annual Report

River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area and Illinois Wildlife Action Plan – Invasive Species Campaign

Submitted by Chris Evans, ISC Coordinator and Karla Gage, CWMA Coordinator

The River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) is a partnership between 12 federal and state agencies, organizations, and universities aimed at coordinating efforts and programs for addressing the threat of invasive plants in southern Illinois.

In 2012, the Shawnee RC&D, through funding from the State Wildlife Grant Program, expanded its efforts to address invasive species by hosting the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan – Invasive Species Campaign Coordinator position. This position is responsible for facilitating the implementation of the IWAP Invasive Species Campaign statewide. In August, Chris Evans moved from the CWMA Coordinator position to serve as the Invasive Species Campaign Coordinator. At the end of 2012, Karla Gage, formerly of Southern Illinois University, joined the RC&D as the CWMA Coordinator.

Karla is nearing the completion of a Ph.D., focused on weed ecology, from the Department of Plant Biology at SIUC, where her dissertation work examined the ecology of an economically important herbicide-resistant weed. She also serves on the board of the Southern Chapter of the Illinois Native Plant Society, and is a member of the Ecological Society of America. Karla and her husband have lived in Carbondale for six years and have enjoyed discovering the opportunities this region has to offer. She is looking forward to raising her daughters in this area.

This year, the CWMA and ISC combined to give 23 presentations on invasive species with over 1200 in attendance. Some examples of presentations given are demonstrating how to build a homemade spray rig at the Sustainable Living Expo, presenting on new invasive species at conferences in Missouri and Chicago, and teaching landowners how to conduct herbicide applications in a field day in Jackson County.

In addition, 3 webinars were given (two in cooperation with the Illinois Forestry Association and one with the National Invasive Species Council) on invasive species-related topics with over 200 people participating. The Illinois Forestry Association reports that these webinars were so successful that they want to continue this partnership to offer more in the future. The CWMA also lead four volunteer workshops in 2012, with over 250 volunteer hours being accumulated.

2012 was the year for expanding partnerships and scope. The RC&D expanded its role in invasive species management with the addition of hosting the IWAP Invasive Species Campaign Coordinator, a role that address all invasive species across the state, not just plants. The CWMA further developed partnerships with the power utility co-ops and companies through the Rights-of-Way Restoration Project funded by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, which also expanded the scope of the CWMA into native species restoration. This project resulted in over 60 acres of ROW being controlled for invasive plants and replanted into native species.



Members of the Invasive Species Strike Team receiving the national award in Norfolk, VA

A new partnership with Dow Agro-Sciences is allowing for some much needed research on control of invasive species to be conducted in southern Illinois. The CWMA facilitated a stakeholder meeting with Dow which led directly to research on Japanese chaff flower, *Sericea lespedeza*, and control methods for woody invasive plants.

Illinois Invasive Species Awareness Month continues to be driven by a broad partnership of agencies and organizations across the state. This year, May was again officially proclaimed as Invasive Species Awareness Month by Governor Quinn and educational events and workdays were held throughout the month.

The CWMA partnered with a for-profit business to complete the bush honeysuckle aerial survey project funded by a USFS State and Private Forestry grant and the project is at the cutting edge of management by exploring the use some new technologies to find and map invasive species.

The very successful Southern Illinois Strike Team, a project in partnership with IDNR and The Nature Conservancy, was awarded the Carl N. Becker Stewardship Award by the Natural Areas Association. This national award is given to recognize innovation and dedication to stewardship of natural areas. Also, we just got notice that the Nature Conservancy has been awarded another grant for the Strike Team, giving us funding for two more years!

These new partnerships and changes in scope are allowing the CWMA to fully address the issues around invasive species in Illinois. Now with both Chris and Karla working on invasive species, the Shawnee RC&D is establishing itself as a major component of conservation in southern Illinois and beyond.

Spotlight on Programming: Stewardship Week—Illinois Forest Resource Center Dixon Springs IL

In 2013, Southern Illinois will celebrate its 24th year of hosting stewardship week for area youth and educators. Schools in the lower 16 counties of Illinois, and several nearby counties in Kentucky and Missouri, will be invited to send students ages Kindergarten through 6th grade, to the Dixon Springs Agriculture Center to receive one-of-a-kind environmental education.

Taking place during the week of Arbor Day, the stewardship program brings together the time and talent of more than 100 of the areas most talented educators, and is 100% free to attendees.

Despite financial issues encountered by several of the attending schools, 2012 saw an increase in attendance and the number of schools making the trek to their location. This increase was due in large part to the efforts of Dixon Springs Ag Center employees and their constant efforts to recruit new schools.

Shawnee RC&D is very pleased to help sponsor Stewardship Week, and is grateful that so many of our project coordinators have chosen to contribute their time and talents to educating the next generation of environment stewards.

Stewardship Week Totals for 23 Years

Year	Students	Teachers	Schools	Counties	Running Total of Students
2012	2,460	132	35	15	64,409
2011	1,056*	57	12	7	61,949
2010	2,954	151	28	11	60,893
2009	2,674	145	25	13	57,939
2008	3,188	158	30	11	55,265
2007	2,923	150	33	11	52,077
2006	3,176	165	36	16	49,154
2005	3,049	162	39	14	45,978
2004	3,277	157	37	14	42,929
2003	3,194	163	41	14	39,652
2002	3,269	157	36	14	36,458
2001	3,392	165	42	14	33,189
2000	3,079	149	38	13	29,797
1999	3,174	164	42	13	26,718
1998	3,120	149	36	13	23,544
1997	3,074	145	40	14	20,424
1996	3,136	151	41	14	17,350
1995	2,994	134	35	12	14,214
1994	2,667	118	33	13	11,220
1993	2,584	113	28	11	8,553
1992	2,384	105			5,969
1991	2,272	105			3,585
1990	1,313	57			1,313

* 2011-Year of the Ohio & Mississippi River flood

IFRC EVENT PHOTOS 2012



Stewardship Week



School of Earth, Society and Environment at Herrin Pond & Expo



Chainsaw Training



High School Woods Tour



FFA Contest



Non-Native Invasive Plants

2012-2013 Grant Activity

Tabitha Ayres—Executive Director

As we close the books on 2012, it is easy to see that Shawnee RC&D has made huge strides as it moved away from the federally funded model of prior years to become a self-sufficient and locally focused organization. Even as other RC&Ds within the state, and indeed throughout the country, close or consolidate, we continue to flourish.

This success is, I believe, due in large part to the wonderful partnerships we have with other area agencies. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Prescribed Burn Association, and University of Illinois Extension have all provided valuable services, and much needed contract work, to ensure that Shawnee RC&D continues to be able to provide the necessary work in this area.

As we move forward into new projects and, hopefully, new partnerships, it is important to remember that as an agency we are only as good as our weakest project. Only by showing our firm commitment and follow-through on every project that we commit to, can we hope to guarantee a steady stream of future income.

Thanks to the professionalism and skill of our employees, coordinators, and volunteers, I suspect we will have a very bright future indeed. Thank you, to all those who contribute so much to the mission of Shawnee RC&D!

Summary of Open Grants

Friends of the Dixon Springs Ag Center (June 2011—May 2013)

Near its completion, this grant from the DCEO pays for the foundation and administration of a Friends support group for the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center, located in Simpson, IL. In its final months, the Friends group will be launching a new web presence, creating an organizational structure (including a Board of Directors and committee organization) and hosting a public event to introduce the new organization. The Friends group will work closely with current DSAC staff, the University of Illinois, and local volunteers and stakeholders to encourage involvement and tourism.

Grand Victoria Foundation (March 2013—February 2014)

To support the efforts of education and outreach, the Grand Victoria foundation sought out this partnership with the Shawnee RC&D based upon the outstanding reputation of the CWMA. The lump-sum grant of \$5,000 is meant to provide coverage of travel and overhead expenses for the attendance of seminars and events and for specific engagements. We are pleased to not only receive these funds to support our cause, but to know that the excellent work being performed by our coordinators is recognized.

Harrisburg Tornado ReLeaf (Ongoing)

A privately funded project, Harrisburg ReLeaf was created to help the residents and businesses of Harrisburg to replace trees lost during the 2012 Leap Day storm. Several area agencies, including University of Illinois Extension, Southern Illinois College—Carbondale, and of course Shawnee RC&D, have come together to oversee the management and organization of donors and volunteers. Current plans include an upcoming public tree planting along a portion of the Tunnel Hill bike trail affected by the tornado. More

extensive plantings are planned for later this fall and an inventory of plantings needed is currently being assembled. We recently received a grant of \$5,000.00 from AT&T, secured with assistance from the City of Harrisburg and Mayor Gregg.

Hidden Springs (August 2009—July 2014)

The is grant covers the design and establishment of native plantings and pollinator gardens at the U.S. Forest Service Hidden Springs Ranger Station (Vienna, IL) and four public camping sights nearby. 2013 will see the finalization of landscape designs and fall plantings of native trees and plants. Several location organizations, including the Audubon Society, master gardeners program, and the local job corp are working together to bring help locate and place these plants. RC&D employees and volunteers will assist in the tagging and identification of plantings and generating local interest.

Conservative Actions to Address Invasive Species Threats in the Cache River and Shawnee COA's (July 2011-June 2014)

This grant, following the successful completion of prior Cache River watershed research, aims to protect the native species of plants and wildlife found in the Cache River area. Goals include creation/protection of native animal habitat's, mapping of habitat's and areas at risk, and an assessment of the flow and watershed levels of the cache as it relates to animals and fish. Additionally, as coordinator of this project, Tracy Fidler is also responsible for leadership for the Southern Illinois area, as it relates to the revision of the WAP.

Reforestation of Mississippi Flyway in Cache River Watershed (Fall 2013)

This project connects closely with prior work performed in the Cache River Watershed. This reforestation of the Mississippi Flyway in Cache River Watershed project aims to recreate a large block of historic hardwood bottomlands, providing high-quality swamp and wetland communities and habitat for more than 100 species listed as threatened or endangered in Illinois.

Southern Illinois Prescribed Fire Resources (September 2011—November 2014)

Providing necessary seasonal firefighters, this project's goal is to provide for the care and recovery of at risk species, using prescribed burns. Prescribed burning is one of the most cost-efficient and effective forms of control know, and we are putting it to use in forests, grasslands, and natural areas owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). Toward this goal, Shawnee RC&D, in partnership with the Prescribed Burn Association, works to provide training and coordination for per-diem firefighters, and overall communication with seasoned professional burn bosses. We are very pleased to be working with the Prescribed Burn Association and are pleased to have so many well-qualified and experienced firefighters working with us to preserve natural lands and to ensure the safety of natural areas.

Survey, Planning, and Strategic Control of Bush Honeysuckle (October 2011—September 2013)

Falling under the banner of the CWMA, this grant covers a comprehensive approach to detecting and eradicating growth of bush honeysuckle. Recent efforts have included heat-sensor photography and stand mapping, to be followed by organized strike team eradication. The project has also included the creation of several information publications to assist private owners and public employees in the identification and detection of bush honeysuckle.