



&



## **Natural Areas 2010 Annual Report**



Warnimont Park State Natural Area

**Milwaukee County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture**

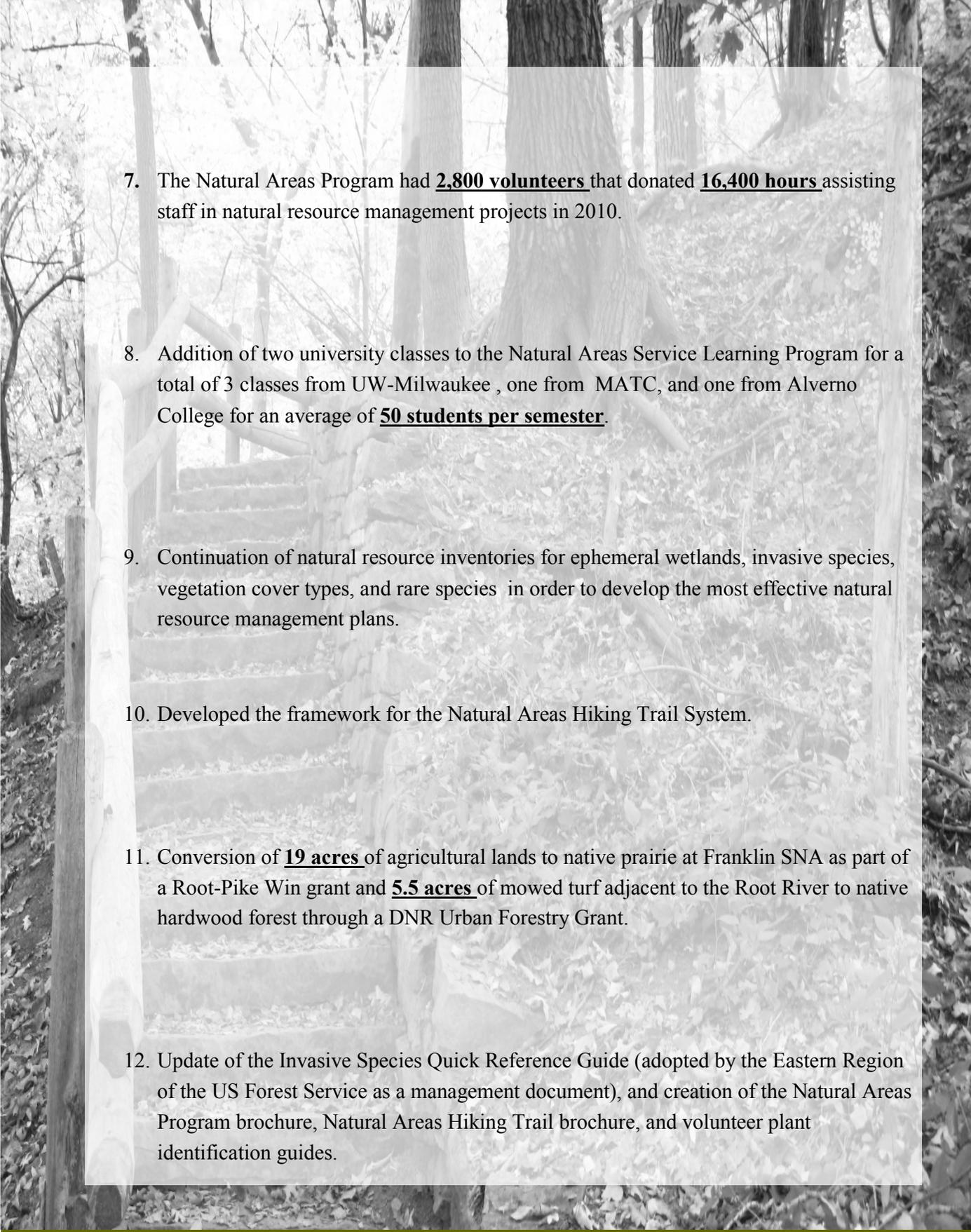
**Sue Black, Director**

**Milwaukee County University of Wisconsin Extension**

**Eloisa Gomez, Director**

## *Major Accomplishments 2010*

1. Natural Areas Program presentations at local, regional, and national conferences as well as local community events reached a total of **1,655 individuals**.
2. Natural Areas Program efforts were published in the Midwest Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration's newsletter and internationally by the Journal of Ecological Restoration.
3. Participated in the Milwaukee County Land & Water Plan update, Parks 2035 Long-range Plan development, and SEWRPC's Regional Natural Areas Plan update.
4. Expansion of the Natural Areas Internship Program (**10 Interns in 2010**).
5. Continuation of the 6-month AmeriCorps Stewardship Position with the Natural Resources Foundation of WI, Lake Park Friends, and Preserve Our Parks.
6. Partner acquisition and development - worked with **51 partner organizations** in 2010.

- 
7. The Natural Areas Program had **2,800 volunteers** that donated **16,400 hours** assisting staff in natural resource management projects in 2010.
  8. Addition of two university classes to the Natural Areas Service Learning Program for a total of 3 classes from UW-Milwaukee , one from MATC, and one from Alverno College for an average of **50 students per semester**.
  9. Continuation of natural resource inventories for ephemeral wetlands, invasive species, vegetation cover types, and rare species in order to develop the most effective natural resource management plans.
  10. Developed the framework for the Natural Areas Hiking Trail System.
  11. Conversion of **19 acres** of agricultural lands to native prairie at Franklin SNA as part of a Root-Pike Win grant and **5.5 acres** of mowed turf adjacent to the Root River to native hardwood forest through a DNR Urban Forestry Grant.
  12. Update of the Invasive Species Quick Reference Guide (adopted by the Eastern Region of the US Forest Service as a management document), and creation of the Natural Areas Program brochure, Natural Areas Hiking Trail brochure, and volunteer plant identification guides.

## 2010 Natural Areas Management Locations

### Back Bay Park

- ◆ Invasive Species Control

### Bender Park

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Service Learning & SCA Park
- ◆ Eagle Scout Foot-bridge Project
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories
- ◆ Prescribed burn

### Brown Deer Park

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Service Learning Park
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories
- ◆ Corporate Workday with Briggs & Stratton
- ◆ Hiking Trail Rehab

### Cambridge Woods

- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories

### Copernicus Park

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories
- ◆ Service Day with McPherson College

### Cudahy Nature Preserve

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories
- ◆ Hiking Trail Rehab

### Dineen Park

- ◆ Invasive Species Control

### Doctors Park

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories
- ◆ Service Learning Park

### Doyne Park

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories

### Estabrook

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories

### Falk Park

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories
- ◆ Eagle Scout Foot-bridge Project
- ◆ Hiking Trail Rehab

### Franklin State Natural Area

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories
- ◆ 19 Acre Prairie Planting
- ◆ Savannah Restoration

### Fitzsimmons Woods

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories

### Gordon Park

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories

### **Grant Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Service Learning & SCA Park
- ◆ Eagle Scout Native Plant/Erosion Control Project
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories
- ◆ Hiking Trail Rehab

### **Greene Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories
- ◆ Corporate Workday Rockwell

### **Greenfield Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Service Learning & SCA Park
- ◆ Eagle Scout Kiosk Project
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories
- ◆ Hiking Trail Rehab

### **Grobschmidt Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories
- ◆ University Wildlife Research Project

### **Holler Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories

### **Hoyt Park**

- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories
- ◆ Eagle Scout Native Plant/Invasive Species Project

### **Humboldt Park**

- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories
- ◆ Invasive Species Control

### **Jackson Park**

- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories
- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Service Learning Park

### **Jacobus Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Hiking Trail Rehab
- ◆ Service Learning Park
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories

### **Juneau Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Native Pollinator Garden Expansion

### **Kern Park**

- ◆ Natural Resources Inventories

### **Kletzsch Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Hiking Trail Rehab
- ◆ Eagle Scout Trail & Invasives Project

**Kohl Park**

- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories

**Lake Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Service Learning & SCA Park
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories
- ◆ AmeriCorps Project

**Lyons Park**

- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories

**McGovern Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories
- ◆ Milwaukee Job Corp Workday
- ◆ Hiking Trail Rehab

**Mitchell Blvd**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories
- ◆ Prairie Seed Collection & Planting
- ◆ Service Learning Park

**Nash Park**

- ◆ Pollinator Garden with the German Immersion School

**Noyes Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Service Learning & SCA Park
- ◆ Hiking Trail Rehab

**Pleasant Valley Park**

- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories

**Rainbow Airport Prairie**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories
- ◆ Native Seed Collection Site
- ◆ Wildlife Habitat Management

**Rawson Woods**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories
- ◆ Hiking Trail Rehab

**Root River Parkway**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories
- ◆ Hardwood Tree Planting
- ◆ Service Learning Park

**Scout Lake Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories
- ◆ Service Learning Park

**Servite Park Preserve**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories

### **Sheridan Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories

### **Underwood Creek Parkway**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories
- ◆ Hiking Trail Rehab

### **Warnimont State Natural Area**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Service Learning & SCA Park
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories
- ◆ Erosion control

### **Whitnall Park-Mangan Woods**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories
- ◆ Eagle Scout Kiosk Project

### **Wilson Park**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control

### **60th St Woods**

- ◆ Invasive Species Control
- ◆ Natural Resource Inventories



## *Natural Areas Education Projects*

### **Higher Education**

- ◆ University Service Learning projects require students to undertake a variety of community service activities. Natural areas projects revolved around ecological restoration, natural resource data collection, and development of educational materials. Natural Areas staff worked with an average of **50 students** each semester. Students participated from UW-Milwaukee, MATC, Alverno College, and MSOE.

### **Community Education**

- ◆ Urban natural resource management requires an engaged and educated community. It was a priority this year to take the Natural Areas Program to the people. During 2010 staff gave **33 presentations** to **1,655 citizens**.
- ◆ The Natural Areas Coordinator presented at **3** conferences this year: Wild Ones Native Landscapers SE WI conference, the Midwest Regional conference of the Society for Ecological Restoration, and the national conference of the Aldo Leopold Foundation.
- ◆ In addition to community presentations and conferences Natural Areas staff were also guest lecturers at local universities: **UW-Milwaukee (2), MATC (1), Alverno College (1), and UW-Parkside (1)**.
- ◆ Staff also taught several sessions of Wehr Nature Center's Master Naturalist course.

### **Natural Areas Interns**

- ◆ Training the next generation of natural resource managers should be an important component of any natural areas program. The Natural Areas Program extended its internship opportunity to **10** university students this past year. Students participated from UW-Milwaukee, UW-Eau Claire, and UW-Whitewater.
- ◆ Interns were provided training in ecological restoration, natural resource data collection, development of management and educational materials, GPS/GIS technology, and plant/wildlife identification skills.
- ◆ In return for the training experience, our interns (**who volunteer their time**) donated **2,400 hours** towards helping us achieve our natural area program goals.

## *Natural Areas Hiking Trail System*

### **Inventory & Development**

Historically, park users have been allowed to generate their own hiking trails in many of the park system's natural areas. While the staff greatly encourages the interaction between citizens and our diverse natural areas it is important that it is done in a sustainable manner. With that goal, staff and partners in 2010 set out to:

- ◆ GPS map all trails located within Milwaukee County Parks natural areas.
- ◆ Overlay GPS data on satellite photos to determine the most ecologically sustainable hiking trails and designate those trails as official natural areas trails.
- ◆ Make sure that the designated trails still provided park users with quality nature-based experiences.
- ◆ Began to stabilize the designated trails through erosion control techniques, re-routing certain trail segments, installing educational kiosks and signs, marking trail boundaries, and installing hiking trail foot-bridges.

This is an ongoing project and great strides were made this past year. Upon completion, the Natural Areas Hiking trail system will add approximately 40 miles of designated hiking trails to the park system for park users to enjoy while protecting the natural resources that add to the quality of our citizens' lives.

## *Natural Areas Outreach and Planning*

Our natural areas do not exist in a vacuum. There are many activities outside our park boundaries that can potentially impact the quality of our sites so interacting with a larger audience is often important. It is imperative that our staff shares knowledge when there is the potential to help others succeed in their management efforts.

- ◆ Natural Areas Program published in the Midwest Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration's newsletter and the Journal of Ecological Restoration, an international scientific journal.
- ◆ Participated in SEWRPC's Regional Natural Areas Plan update
- ◆ Participated in Milwaukee County's Land & Water Plan update
- ◆ Participated in Milwaukee County Parks 2035 Long-range plan development
- ◆ Served on the Board of the Southeastern Wisconsin Invasive Species Consortium

## *Natural Areas Land Management Activities*

### **Urban Natural Resource Management**

With 9,100 acres of natural areas and only two staff positions, what can realistically be accomplished? Turns out a great deal thanks to our natural areas partners and volunteers. In 2010 staff and partners:

- ◆ Continued to remove **20** different invasive species from **38** parks and parkways.
- ◆ Conducted a prescribed burn at Bender Park to enhance wildlife habitat.
- ◆ Planted **19 acres** of wet-mesic prairie at Franklin State Natural Area as part of a Root-Pike/WIN Grant.
- ◆ Planted **5.5 acres** of hardwood trees along the Root River Parkway as part of our mowing reduction program (DNR Urban Forestry Grant).
- ◆ GPS mapped populations of invasive species, rare flora & fauna, vegetation cover types, and ephemeral wetlands.
- ◆ Monitored wildlife populations.
- ◆ Managed and expanded native pollinator gardens.
- ◆ Trained **2,800 volunteers** that in turn donated **16,400 hours** to the Natural Areas Program.
- ◆ Conducted ecological restoration activities on **1,200 acres** of natural areas.

## *The Financial Value of the Natural Areas Program*

### **Costs & Returns**

Ecological restoration requires specialized equipment, herbicides, planting materials, educational resources, and trained staff, all of which can financially add up and prevent worthy projects from being undertaken. Fortunately, the Natural Areas staff has been able to leverage outside resources through donations from partner organizations and volunteers. In 2010 the Natural Areas Program received:

- ◆ **\$23,000** in grants
- ◆ **\$22,000** in donations of materials or cash
- ◆ **\$164,000** in donated labor from volunteers (\$10.00/hr)
- ◆ **\$87,300** from the Agricultural Lease Program it manages

**Staff brought in \$4.67 for every dollar the Parks Dept spent on their salaries.**

## *Natural Areas Notable Partnerships for 2010*

### **The Park People Weed-outs**

Weed-outs to remove invasive species were conducted in spring and/or in fall at Doctors, Estabrook, Grant, Greene, Greenfield, Holler, Honey Creek Pkwy, Hoyt, Humboldt, Jacobus, Juneau, Kletzsch, Lake, McGovern, Menomonee River Pkwy, Noyes, Oak Creek Pkwy, and Sheridan parks. These Weed-outs significantly improved the quality of our natural areas and we are greatly appreciative of the Park People's tireless efforts.

### **SCA- Conservation Leadership Corps**

SCA crews once again did an outstanding job this summer stabilizing hiking trails, removing invasive species, building natural fencing, repairing stream channels, improving wildlife habitat, and educating the community. This year crews worked in Bender, Grant/Warnimont, Greenfield, Lake, Riverside, Washington, and Whitnall parks.

### **AmeriCorps—Lake Park Friends—Preserve Our Parks**

This year's 6-month AmeriCorps Stewardship Assistant was Molly Lundberg. The position was made possible through the leadership and financial donations of the Lake Park Friends and Preserve Our Parks. Molly made a significant difference in the quality and quantity of work that we were able to accomplish this year.

### **United States Forest Service**

The USFS provided **\$10,000** to install a native pollinator garden and educational sign in Juneau Park. They also donated significant hours in maintaining the garden and educating volunteers on the benefits of pollinators.

### **Eagle Scouts & Brownie Projects**

Experiencing conservation at a young age often solidifies an individual's natural resource perspectives for life. While environmental education is extremely important, so are hands-on projects. This year scouts built hiking trail foot-bridges and educational kiosks, stabilized trails, removed invasive species, and planted native seeds. While five Brownie Troops at Parkway School next to Kletzsch Park pooled their cookie money (**over \$1,000**) and paid for 9 new tree education signs in the park next to their school.

### **Neighborhood Associations & Friends Groups**

The bread and butter. Once again they donated their time, expertise, knowledge, and funding in order to enhance not just their local parks but also the larger Milwaukee County Park System. At the end of the day, these parks belong to county residents and they have shown an overwhelming desire to preserve the natural places that make our County unique.



***Natural Areas Mission Statement***

***Blending Milwaukee County's Diverse and Unique Natural Areas With Its Culturally Rich Communities to Preserve and Nurture Its Natural Heritage for Current and Future Generations***

Jacobus Park Lagoon

Report prepared by:

Brian Russart , Natural Areas Coordinator

&

Mary McQuiggin, Natural Areas Stewardship Assistant