

Susan,

First things first; we did very little spraying this year. We chose to hire Heartland Ecological to wick the cattails in C10 because we have put quite a bit of work into the area in the past and did not want to lose the plantings to broadcast spraying we would do on the rest of the property. He performed the work satisfactorily and on time. The rest of the property was supposed to be done by our usual sprayer.

Our usual sprayer, Nature Care Ecological, made us his last priority, showed up on the last day possible, then broke his equipment after spraying 8 acres. He arrived on site after cattails were going dormant and right before the first hard frost put the phragmites to bed for the winter. We do not plan to do business with him next year and are currently requesting quotes from the companies on the list that you provided me. There is concern that Nature Care was working cheaply for us, and our grant was built around his figures. After initial meetings with sprayers, I am gaining confidence that we will be able to find a good sprayer to work within our budget.

Biomass removal: Last year we attempted to burn at least 6 times and all were either cancelled by a burn ban or were failures. We finally had success by cutting or plowing down with 4 wheelers 9 acres of phragmites. These were the patches that ring the South edge of the property. We have received skepticism about these methods; people are concerned that we should be clearing the biomass instead of just knocking it over. I have inspected these patches, and the cut phragmites do not appear to be an issue for emergent plants. There is little or no evidence of them 9 months later. As of December we have scheduled work days on the first Saturday and the third Friday of each month. So far we have cut the cattails wicked by Heartland Ecological, are about halfway through cutting what Naturecare sprayed and have cut firebreaks on most of the cattails North and East of Berlin Rd. These work days are gaining volunteers and equipment such that we are on pace to cut or burn at least half of our invasives this year.

All of that said, we are seeing successes on the property. The patches that we were able to knock over show signs of severe degradation and many of the smaller ones appear to be eradicated. The cattail wicking that Heartland performed looked successful, and we have cut it, so anything missed will be obvious this year. Perhaps the biggest improvement has come in the form of our scheduled workdays. Momentum is building and we are hopeful that by the end of winter we will have 4-5 volunteers per workday. Additionally, since DNR paid for the spraying this year, I talked our Executive Board into purchasing a shipping container for the property. Now we have equipment on site making our workdays more successful and less laborious. Having local storage also seems to be attracting equipment as 2 weed-eaters have been donated and interest is rising in procuring a 4 wheeler for the property, which will at least double our productivity for biomass removal and increase monitoring tenfold.

We will have our annual banquet on March 21. At this banquet I will be giving my first presentation on the property and the problems it is facing. It will encompass an overview of the property, the invasive plants we are fighting, the grant from DNR and a call to action for more volunteers and equipment. Any ideas or help from DNR in this is always welcome.

Pictures: I ran around the property taking "before" pictures, which I have included. None of these areas were sprayed by Naturecare Ecological. I have also included "after" pictures of the wicking that Heartland Ecological performed.

Thank you,
Billy Froeschner
Wings Over Wisconsin Tri-County
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