

Less is More

Making an Impact with
a Few Words

John Elliott
Upstream Interpretation



Sign, sign, everywhere a sign
Blocking out the scenery,
breaking my mind...



“Signs,” Five Man Electric
Band, 1970

Do you use?

- Orientation and information signs
- Warning or regulatory signs
- Wayside interpretation
- Indoor exhibit labels



Some Key Points

Principles of Interpretation

Objectives

Audience

Thematic Message

Provoke – Relate - Reveal

Placement

Attention Getting

Layout

Color

Type

Spacing

So much time, so little to do....



No Wait, Reverse that!

KISS



Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Tinley Creek Preserve Wetlands Habitat Improvement Project

This cooperative project will restore and enhance the wetland, grassland and woodland habitat for Cook County's wildlife.

TO VOLUNTEER PLEASE CONTACT THE FOREST PRESERVE AT (773) 631-1790 or at WWW.FPDCC.COM



10 Seconds to Read

The Des Plaines Valley Rendezvous

Historic Festival with Food, Fun, and Entertainment

COLUMBIA WOODS
Willow Springs

Saturday, Oct 10th 10 - 5
Sunday, Oct 11th 10 - 4



1-800-926-CANAL

www.aRiverThruHistory.com

TIME'S UP!

Fall Festival



RIVER TRAIL NATURE CENTER

Northbrook



THIRD SUNDAY IN OCTOBER



Objective

Audience

Thematic

Provoke –

Relate –

Reveal

Simple and
creative design





Design fits the location

Regulatory signs can be positive, and interpretive.



- Be sure your sign says what you mean.
- Edit!

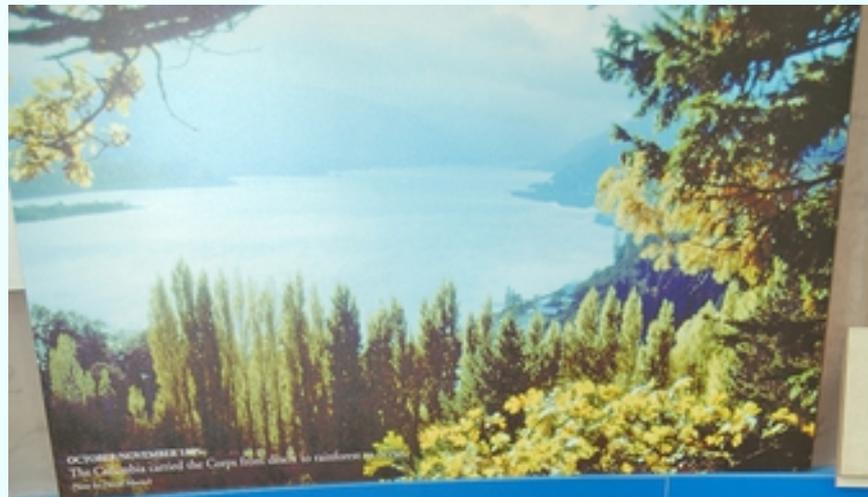


Graphic representation adds interest, invites visitor involvement

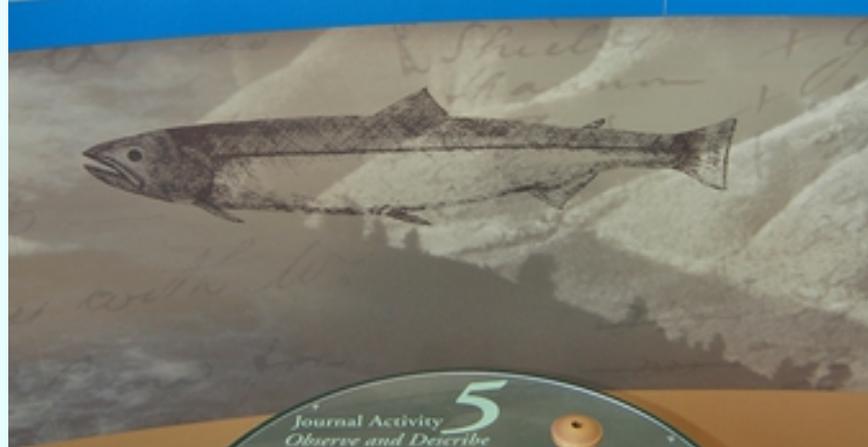


Visitors involved - Objects to manipulate





OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1899
The Columbia carried the Corps from dusk to rainbow to dawn
the best view



Journal Activity **5** *Observe and Describe*

Imagine how hard it would be to describe plants and animals to people who had never seen them.

Instructions

- Choose one of the plants or animals seen by the Corps.
- Draw a picture of it and write a short description to share your friends.



Titles Matter

WOULD YOU DRINK THIS WATER?

Salt Creek is a natural waterway that runs alongside Indian Lake. In the past, large amounts of pollution flowed into Salt Creek. Today, the creek is cleaner, but bottom sediments still hold wastes and pollution from industries, homes, and farms.



1940s—Swimmers enjoyed the clean water of Salt Creek.



1960s—Trash and pollution flowed into Salt Creek.



1990s—The creek looks clean, but chemicals remain on the bottom.

Here's how you can help



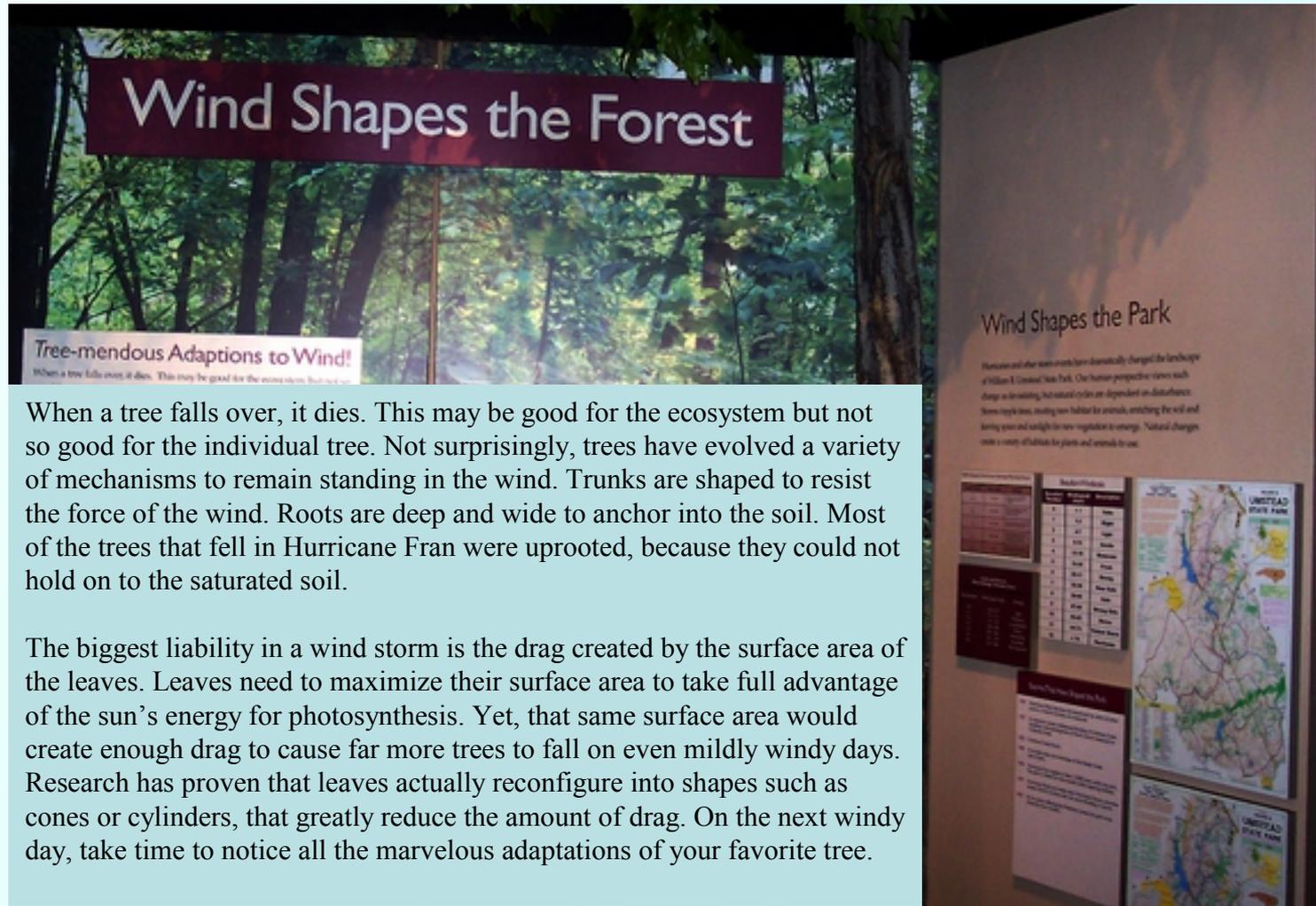
Dispose of paint and household wastes properly so they don't pollute. Don't flush your automobile.



Apply your car's brakes so to reduce brake pads and the asbestos that causes acid rain and other pollution.



Join a group monitoring water quality. Check the Chesapeake Environmental Network to find out for more.



When a tree falls over, it dies. This may be good for the ecosystem but not so good for the individual tree. Not surprisingly, trees have evolved a variety of mechanisms to remain standing in the wind. Trunks are shaped to resist the force of the wind. Roots are deep and wide to anchor into the soil. Most of the trees that fell in Hurricane Fran were uprooted, because they could not hold on to the saturated soil.

The biggest liability in a wind storm is the drag created by the surface area of the leaves. Leaves need to maximize their surface area to take full advantage of the sun's energy for photosynthesis. Yet, that same surface area would create enough drag to cause far more trees to fall on even mildly windy days. Research has proven that leaves actually reconfigure into shapes such as cones or cylinders, that greatly reduce the amount of drag. On the next windy day, take time to notice all the marvelous adaptations of your favorite tree.

Active Title
Turns information into a story
Layering

River Critters: Amazing Adaptations

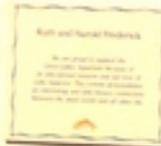
How Can a Trout Eat a Tree?

With the help of thousands of little insects! These specialized feeders transform plant energy into bug energy. Then trout and other fish eat the insects, completing the transfer of energy from trees to trout in the amazing river food web.

Eaters on the Energy Flow Pathway

Aquatic insect nymphs (larvae) with specially adapted mouths convert the food they like into the food fish like.

Discover how the shape of a nymph's mouth fits the way it feeds.



River Habitats from Beginning to End

Compare the river habitats shown in this painting. The atmosphere is shaded and shallow. Mid stream is fast flowing, and full stream is narrow and deep. Each habitat offers its inhabitants a distinct niche.

Now pretend you are a river biologist collecting samples of insect larvae. Where would you go to collect specimens of streamside "scrapers" collectors' predators?

How would knowing the river habitats and the eating habits of each organism help you find specimens more easily?

Twitter?

Enough words?

Too many?

25 words for an introduction?

70 words for a label?

Number of syllables is more important
than number of words

FOG test

Flesch test

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

- PRESERVING THE PRESERVES -

FOREST PRESERVES - NATURAL TREASURES

Your forest preserves are home to thousands of plants and animals living in a variety of exquisitely complex and beautiful ecosystems unique to northwestern Illinois. Established in 1914, the Forest Preserve District's early expectation was that acquiring land would be sufficient to preserve the native woodlands, wetlands, forests, streams and prairies in perpetuity.

Over time, however, ecologists observed unwelcome changes. Altered hydrology, population growth, the suppression of fire and increases in invasive species all contributed. It became more difficult to find lush carpets of wildflowers growing amongst healthy woodlands of oak and hickory. Prairies were becoming choked with brush. Many wildflowers, birds and butterflies - once abundant - were in danger of extinction. Bit by bit, the very treasures the forest preserves were created to sustain were at risk of being lost forever.

HARD WORK - BIG ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Nature needs our help to remain healthy in an urban setting. Our native habitats can be destroyed by invasive species and urban development. The Forest Preserve District employs the best management practices developed and well proven over time by leading ecologists and land managers.

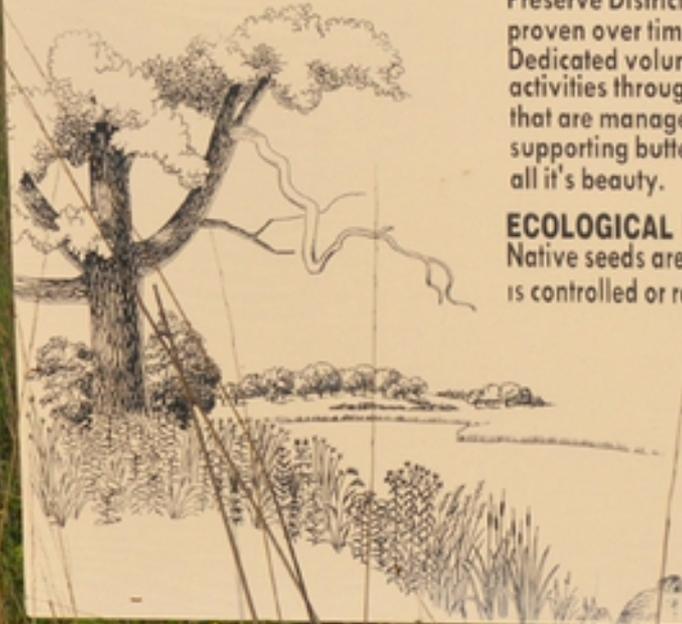
Dedicated volunteers and District staff conduct ecological management activities throughout Cook County each year. As a result, Forest Preserve sites that are managed team with hundreds of species of wildflowers, trees and shrubs supporting butterflies, birds and other wildlife - exhibiting native diversity in all it's beauty.

ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT - BEST PRACTICES IN ACTION

Native seeds are collected and redistributed. Aggressive alien and native vegetation is controlled or removed. Herbicide (regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) is applied directly to invasive plant species by state licensed individuals. Controlled burns, conducted by exceptionally well trained and thoroughly equipped crews, follow strictly defined guidelines to ensure safe and effective outcomes.

VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

People just like you are an important part in preserving our natural treasures. Contact the Volunteers Resources office at 773-631-1790 or browse our websites www.fpdcc.com or www.fpdccvolunteers.org



52

78

90

55

27

Titles add 27

TOTAL WORDS = 329

FOG score = 14

302

If you restore it they will come!



Marsh and Blue-winged Teal
EPDCC Staff



Bartel Grassland offers an opportunity to recover a small portion of Illinois grassland habitat. Restoration began with removal of miles of interior fence row trees and disabling farmer's drain tiles to restore original wet grassland. Native species have been planted, and prescribed fire and mowing help to control invasive species.

50



Two Prairie Sparrows
John Lewis



Short-eared Owl
Alan Winkler

A dramatic increase in wintering short-eared owls since restoration began in 2001 has demonstrated early success. Shorebirds and waterfowl are regular migrant visitors to the restored wetlands. Hundreds of bobolink pairs and grassland specialists like Henslow's and grasshopper sparrows, nest here.

41



Bobolink
EPDCC Staff



Monarch
Dick Riser

Restoration will be a long term process. To learn more or to volunteer for this exciting effort, visit fpdcccvolunteers.org

19



Bumblebee
Dick Riser



Nodding Wild Onion
Dick Riser



Looking for tadpoles
Dick Riser



Butterfly Weed
John Lewis

52

Many public and non-profit organizations have worked together on this project, including the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Corlands, and the National Audubon Society.

30

This viewing area was built and funded through combined efforts of the DuSable Cook Audubon Society, National Audubon Society, a private donation, and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

Dedicated May 29, 2007 at the 3rd annual Wild Neighbors Festival
Constructed by Clarence Daniels & Company
Landscaped by Possibility Plant Nursery

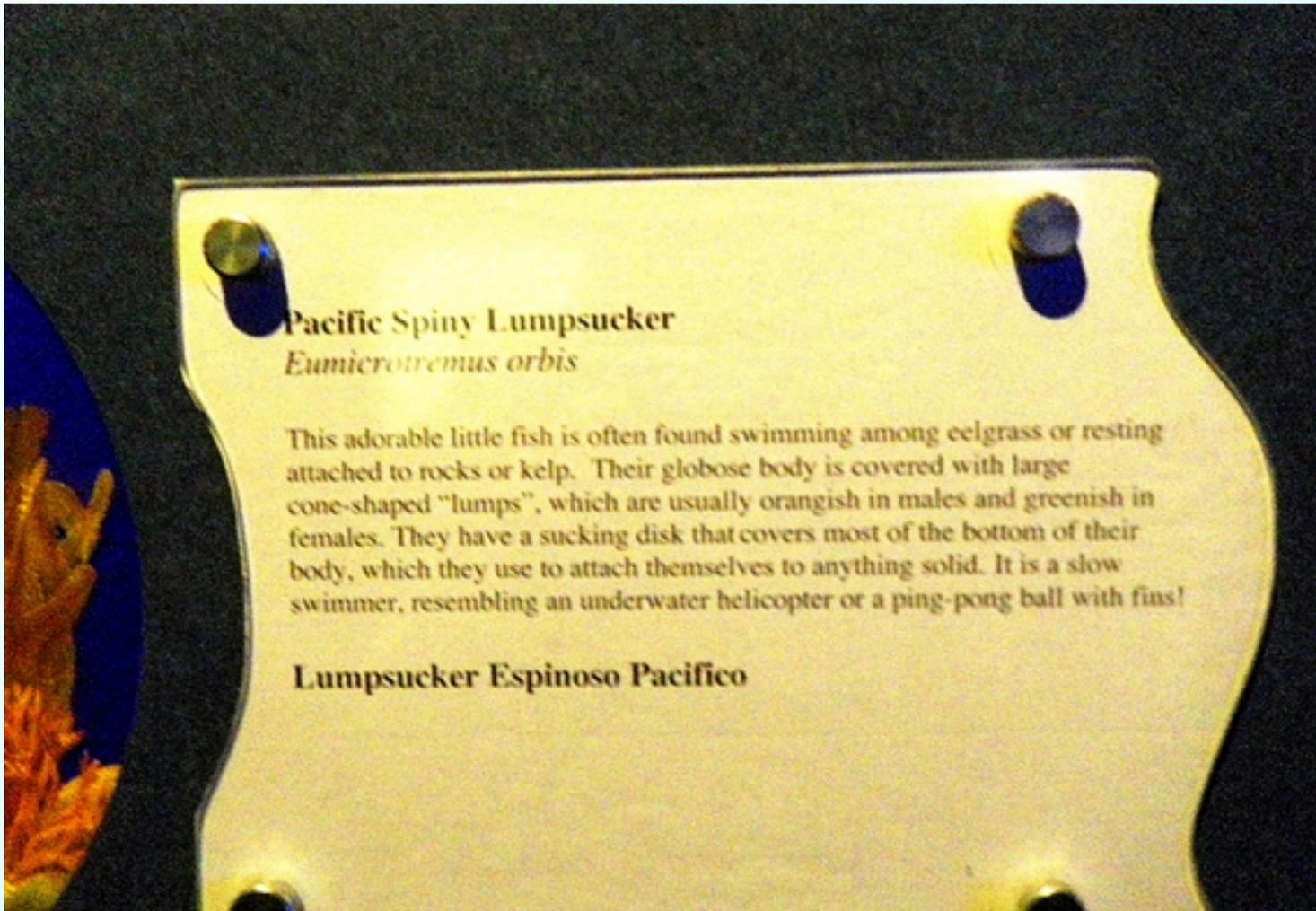
Title = 7, Captions = 20

FOG score = 10

192

Readability

- Short sentences – 15 words or less
- Simple sentences
- No jargon or technical terms – if a shorter word will work, use it
- Get to the point - lead sentence is most important
- Positive, not negative
- Active, not passive



Edit for Grammar

Encyclopedia?





Deer Grove East Forest Preserve - Restoration Plan

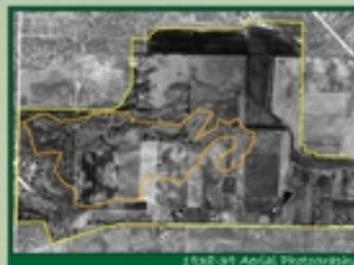


Introduction

Ecological restoration is increasingly important for creating educational, recreational, and beautiful nature preserves. The Deer Grove East Forest Preserve (DGE) Restoration Area currently consists of struggling wetland communities surrounded on their northern and western edges by significantly degraded native oak woodlands and former prairie. Sections of the restoration area consist of old, over-grown field and shrub thicket plant communities that were historically farmed. Non-native invasive species have flourished and are preventing the native species from re-establishing. The Forest Preserve District of Cook County, with the assistance of Openlands, have developed a plan to restore historical conditions, enrich native habitats, and improve public enjoyment.

Restoration Goals:

1. Restore artificially drained basins to robust wetland habitats;
2. Maintain, enhance, and preserve the ecological integrity and biodiversity of existing wetlands;
3. Restore the woodland habitats and prairies surrounding the wetlands; and
4. Restore the integrity of the landscape for human enjoyment and the sustainability of native species.



The Habitats of Deer Grove

Old Woodland/Savanna

There is a narrow and vertical strip of restored old-growth oak woods (oak and bluffs) and savanna, and this is with native vegetation.

Healthy Illinois oak woodlands consist of large robust trees that are naturally spaced to allow sunlight to filter onto the woodland floor. The sunlight penetrates the canopy and provides the energy for growth of a multitude of native flowers, grasses, and shrubs. Oak woodlands and savannas provide multiple layers of habitat to support a diverse wildlife population. Deer Grove's woodlands have become overgrown by



invasive trees and shrubs that crowd out the sunlight necessary for a healthy and enjoyable woodland. The restoration plan includes an effort to "uncover" the native woodlands by removing the invasive and harmful species, allowing them to develop into diverse habitats and open them up for exploration and enjoyment.



Prairie

The prairie, in all its expressions, is a mosaic, rather than a long history of monotonous and unchanging. But, it is worth the effort of our generation. It is, after all, at the center of our national identity.

—Margaret Fuller, "Last Willows" (1840)

Illinois, once named the "Prairie State," could now more aptly be called the "Old Field State," after so many acres were tilled up for their deep, rich soils. Prairies are now in high demand for their quality of habitat, tourist value, and their importance for groundwater quality and recharge.

Our intent is to restore Deer Grove's landscape to reflect the rich and diverse ecological heritage of Illinois' prairies.



Wetlands/Open Water

Our diverse and dynamic wetland is a community teeming with life. Unless we are careful to do a community to which we belong, we may begin to lose it with just one report.

—Walt Leland

Illinois' aquatic habitats have been modified for over 150 years for various human uses. The original wetland complex at DGE was extensively drained and tilled in order to aid in the cultivation of agricultural crops.

After a careful evaluation of potential offsite impacts, restoration ecologists have developed a plan to restore sections of DGE's former hydrology to sustain former wetland habitats. The restored wetlands will play an important role in improving the quality of surface and groundwater and provide an invaluable habitat for waterfowl and other endangered wildlife and plant species.



Deer Grove's Heritage

As illustrated in the historical photograph to the left, the restoration area was at one time a mixture of farm fields, wetlands, and woodland. Research has shown that extensive areas of the farm fields and overgrown woodlands were diverse wetland habitat, prairie, savannas, and oak woodlands... before farmers cut and drained them for access to their rich soils.

Deer Grove Today

At DGE, the overgrowth of invasive species has degraded the forests, the introduction and success of non-native species has crowded out native plants and animals, and human modification of hydrology has depleted the potential values of wetland communities. But, a glance around Deer Grove's scenic landscape will illustrate that this area is not without hope and detailed inventories conducted by Forest Preserve staff and other regional experts have revealed that rare and healthy native wetland and woodland species remain, hidden amongst the disturbed areas.

The Future of Deer Grove East

With careful restoration techniques and encouragement, the heritage of the Illinois landscape can be restored at Deer Grove East Forest Preserve. Restoration, including hydrological modifications, opening of the woodlands, invasive species control, planting, and long-term management, will result in a stunning natural area complete with diverse ecosystems, habitats for a variety of native birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects, and an inviting trail complex for public education and enjoyment.

Please, be patient while this restoration is underway, and understand that some short term inconveniences will result in invaluable rewards to the Illinois landscape, its wildlife, and the community.

Contact Information

Forest Preserve District of Cook County:
Wayne Vandroplog, (708) 431-7406;
Openlands: Joseph Roth, (312) 863-6275;
NRC: Dominic Kempson, (608) 839-2014.

openlands

NRC

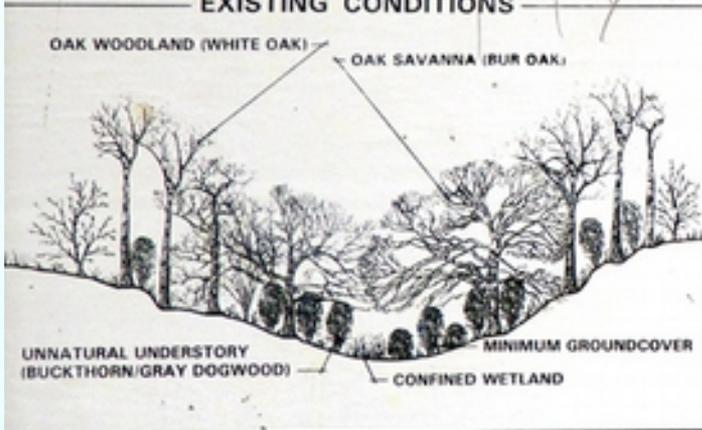
Artwork and Photo Credits by: Anne Aronson, NRC

THE SWALLOW CLIFF WOODS RESTORATION IS UNIQUE. IT RESTORES THE INTERACTION AND SUCCESSIONAL PROCESSES BETWEEN ECOSYSTEMS, SUCH AS GRASSLAND AND OAK COMMUNITIES, THROUGH THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF PRESETTLEMENT FIRE PATTERNS.

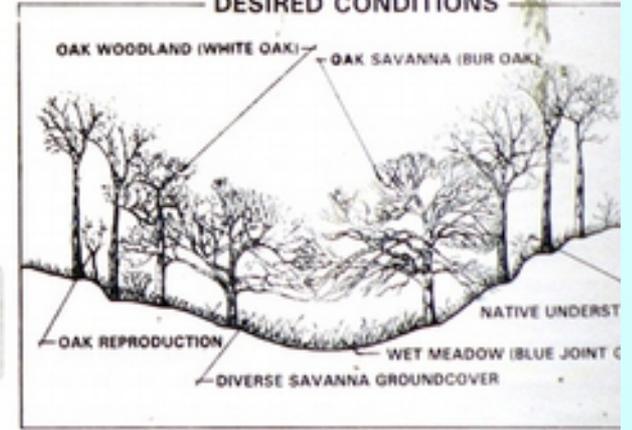
TRADITIONAL RESTORATION OF TALLGRASS PRAIRIES, SAVANNAS AND OAK WOODLANDS IN THE MIDWEST HAS FOLLOWED A "MICROSITE COMMUNITY" BASED APPROACH GUIDED BY PLANT ASSOCIATIONS SUCH AS MESIC PRAIRIE AND TALLGRASS SAVANNA. IN THE PAST, TALLGRASS PRAIRIES WERE IDENTIFIED, RESTORED AND MAINTAINED AS TALLGRASS PRAIRIES. TALLGRASS SAVANNAS WERE IDENTIFIED, RESTORED AND MAINTAINED AS TALLGRASS SAVANNAS. THE INTERACTION AND SUCCESSIONAL PROCESSES BETWEEN THESE TWO ECOSYSTEMS WERE NOT ADDRESSED.

THE RESTORATION AT SWALLOW CLIFF WOODS WILL ACCOMMODATE THE CONTINUED EVOLUTION OF THE DYNAMIC INTERFACE BETWEEN GRASSLAND AND OAK COMMUNITIES. THE RESULTING LANDSCAPE WILL INCLUDE ALL THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRAIRIE TO FOREST TRANSITION.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



DESIRED CONDITIONS



SWALLOW CLIFF WOODS RESTORATION

FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF COOK COUNTY

Flesch = 36.7 FOG = 14+

Table 5.1 Two Readability Formulas

Flesch Ease of Reading test

1. Count the total number of sentences and words in the text.
2. Count the number of syllables in the text.
3. Calculate the average sentence length in words (the number of words divided by the number of sentences).
4. Calculate the number of syllables per 100 words (the number of syllables divided by the number of words multiplied by 100).
5. Calculate the reading ease score with the following formula.
6. Ease of reading = $206.835 - (0.846 \text{ times the number of syllables per 100 words}) - (1.015 \text{ times average sentence length})$.

91–100 is Very Easy

81–90 is Easy

71–80 is Fairly Easy

61–70 is Standard

51–60 is Fairly Difficult

31–50 is Difficult

0–30 is Very Difficult

Sources: Adapted for interpretive sign text by Woods et al. (1998, 61), and interpretation of scores from Trapp et al. (1994, 103).

FOG test

1. Find the average number of words per sentence.
2. Find the percentage of words with three or more syllables (not counting endings such as -ing, -ed, -es).
3. Add the results of steps one and two together and multiply this total by 0.4.
4. The result is the number of years of schooling needed to understand the material.

Source: Kool (1985, 33).

From Moscardo, Ballantyne, & Hughes, *Designing Interpretive Signs*

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

How we do it

With periodic fires and other natural processes interrupted, many natural areas have been invaded by aggressive weeds. These plants can take over entire preserves. Native plant communities comprised of hundreds of species are replaced by a few weed species. Removing these invaders is an important step in restoring native biodiversity.

Many native species have been so suppressed by invading weeds that they have difficulty recovering without assistance.

It is necessary to collect and sow their seeds to ensure their survival. To preserve the specialized genes of local native plants, seeds are carefully collected from on-site or nearby preserves and sowed by hand.

Fire is reintroduced to the natural community. Fire played a major role in developing the landscape of presettlement Illinois.

Most natural communities must periodically burn to survive. Most aggressive weeds cannot tolerate fire. Regular prescribed burns are carefully conducted to maintain the natural biodiversity of our forest preserves.

Volunteers play a major role in restoration. If you would like to participate, call the Forest Preserve District of Cook County at 630-257-2045.



**I AM AN OLD COUNTRY LANE
NOW I HAVE BEEN
OFFICIALLY VACATED AND CLOSED**
(I NEVER LIKED AUTOMOBILES ANYWAY)
**I INVITE YOU TO WALK
AS FOLKS HAVE WALKED FOR GENERATIONS.
PLEASE BE FRIENDLY WITH MY TREES
MY FLOWERS AND MY WILD CREATURES.**

FOR INFORMATION - 1-800-875-3888
POLICE - 708-771-1000 TDD - 708-771-1190

CLOSED AT SUNSET



Handouts Available:

The right size for the story: paring down without messing up,

by Judy Fort Brenneman

Some thoughts on language

FOG & Flesch test formulas

References and contact information

Thank You



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