



HOMEWOOD IZAAK WALTON PRESERVE

Dedicated to Service in Conservation

To our members and friends:

April 2021 Newsletter

WATER MAIN CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

This is our 7th update on the Village of Homewood's waterline project, which will bring a continued source of Lake Michigan water to Homewood and neighboring communities. Our initial 4 newsletters described the Village's plans and our last 3, including this edition, describe actual work on the project. Work began in January with the establishment of an equipment staging area north of the lift station and this included a temporary expanded limestone road and bridge connecting the staging area with the abandoned railroad line. Next came the clearing of trees and brush up and down the RR line. Most trees within 20 feet of both sides of the center line were removed so that large construction equipment could maneuver during construction. At the end of the tree-removal phase, spring was still weeks away, trees were in their winter dormancy, and the view was not pretty.

Next came the staging of equipment and supplies followed by excavation and pipe installation beginning just west of the Ridge Road and construction proceeded westward. Daily progress has varied due mostly to weather conditions, but all-in-all progress has been very good thanks to a mostly-dry spring. On one very productive day, we understand 600 feet of pipe was laid. Pipe has already been laid under both principal trails connecting the main parking lot with the sand-pit lakes. In fact, pipe has been laid well to the west of the baseball fields. This portion of the project involves the trenching method whereby one excavator digs the trench and lowers the pipe, while a second excavator follows and refills the trench with dirt. Westward trenching will continue down the RR line to a point about 300 yards east of our western entrance on Ashland Ave. The Village of Homewood is confident the waterline will be extended to that point by the end of May and perhaps earlier. Once the pipeline reaches this point, it will turn sharply west and connect with the large village water tank adjacent to our western entrance. Waterline installation for this final section will be via an underground horizontal method (jack-boring), which will cause only minimal disruption to our ancient prairie.

Parts of the railroad line have long been part of our trail system and these parts will be restored as trails. But for the moment, the surface is very uneven due to excavation. Final smoothing of the trails will have to wait until the ground settles over the pipe, which was laid about 8 feet down. In the meantime, these trails, while passable, are not at all smooth and so, you should hike at your own risk. We continue to ask for your patience and understanding as we tolerate the disruption of this project. The best practice for all involved is to avoid walking anywhere near an area where crews are actively working with their heavy machinery. We'll indicate closed trails as best we can with signs. We reiterate that close to 95% of the trees and vegetation that were cut down were undesirable or invasive species. As soon as we can, certainly by this fall, we'll start a replanting effort with native trees and shrubs. The Village of Homewood recently informed us of a planned gift of 300 native hardwood trees for which we are thankful. Specific species to be planted will be chosen by our Conservation Committee and they will consider many factors including soil type and moisture conditions. We believe that when all is said and done, we'll eventually have an improved Preserve.

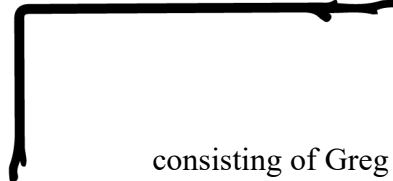
SPRING CONTROLLED BURNS

We've been active with controlled burns this spring, which has been fostered by our generally dry conditions (we're considered Abnormally Dry per the US Drought Monitor). Our first priority was to burn the western third of the oak woodland, which we have been trying to accomplish without success for the past two years. Finally on Monday March 22nd, a crew

1100 Ridge Road • Homewood, IL 60430



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consisting of Greg Busler, Clayton Wassilak, Mark Becker and John Brinkman led by Dave Zaber got this accomplished. Now a month later one can clearly observe that the 2-4' high growth of saplings in the woodland were killed by the heat of the fire.

We conduct these burns to keep the invasive plant species from taking over and crowding out the native prairie plants. The burning process also puts nutrients back into the soil, especially as we have rain and snow over the winter months. If we did not do these burns periodically, a thick mat of dead vegetation would accumulate preventing much needed precipitation and sunlight from reaching the new growth in the Spring. We typically conduct our Spring burns from late March through early-May, before the vegetation begins growing again. The surviving native vegetation then fully benefits from the rain and sun of the Spring Season.

A second area burned successfully this spring was along the southern shore of the prairie lakes just west of the lift station. Last fall we cleared invasive Eurasian Alder trees and also cut back vegetation about 4-10' deep that was invading the prairie from the south for about 200 yards. We piled up the branches and debris and waited until now to allow them time to dry out over the winter. Once again, Dave Zaber led crews on April 2 and April 7 consisting of Mark Becker, Greg Busler, Thaddeus Knaus, Dan Galen, Clayton Wassilak, and John Brinkman to accomplish the task. We have posted some colorful action photos of the burn on our website. (Click on More Info, then Recent Event Pics) Due to the pandemic, we have not asked scouts and other youth groups to help out as we normally would. Hopefully we can soon return to that practice. Our sincere thanks to all volunteers helping with this work.


TRASH BRIGADE FORMED

In case you were wondering, we can report that the spirit of voluntarism is alive and well in our Izaak Walton community. In our last newsletter, we asked for volunteers to join the Trash Brigade to pick up trash around the entire perimeter of the Preserve for the rest of the year before winter. We are pleased to report that 15 individuals have joined the Brigade, one more than we needed so one of them will be a roving trash collector on the trails. Upon receiving their equipment, some of them went to work immediately! Our heartfelt thanks goes to Shawn Bader, Carl and Sue Wahlstrom, Liz Tavitas, Harold and Lucy Kocal, Mitch and Jody Burks, Janet Hernandez, Pearl McReynolds, Gigi Sappenfield, Peter Stapleton, Ken Stern, Ingrid Krizan, and Joy Heine. Fourteen of them have been assigned to specific areas around the perimeter of the Preserve to pick up trash periodically with one of them assigned to the trail system in general. As a result of their efforts, we can expect that trash will be hard to spot around the Preserve for the rest of this year. We will organize this effort every year going forward and recruit replacements as necessary.

GARDENING VOLUNTEERS WANTED

An organized gardening effort has begun at the Preserve in April. Only Illinois Native plants are used in the gardens, so if you are interested in finding out more about the plants that support pollinators, birds and wildlife, this would be a great opportunity. Or if you have gardening knowledge and experience, we are thrilled to have your help.

Every Tuesday, weather permitting, Board member Judy Johnson will be gardening at 10:00 AM on Tuesdays concentrating on the Old Flagpole Garden (across the lawn from the Senior Building). Judy can be contacted at johnson@homewoodizaakwalton.com or 312-307-1808.



Every Wednesday, Carolyn Bury will be gardening at 9:00 AM concentrating on the New Flagpole Garden (near the sidewalk/bathrooms of Senior Building). Carolyn can be contacted at bury@homewoodizaakwalton.com or 708-789-0826.

Both of the above gardens are located at the end of the driveway off of Ridge Rd near the Senior Building. If you want to help:-

- follow COVID safety guidelines with distancing (and masks if needed)
- bring your gardening tools and gloves.
- dress safely (protected from sun; sturdy shoes; bug spray, etc.)

Other times can be scheduled if either of the above days are not do-able for you. Because the weather is so unpredictable, feel free to contact us regarding cancellations.

INVASIVE PLANT—LESSER CELANDINE

In the spring of 2020, Jeff Maharry brought to our attention an outbreak of this non-native invasive plant in the dunes area that flowers in the spring and then dies before summer. The seeds spread widely and within a few years these plants can cover an area like a carpet. So last spring Jeff offered to assist in applying herbicide to arrest this development. With assistance from Greg Busler and John Brinkman, all visible plants were killed with herbicide before the end of April. Fast forward to this spring and again we noticed these plants returning but thankfully far fewer of them. This time Jeff took on the responsibility on his own to apply herbicide on all of them which he completed on April 20. We thank Jeff for his work and diligence at quickly arresting and controlling the outbreak of invasive Lesser Celandine

OFFICE HOURS HONEY, AND MILKWEED SEED PACKETS

We will now staff the office on Saturday mornings from 9-noon until mid-November. We have plenty of milkweed seed packets available **free of charge** and an ample supply of Preserve honey for sale for \$12 per 12 oz jar.

PLEASE CLEAN UP AFTER YOUR DOGS !

Every spring we notice an accumulation of dog poop from our canine friends leftover from the winter or as a result of spring walks due to better weather. Our ground rules require that our members clean up after their dogs and membership is required to walk dogs in the Preserve. So once again please clean up after your dogs and also please refrain from throwing the poop off the trails into nearby areas. That is also not good for our native landscape. We will redouble our efforts to provide poop clean up bags at our entrances. Thank you for your cooperation.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Our membership year ended on 3-31-21 so we encourage all members to be renew soon. Last year a larger volume of memberships were purchased on line via our website (www.homewoodizaakwalton.com), likely, to some extent, due to the pandemic (causing record Preserve membership). We encourage you to renew on line soon or stop by the office on Saturday mornings 9-noon. Thanks for your cooperation!

*Your President,
John Brinkman*




**ENJOY SPRING !
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WE WILL GET
THROUGH THIS TOGETHER !**

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WATER MAIN CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

We've written extensively about this project in previous newsletters which can easily be found on our website; we'll continue to provide monthly updates. The general contractor for the project, Spiess Construction, has made significant progress in the last month. (See the November/December Newsletter



for a map of the route). The path (roughly 40 feet wide) was completely cleared of trees and vegetation by Homer Tree Service at the end of March. Trench digging and pipe laying began in early April. For those of you for whom we have email addresses, we have been sending out periodic notices of planned trail closings and closures of the Ashland avenue entrance. As of this writing, approximately half of the pipeline has been installed between the Ridge road overpass and the point at which the pipeline turns west into the prairie. (Recall that the pipeline must traverse about 200 yards of prairie on the western side of the Preserve utilizing horizontal jack boring)) Work is progressing well due to favorable weather. The 3 pits necessary to accomplish the jack boring underneath the prairie will be dug before the end of April. With this degree of progress taking place, there is potential for completion of the pipeline installation from the Ridge Road overpass all the way to its western terminus at the water tank by around the end of May. This is quicker than anyone had thought possible.

We have been calling the cleared area along the old RR line the *path of destruction*. We continue to ask for your patience and understanding as we tolerate the disruption of this project. The best practice for all involved is to avoid walking anywhere near an area where crews are actively working with their heavy machinery. We will indicate closed trails as best we can with signs. We reiterate that close to 95% of what was cut down were undesirable or invasive species. As soon as we can, certainly by this fall, we'll start a replanting effort with native trees and shrubs. The Village of Homewood recently informed us of a planned gift of 300 native oak and hawthorn trees for which we are thankful. Specific species to be planted will be chosen by our Conservation Committee and they will consider many factors including soil type and moisture conditions. We believe that when all is said and done, we'll eventually have an improved Preserve.

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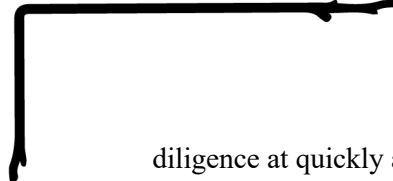
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