



## **Open Space 2025 Annual Report**

Libertyville Township Open Space District owns over 1,500 acres of Open Space. The Township has 4 full-time employees who are responsible for all maintenance and restoration efforts. In 2025, the Township applied 3,424.32 gallons of herbicide, spread 581.55 lbs. of native seed & 500 lbs. of cover crop, collected 50 lbs. of native seed, conducted prescribed burns on 314 acres, rough-cut mowed 35.3 acres, mowed 11.9 miles of trail edge/burn breaks, cleared 6.5 acres of invasives, burned 72 brush piles, 1,064 plugs were planted, held 8 volunteer workdays, and 41 individuals volunteered.

### **Special Projects**

#### **Donnelley Prairies & Oaks Mitigation Bank Construction Project**

The Donnelley Prairies and Oaks Wetland Mitigation Bank has now moved to management and maintenance phase. Hey & Associates, Inc. has been monitoring the wildlife, hydrology and vegetation performance standards of the bank. HGS, LLC dba RES Environmental Operating Company, LLC is responsible for the construction and maintenance until the closeout of the bank. The project included the realignment of the trail, 17 water control berms, the disablement of 2.3 miles of drain tile, the installation of erosion control measures, and planting of native seed and plugs. All available first round of wetland mitigation credits have been sold which covered the cost of the construction of the bank and the realignment of the trail. Once the wetland has met the required performance standards, the Township will request the USACE release the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of credits.

#### **Rt. 45 Parcel Restoration Project**

Restoration efforts have started with the clearing of 6.5 acres of invasive species and overgrown nursery stock. The Township applied for a Lake County Stormwater Management Commission Watershed Management Board Grant (WMB). If awarded, the funds will be used to further the restoration efforts: 12 acres of clearing, spreading of native seed and planting live plants.

#### **Casey Trail Improvement Project**

The Township engaged Pearson Brown and Associates for engineering to resurface the Casey Trail from Oak Openings to Liberty Prairie. The project will address the current erosion, and washout issues the trail experiences during rain events. The project has received approval from the Illinois Nature Preserve Commission. The project went out to bid August 2025 but only received one bid. The project will be re-bid Spring 2026.

#### **Eagle Scout Project**

In 2025, the Township served as a beneficiary for 1 Eagle Scout Project. The project involved constructing and installing 5 wood duck boxes and an information panel at the Atkinson Road parcel.

#### **Plant and Wildlife Monitoring**

The Open Space staff and volunteers monitor Threatened and Endangered plant species as well as wildlife on Township property. The plants monitored include Gentian, Grass-of-Parnassus, and Slender Bog Arrowgrass. The Township maintains 36 bluebird boxes, 10 hen houses, 5 kestrel nest boxes, and 5 wood duck boxes. The kestrel boxes are located within the plant and aminol section.

Volunteers and staff have observed Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, House Wrens, Bobolinks, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Dunlin, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Mallard, Ducks, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Willet, Wood Thrush, Lesser Yellowlegs, Greater Yellowlegs, and Wilson's Phalarope. Additionally, staff from the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum of the Chicago Academy of Sciences monitor snake populations. The Smooth Green Snake is considered threatened in Illinois with very few populations in Lake County. It is one of the species monitored.

### **Volunteer Herbicide Class for Open Space Volunteers**

On January 25, 2025, Libertyville Township and Dave Eubanks from Eubanks Environmental partnered to provide an in-person herbicide training class to 8 volunteers interested in obtaining a volunteer herbicide license. The license allows open space volunteers to participate in herbicide activities under the supervision of Township staff and Dave Eubanks.

### **Volunteer Workdays**

Most of the volunteer workdays are held the second Saturday of each month from 9:00 to Noon and are typically held at Oak Openings, Liberty Prairie, or Donnelley Oaks and Prairies. In 2025, the Township held 8 volunteer workdays which included 41 individual volunteers. Four workdays were canceled due to weather conditions. In addition, the Township held on May 16<sup>th</sup> a volunteer workday for a local company.

### **Conservation Easement Data**

In 2010, Libertyville Township began documenting baselines and conducting annual monitoring for the conservation easements it holds on 6 privately owned properties. This provides an opportunity for the Township to partner with the landowners to ensure the integrity of each conservation easement is maintained. In 2025, the Township completed the following monitoring activities:

- Bleck Easement – The annual easement monitoring was conducted on October 3, 2025.
- Bott Easement – Completed annual easement monitoring on October 3, 2025.
- Brennan Easement – Completed annual easement monitoring on November 7, 2025.
- Getz Easement – This easement covers three separate properties. Separate baselines have been created for each property. In 2016, all 3 properties were purchased by a single owner.
  - Completed annual easement monitoring for Getz 1 on October 14, 2025.
  - Completed annual easement monitoring for Getz 2 on October 14, 2025.
  - Completed annual easement monitoring for Getz 3 on October 14, 2025.
- Maxey Easement – Completed annual easement monitoring on October 3, 2025.
- Pritzker – Completed annual easement monitoring on October 14, 2025.

On August 4, 2025, Openlands conducted their annual monitoring of the easements they hold on Township property.

### **Site Specific Activities**

In 2025, the Libertyville Township Open Space District applied 3,424.32 gallons of herbicide, collected 50 lbs. of native seed, spread approximately 581.55 lbs. of native seed & 500 lbs of cover crop, cleared 6.5 acres of invasive species, burned 72 brush piles, mowed 35.5 acres, planted 1,064 plugs, and conducted prescribed burns on 314 acres. These numbers will fluctuate based on each property's needs over time.

### **Atkinson**

- 151.75 gallons of herbicide are applied to invasive species.
- Cleaned storm grate along the berm.
- Cleared .43 acres.
- Conducted property inspections and monitored encroachments: January, March, July, September, and November.
- Installed and/or repaired signage as needed.

- Mowed 1.3 acres.
- Monitored henhouses.
- Monitored trail following rain events for potential drainage issues.
- Provided 236 linear feet of trail renovations.
- Removal of fallen and dead branches over trail.
- Removed trash.
- Rolled trails as needed.
- Repaired trail as needed.

### **Butterfield/Canterbury**

- 951.5 gallons of herbicide applied to invasive species.
- Burned 47 brush piles.
- Cleared 2.43 acres
- Conducted prescribed burn on 117.3 acres.
- Conducted property inspections and monitored encroachments: January, March, July and September.
- Cut fallen tree.
- Installed signage as needed.
- Monitored bluebird boxes.
- Monitored trail following rain events for potential drainage issues.
- Mowed 18.5 acres.
- Mowed .7 miles of trail edge/burn breaks.
- Provided 593 linear feet of trail renovations.
- Relocated bluebird boxes.
- Removal of fallen and dead branches over trail.
- Removed graffiti.
- Removed Seavey ditch log jam.
- Removed trash.
- Removed tree cages.
- Repaired memorial stone.
- Repaired & rolled sections of trail as needed.
- Spread 3.5lbs of native seed.
- Trail repairs as needed.

### **Casey North/Oak Openings & Donnelley Prairies & Oaks**

- 526.5 gallons of herbicide applied to invasive species.
- Burned 2 brush piles.
- Collected 28.5 lbs. of seed.
- Conducted property inspections and monitored encroachments: February, April, June, August and October.
- Conducted a prescribed burn on 101.32 acres.
- Continued ongoing monitoring and maintenance of 319 grant: biannual inspections, mowing, and herbicide applications as needed.
- Installed signage as needed.
- Maintenance and repairs to kiosk as needed.
- Monitored ice in parking lot & spread stone for traction.
- Monitored Oak Openings Bluebird Trail.
- Monitored trail following rain events for potential drainage issues.

- Mowed 2.16 acres.
- Mowed 3.1 miles of trail edge/burn breaks.
- Porta-potty delivered & removed.
- Removal of fallen and dead branches over trail.
- Replaced and repaired fencing as needed.
- Repaired sections of trail and rolled entire trail.
- Spread 56 lbs. of native seed and 50 lbs. of cover crop.
- Five volunteer workdays were held at Oak Openings: 4/12 & 10/11. Two volunteer days held at Donnelley Prairies and Oaks: 6/14 & 7/12. Activities included applying herbicide, collecting seed, and removing invasive species.

#### **Casey South/Liberty Prairie & Donnelley Oaks & Prairies**

- 463.75 gallons of herbicide applied to invasive species.
- Assisted with snake monitoring
- Burned 4 brush piles.
- Cleared .81 acres.
- Collected 12.5 lbs. of native seed.
- Conducted a prescribed burn on 85.78 acres.
- Conducted property inspections and monitored encroachments: February, April, June, August, & October.
- Installed signage as needed.
- Monitored trail following rain events for potential drainage issues.
- Mowed 2.71 acres.
- Mowed 3.5 miles of trail edge/burn breaks.
- Planted 1,064 plugs.
- Sowed 65 lbs. of native seed and 50 lbs. of cover crop.
- Delivered and removed porta-potty.
- Repaired sections of trail and rolled entire trail.
- Removal of fallen and dead branches over trail.
- Two volunteer workdays were held at Liberty Prairie: 2/8 & 3/8. Two volunteer workdays were held at Donnelley Prairies and Oaks: 4/12 & 7/12. Activities included applying herbicide, collecting 3lbs. of seed, and removing invasive species.

#### **Kildare**

- 231 gallons of herbicide applied to invasive species.
- Burned 3 brush piles.
- Conducted property inspections and monitored encroachment: February, April, June, August, & October.
- Installed & reinstalled bench.
- Installed doggie bag dispenser.
- Installed garbage can.
- Installed signage as needed.
- Monitored drainage.
- Mowed 8.77 acres.
- Mowed .6 miles of trail and burn breaks.
- Planted 1 oak tree.
- Removed trash.
- Replaced property markers as needed.

### **Lindholm Park**

- 113.41 gallons of herbicide applied to invasive species.
- Conducted ball field maintenance.
- Conducted playground equipment inspection.
- Conducted prescribed burn on .22 acres.
- Conducted property inspections & monitored encroachments: February, March, July, September, and November.
- Coordinated, managed, and awarded ballfield permits.
- Installed signage as needed.
- Monitored and maintained solar gate.
- Mow as needed.
- Quarterly maintenance of solar parking lot gate.
- Removed fallen and/or dead branches over trail.
- Repaired and replaced fencing as needed.

### **Milwaukee Road**

- 41.1 gallons of herbicide applied to invasive species and sidewalks.
- Conducted property inspections & monitored encroachments: January, February, March, April, June, July, August, October, & November.
- Installed firebreak as needed.
- Installed signage as needed.
- Monitored drainage at Edigi Lane.
- Mowed .4 miles of burn breaks.

### **Old School**

- 66.5 gallons of herbicide applied to invasive species.
- Burned 3 brush piles
- Cleared .83 acres
- Conducted prescribed burn on 1.27 acres.
- Conducted property inspections and monitored encroachments: January, March, July, September, and November
- Mowed .4 miles of burn breaks.
- Replaced property markers as needed.

### **River Road**

- 181 gallons of herbicide applied to invasive species.
- Burned 7 brush piles.
- Cleared .28 acres.
- Collected 5.5 lbs. of native seed.
- Conducted maintenance and rolled trails as needed.
- Conducted prescribed burn on 6.41 acres.
- Conducted property inspections: February, April, June, August, and November. October,
- Installed burn breaks.
- Installed signage and property markers as needed.
- Monitored trail following rain events for potential drainage issues.
- Mowed .3 miles trail edges/burn breaks.
- Removal of fallen and/or dead branches over trail.
- Spread 2.25 lbs. of native seed.

- Abandonment of well and disturbed area restored.

#### **Rt. 45**

- 329 gallons of herbicide applied to invasive species.
- Burned 7 brush piles.
- Cleared .86 acres.
- Conducted property inspections and monitored encroachments: January, February, March, April, June, July, August, September, and November.
- Installed signage and property markers as needed.
- Mowed and widened foot paths.
- Mowed .1 miles of burn break.
- Removed garbage and debris.
- Spread 403 lbs. of native seed and 400 lbs. of cover crop.

#### **Rt. 137**

- 127 gallons of herbicide applied to invasive species.
- Conducted boardwalk inspection.
- Conducted a prescribed burn on 1.82 acres.
- Conducted maintenance and rolled trails as needed.
- Conducted property inspections and monitored encroachments: February, April, June, August, and November.
- Continued clearing activities.
- Installed signage and property markers as needed.
- Maintenance and repairs to kiosk as needed.
- Monitored trail following rain events for potential drainage issues.
- Mowed 1.25 acres.
- Mowed .9 miles of trail edge/burn breaks.
- Removal of fallen and/or branches over trail.
- Removed garbage and debris.

#### **St. Mary's**

- 438 gallons of herbicide applied to invasive species.
- Cleared 1.19 acres.
- Conducted prescribed burn on 30.43 acres.
- Conducted property inspections and monitored encroachments: February, March, July, September, & November.
- Installed signage as needed.
- Monitored trail following rain events for potential drainage issues.
- Mowed .78 acres.
- Mowed 1.9 miles of trail edge/burn breaks.
- Removal of fallen and/or dead branches over trail.
- Repaired and replaced fencing as needed.
- Spread 41lbs. of native seed.

#### **Township Grounds**

- 3.5 gallons of herbicide applied to invasive species.
- Hauled & spread mulch on landscape beds.
- Snow removal.

## **Winchester Rd/Libertyville Township Soccer Complex (LTSC)**

- Conducted property inspections and monitored encroachments: February, April, July, August, September, and October.
- Installed signage as needed.
- Monitored beaver activity.
- Removed downed trees and buckthorn.

### **Seasonal Maintenance Activities**

#### **Winter:**

- Clearing of buckthorn and other invasive trees.
- Burning of brush piles.
- Monthly volunteer workdays.
- Assist Road District in weather-related events as needed.
- Open Space employees assist with the maintenance of Township grounds.
- Assist with food pantry activities as needed.

#### **Spring:**

- Herbiciding invasive plants.
- Planting native species.
- Trail maintenance and repairs.
- Burning is done on a rotating basis as site and weather conditions allow. Sites are prioritized and are burned in accordance with the prescribed burn management plan.
- Clean and inspect water control structures for wetlands. The water control structure is closed for the spring.
- Weekly activities: mowing, weed whacking, raking of baseball diamonds.
- Monthly volunteer workdays.
- Open Space employees assist with the maintenance of Township grounds.
- Assist Road District in weather-related events as needed.
- Assist with food pantry activities as needed.

#### **Summer:**

- Grading of dirt along trail edges.
- Herbiciding invasive plants.
- Trail maintenance and repairs.
- Weekly activities: mowing, weed whacking, raking of baseball diamonds.
- Monthly volunteer workdays.
- Open Space employees assist with the maintenance of Township grounds.
- Assist with food pantry activities as needed.

#### **Fall:**

- Seed collection.
- Planting native species.
- Herbiciding invasive plants.
- Trail maintenance and repairs.
- Clean and inspect water control structures for wetlands – open for fall.
- Burning is done on a rotating basis as site and weather conditions allow. Sites are prioritized and are burned in accordance with the prescribed burn management plan.
- Weekly activities: mowing, weed whacking, raking of baseball diamonds.

- Monthly volunteer workdays.
- Open Space employees assist with the maintenance of Township grounds.
- Assist with food pantry activities as needed.

### **Public Communication and Outreach**

K. O'Connor served on the ComEd Green Region Advisory Grant Committee.

J. Happ & K. O'Connor coordinated Libertyville Township's Open Space Volunteers Appreciation Luncheon – January 25, 2025

K. O'Connor attended Annual Libertyville Township Soccer Complex Meeting – January 28, 2025

J. Happ attended the North Branch Watershed Workgroup General Meeting – February 19 and August 13, 2025

K. O'Connor attended Eagle Scout Ceremonies for projects where the Township was the beneficiary – March 1 & May 1, 2025

J. Happ attended the Des Plaines River Watershed Workgroup General Meeting – August 21, 2025

K. O'Connor met with Senator Edly Allen regarding traffic concerns on Casey Road – March 30 and September 23, 2025

K. O'Connor provided comment to Executive Committee on HB1367 – May 15, 2025

J. Happ & K. O'Connor met on site with representatives from Lake County Stormwater Management Commission for 319 grant project inspection - June 5, 2025

K. O'Connor and J. Happ met with representatives from MABAS Divisions 4 & 5 to discuss wildfire training opportunities on the Township's open space parcels – October 29, 2025

K. O'Connor attended Lake County Watershed Management Board Annual Meeting – December 10, 2025

### **Professional Development**

J. Happ, M. Cardenas, B. Renz, and K. Slaybaugh successfully completed the Forestry Webinars – January 15, February 12, February 29, March 12, April 9, May 21, July 20, July 30 and August 26, 2025

J. Happ successfully passed the Certification Park & Recreation Professional (CPRP) test – January 31, 2025

J. Happ, M. Cardenas, B. Renz, and K. Slaybaugh attended the Illinois Association of Conservation Districts Conference – February 20 & 21, 2025

J. Happ, M. Cardenas, B. Renz, K. Slaybaugh and K. O'Connor successfully completed the CPR AED training – July 10, 2025

J. Happ, M. Cardenas, B. Renz, and K. Slaybaugh successfully completed the Smart Salting Webinar – October 2, 2025