

Sheehan Park Woodland Restoration

Phase 1: Invasive Shrub Removal

City of Sun Prairie, Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department
2021 Community Partners Program Grant – Dane County Environmental Council

Project Summary:

In September 2021, the City of Sun Prairie's Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department (PRF) received an award of \$1,000 from the Dane County Environmental Council (DEC) to supplement its invasive shrub removal efforts at Sheehan Park in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. Sheehan Park is Sun Prairie's largest (143 acres) and most utilized park and it is a hotspot for summer and winter recreation activities for our residents as well as several of our neighboring communities. Although this park is highly utilized, the city has not had the resources to implement invasive species control measures. Invasive shrub species (e.g. buckthorn and exotic honeysuckle) have quickly taken over Sheehan Park's natural areas, which has limited access to park users and has made it very difficult for native plants to survive and thrive.

This project is a part of a multi-phased approach to restore the health and function back to a large urban woodland located in the heart of Sun Prairie. We focused our invasive shrub removal efforts along the paved bike path that bisects the park. This will allow increased access into the interior portions of forested areas and make it easier to manage invasive plants in subsequent seasons.

This project was funded by a new budget initiative authorized by our Common Council (\$4,000) and enhanced by funds from the Dane County Environmental Council (\$1,000). We hired RES to do the shrub removal and cut stump herbicide application and were able to stretch the funds more by having our parks crew chip the brush as it was cut. The contractors were able to cover approximately 2 [heavily infested] acres and create a buffer of approximately 50 feet along approximately 1,400 feet of multiuse asphalt paths. This will help us access interior locations of the woodland for additional herbaceous and woody invasive species removal.

A part of the DEC Community Partners Program, we also worked with the Sun Prairie Parks Friends group on a volunteer event on Saturday, May 14 to pull garlic mustard and dame's rocket in Sheehan Park. We had 9 people participate for a total of 27 volunteer hours where we pulled 10 – 60 gallon sized bags of garlic mustard and dame's rocket.

We hope to continue this work in the future, by incrementally removing more invasive shrubs in the winter and then following up with removing herbaceous invasive plants during the growing season. Once we have removed a significant amount of invasive herbaceous groundcover, we plan to start enhancement plantings of native woodland plants in these areas to help recolonize the area and compete with the invasives.

We hope that this project will jump start a long-range commitment from the community to invest in invasive species management within Sun Prairie's park system.

Buckthorn/Honeysuckle removal:



Garlic Mustard/Dame's Rocket Volunteer Event:

