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Clearing project to improve migratory bird habitat ramps up, Dec. 1, at Fabyan

GENEVA, IL — A multiyear project to clear invasive trees and brush from the east side of Fabyan Forest Preserve will get a big boost this winter, thanks in large part to funding from a state grant.

Contractors will begin clearing roughly 134 acres north of the Fabyan Windmill in Geneva, beginning Dec. 1. The clearing work is expected to last through the winter. Non-native, invasive trees and brush such as Black Locust, Honeysuckle and Buckthorn will be removed from the project area. Native Sycamores will remain.

By clearing the mid- and understory of invasive species, it will leave room for staff to plant 300-500 native shrubs, including Viburnums, Elderberry, American Hazelnut and other shrubs, next spring.

“We’re continuing the work that dedicated volunteers began here,” said Patrick Chess, interim director of natural resource management for the Forest Preserve District of Kane County. “For years, stewards have led brush-clearing events at this site. With these grant funds, we can complete this work on a much-larger scale. Ultimately, by removing these invasives and replacing the mid-story with native shrubs, it’ll dramatically improve habitat and foraging for native wildlife and migratory birds,” he said.



The Forest Preserve District of Kane County will embark on a non-native tree and brush clearing project, Dec. 1. The work, expected to last throughout the winter months, will make way for the District to plant hundreds of native shrubs, next spring. Native shrubs will improve habitat and benefit migratory birds at the Geneva forest preserve.

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Chess added that while the area north of the windmill may look rough over the winter, it'll be much improved both visually and as wildlife habitat, come spring, once the new shrubs are planted.

The Forest Preserve District of Kane County first proposed the project to the Illinois Legislature in 2019. The proposal included removal of invasive woody brush from 170 acres of woodland, chemical follow-up treatments to prevent regrowth, and removal of several volunteer-created brush piles scattered across Fabyan Forest Preserve.

The project was approved in June 2019, but required issuance of an official Notice of State Award before work could begin. Thanks to prompting by State Sen. Karina Villa (IL Senate 25) and an assist by State Rep. Maura Hirschauer (IL House 49), the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) issued the official notice in August 2022. The \$335,000 grant will be awarded upon completion of the project.

“We’re grateful to everyone who’s helped make this project happen, from the volunteers who spent time clearing invasive brush, to our staff who work tirelessly to improve Kane County’s open spaces, to the state legislators who truly advocated on our behalf. Natural resource improvements are a large part of what we do here. Without so many working to make this happen, this project would have taken years to complete,” Chess said.

Fabyan Forest Preserve is located at 1500 Crissey Ave. (IL Route 25), Geneva.

For more information on the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, visit <http://www.kaneforest.com> or find the District on social media; search @forestpreserve.

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