WINNEBAGO COUNTY
SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
4833 OWEN CENTER ROAD • ROCKFORD, IL 61101-6007 • (815) 965-2392
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June 10, 2004

Ed Anderson
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Dearborn Hall, 205 E Seminary St
Mt Carroll, IL 61053

Dear Ed:

I've enclosed the news release, technical report, copies of receipts, photo documentation, and the payment request form for **grant # 04-045W** for the Winnebago County Soil & Water Conservation District. By working with vendors and other organizations we were able to reduce project costs and came in under budget. I asked Kathy Barker if I should ask for the entire reimbursement amount even if we came in substantially under budget and I was told that that would be acceptable. As I mentioned to her, the District will use the money to expand the project and put on additional educational events.

I hope the technical report meets your requirements, because it has been sometime since I've had to write one. The photos are labeled in the upper right corner and are as follows:

1. A before picture of the butterfly garden project site.
2. A post planting picture of the butterfly garden project site.
3. A photo of one of the two rain gardens.
4. A photo of the moist soil area and the bird feeder.
5. A photo of the tree & shrub planting area.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please feel free to give me a call (815-965-2392 x 3) and I would be happy to help.

Sincerely,

Brian Russart

Brian Russart
Winnebago County Conservationist
Winnebago County SWCD

Native Landscaping for Non-game Wildlife
Winnebago County SWCD
Grant # 04-045W

Introduction

Urban Sprawl is having a significant impact on the quality of wildlife habitat in Winnebago County, Illinois. Most new development is planted to the traditional turf grass lawn with non-native shrubs and herbaceous plants. All of which typically require additional fertilizer, water, pesticides, and labor to maintain health and vigor. The direct affects of this planting style include reduced food value because wildlife have not evolved with the typical exotic species that are planted, leading to unusable soft mast, nectar, hard mast, or herbaceous food materials. Another direct affect from a manicured lawn is the lack of overall structure whether it is hard structure (cavities, rock piles, brush piles) or the different vegetative/canopy levels provided by herbaceous plants, shrubs, and trees. Reduced food sources and poor cover not only affect breeding wildlife populations but migratory and/or wintering species as well.

Indirect affects of urban sprawl would include the lowering of ground water levels, pollution of ground water and nearby water bodies through run-off and infiltration, increased run-off rates leading to increased stream bank instability, proliferation of exotic species, creation of edge habitat and greater susceptibility to predators and brood parasites, and increase fuel and labor inputs which leads to increased air pollution

If designed and managed properly, urban areas can provide greatly improved habitat for local wildlife as well as migratory species. By landscaping with native, regional plant species urban landowners can provide a variety of food sources, cover types and at the same time reduce pesticide and fertilizer inputs. The project goal is to educate the general public on wildlife landscaping through handouts, workshops, and a public demonstration site.

Materials & Methods

The Winnebago County SWCD's property at 4833 Owen Center Road, in Rockford was chosen for the demonstration site because it is a public agency that services both urban, suburban, and rural clientele. Facilities are available to indoor and outdoor youth and adult education. The demonstration site is broken into two separate areas. The butterfly garden, moist soil area, water source, and rain gardens will be located along the main walkway entering the building. The tree and shrub planting is located at the East edge of the property located adjacent to an existing prairie planting and fencerow.

Project work will begin with spraying the existing sod adjacent to the front walkway with round-up herbicide. After the application, filter fabric will be staked down to provide the foundation for the walking

educational workshops and public viewings. Eight hundred of the plants were plugs and 50 where larger transplants from an existing butterfly garden. The plants have been watered daily to reduce stress and encourage establishment.

Shallow excavations (5' x 5' x 6" deep) were made adjacent to both down spouts and the wetland plants were planted in these areas. A third excavation (5' x 3' x 4" deep) was made in the center of the butterfly garden. This excavation was lined with plastic and filled with sand to provide a moist soil area for butterflies. A bird bath/water source was installed as well as a squirrel proof bird feeder.

The native landscaping workshop and the adult education courses were attended by several hundred individuals. A number of native landscaping projects have begun based on the material that was distributed and the presentations that were provided during the training sessions. Several butterfly gardens were installed at local schools and Burpee Museum is working on designing a native landscaping layout for their property, which will be used for youth education.

Discussion and Summary

This project is already attracting additional species of wildlife (birds & insects) to the Winnebago SWCD's property. The plants and trees are establishing well and the wildlife is already using the structural habitat. The educational materials and presentations have been very well received and numerous projects based on the concept of native landscaping have begun. Planning for educational workshops for this fall and next spring has already begun. The Winnebago SWCD firmly believes that the educational materials and the demonstration sites have been and will continue to be excellent tools to restore wildlife habitat, reduce exotic specie use, and promote sound natural resource conservation in Winnebago County.