

# Wildlife Preservation Fund Grant #11-010W – Final Report

“Invasive species education through control demonstration area and interpretive trail at Giant City State Park”

Friends of Giant City  
P.O. Box 143  
Makanda, IL 62958

Grant #11-010W  
January 24, 2011 – December 31, 2011

**Grantee Representative** – Carolyn Ferdinand (totem@frontier.com or 618-457-7616)

## **Project Objectives –**

1. Continue establishing a demonstration area adjacent to the Giant City Visitor Center.
2. Design and install an interpretative trail through demonstration area and adjoining unmanaged, heavily invaded area.
3. Conduct educational event that utilizes demonstration area and trail and highlights benefits of controlling invasive species.
4. Raise awareness in Southern Illinois, and, in particular, Giant City SP patrons, about the threat of invasive species and the positive changes our lands can see through the implementation of management practices such as invasive species control.

## **Project Description –**

This project, a collaborative effort between the Friends of Giant City, IDNR, and River to River CWMA, further established the invasive plant demonstration area adjacent to the GCSP Visitor Center and laid out and installed an ¼ mile interpretive trail with 8 sturdy bridges and 3 large interpretive signs. In addition, 14 small ‘species identification’ signs were also purchased, but we are waiting until leaf-out in spring to install these to verify species identification.

## **Summary of Project Accomplishments**

### *Introduction*

The demonstration area established next to the Giant City Visitor Center was intended to show the value of invasive plant control efforts and to contrast managed and unmanaged forests. The use of an interpretive trail enhances the utility of the demonstration area and creates self-guided educational

opportunities. The Friends of Giant City obtained a WPF grant to install this trail and to further establish the demonstration area through additional control efforts.

### *Materials and Methods*

The Friends Group partnered with the River to River CWMA to conduct the invasive plant control efforts and conduct the initial design of the trail. CWMA interns Jordan Kiefer and Lindsay Shupert conducted three days of control efforts in July 2011 and designed the ¼ mile trail also in July. The interns then weed whipped, raked, and laid mulch on the trail and created a draft list of signs to use.

Fall weather and heavy rains aided in the discovery of a need for small wooden bridges and some slight rerouting of the trail. In September 2011, a local craftsman was contracted to create these bridges and to install the posts for the signs. In December 2011, three interpretative and 14 identification signs were purchased from a local graphic design company and Friends members assisted the local craftsman in installing the three large interpretative signs. The additional 14 smaller identification signs are not installed yet. We did not want to install these identification signs until leaf-out to make sure they are placed adjacent to the correct species.

The mulch and some of the lumber was donated by the Giant City State Park and the herbicide used was donated by the River to River CWMA.

### *Results*

The new ¼ mile interpretative trail is established and operational at Giant City State Park. Because of the delays due to the necessity of rerouting the trail and building bridges, we have not yet conducted the educational event, though visitors to Giant City can use the trail on their own. Additionally, three articles about the trail were published in local papers.

### *Discussion*

This was a very successful project. The trail is a drastic visual comparison of an unmanaged and managed forest. The differences are stark and the trail does a great job of highlighting these differences.

### *Audience*

The specific audience for this project is members of the general public that visit the Giant City State Park Visitor Center. This could include school children classes and other organized groups.

*Measurable outcomes*

Installation of a new interpretative trail at Giant City and further establishment of the demonstration area.

**Budget**

**Total project expenses: \$1110.50**

*Materials*

**\$249.50**      17 signs      Attitude Designs      718 S. Illinois Ave  
Carbondale, IL 62901      December 21, 2011

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**\$255.00**      Materials for Bridges (4x4s, screws, 2x8s)      Lawrence Johnson      57 Caretaker  
Road, Makanda, IL 62958      September 29, 2011

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**\$86.00**      Materials for Sign Posts (4x4s, screws, 1x2s)      Lawrence Johnson      57 Caretaker  
Road, Makanda, IL 62958      December 28, 2011

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*Contractual*

**\$345.00**      Bridge installation      Lawrence Johnson      57 Caretaker Road,  
Makanda, IL 62958      September 29, 2011

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**\$175.00**      Sign installation and bridge installation      Lawrence Johnson      57  
Caretaker Road, Makanda, IL 62958      September 29, 2011

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**Oriental Bittersweet**  
*Celastrus orbiculatus*

## Forest Management Demonstration Trail

This trail was designed to contrast the impact of invasive species with the benefits of managing woodlands. The southern area (on left) is heavily invaded with several invasive species. The northern area (on right) is being managed to remove the invasive species and restore native plants. Note the difference between the two areas as you hike this short, 1/4 mile trail which is a collaborative effort of the Friends of Giant City, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area.

