

USM Woodland Restoration Project

You may have noticed, or heard about, some changes at USM along County Line Road with campus looking a little different. At USM, we are fortunate to have a campus of 120 beautiful acres, including green space which is used for outdoor education programs. About 75 acres of this land has been left to grow in a natural way, and unfortunately the tree species that began to grow and survive are primarily invasive and non-native plants.

The school has taken the bold, yet necessary step to start over by creating new, sustainable habitats. This will take resources in the form of time and expense, but the school is committed to improving our campus for the future generations of students that will be learning on our campus. In December, the school began a woodland clearing and native species restoration project which will take three to five years to complete. Recently, we removed dead ash trees and invasive plant species (buckthorn, honeysuckle, teasel, and thistle) from about 45 acres of land which was forestry mowed to take everything literally to the ground. Once the invasive species are prevented from regrowth, the areas will be planted with native species to restore and redevelop the native habitats within our campus. The change is dramatic for sure; however, replanting will soon follow in the months and years to come.

Over the last 5 years, there has been a resurgence of outdoor education at USM. As the result of contributions from a number of donors, several projects have sparked the renewed interest in the outdoors as a place to teach and learn. An outdoor classroom primarily for Preschool students was designed and built close enough to school for that age group to learn and explore outside. The renovation of the greenhouse, newly planted milkweed habitat for monarch butterflies, and expansion of gardens, bees, and 300 trees planted on the property are all providing the basis of habitat diversification on campus.

We know that USM and its environmental impact is as important to you as it is to the school. We will continue to keep you updated on the restoration progress and inform you of opportunities to become involved. Thank you for your support and encouragement throughout the project!

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