



July 2022

SHELDON NATURE AREA

1225 N Oakwood Road, Oshkosh, WI

History

The property for the 26-acre Sheldon Nature Area (SNA) was donated to the Oshkosh Area School District (OASD) in 1991. It consisted of old farm fields, wooded areas along Honey Creek, and a pond later filled in with asphalt and other debris. An EPA grant was used to clean up and redesign the pond. The EPA grant was also used to construct a retention dam and wetlands.

The all-volunteer Sheldon Nature Area Committee (SNAC) was formed in September of 1998 to direct the activities at SNA. This committee is composed of OASD administrators, teachers, professionals, civic and environmental group leaders, and neighbors.

The committee has been working towards the goal of creating an exemplary outdoor education center to be used by the entire OASD, as well as the adjacent Oakwood Elementary School. At least eight native Wisconsin ecosystems exist or are under development in the area including prairie, wetland, wet-mesic forest, old field, evergreen forest, oak savanna, pond, and stream. Thus, the SNA serves as a beautiful living laboratory for the students to learn directly from the natural environment and the surrounding community as a natural area and green space.

Accomplishments

The committee has come a long way since its inception. Major accomplishments include:

- The planting of 5 acres of native prairie by Oakwood Elementary School students in 1999.
- The planting of over 4000 trees by students in the past 5 years. Most trees were supplied by the National Tree Trust.
- The development of 2 miles of gravel trails including 2 bridges for student and community access to the area.
- The planting of aquatic species in the wetland and pond ecosystems.
- The construction of a floating classroom in the pond.
- Construction of an outdoor classroom in SNA which includes a pavilion
- Development of learning trails describing habitats, and nature identification signs.
- Ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the structures and ecosystem.
- Control of non-native invasive species.
- Erect and maintain structures for wildlife (bluebird, wood duck, and bat houses).

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Current Needs: Responding to the Emerald Ash Borer

Unfortunately, the Sheldon Nature Area is experiencing a severe infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB).

What is the Emerald Ash Borer and why is it a concern?

An invasive beetle that has decimated ash trees all over the midwest. The EAB kills 99.7 percent of the Ash Trees in a forest. Most within five years. The dead trees break off at the lower trunk and large branches break off at the base causing a severe hazard to people and property. The forest floor becomes a tangle of limbs. The area is not accessible for replanting the forest or control of invasive species, and waterways become backed up by debris.



How much of the Sheldon Nature Area is impacted? At Sheldon, 95% of the seven-acre forested area is Green Ash. At least 20% are infested and dead or dying. The rest will soon follow.

What is the plan? Plans are being made to remove the ash trees in the Sheldon Nature Area. The forest area will be replanted with a broader mix of trees suitable for the site.

Contact | Volunteer | Donate

To volunteer, or for further questions, contact Steve Maassen, President of Sheldon Nature Area Committee at maassen@charter.net. To donate to reforestation and planting, contact Theresa Duren, Director-OASD Education Foundation at theresa.duren@oshkosh.k12.wi.us

Notes

