

Controlled burn at History Center



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FIRE CONTROL. "Burn Boss" Kevin Walz, above left, directed crew members from Prairie Restorations, Inc., during a controlled burn conducted at the Sherburne History Center last Friday. The firm raises and plants native prairie species for restoration projects, and conducts burns and other restorative projects throughout the state. The dry conditions this autumn helped ensure success at a controlled burn. Above right, crews from Prairie Restorations, Inc., in Princeton, MN, burned sections of the Oak Savannah at the Center, as well as the immediate grounds around the building, in preparation for planting new native species, including 25 types of wildflowers. (Photos by David Hannula.)

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David Hannula
Staff Writer

The grounds of the Sherburne History Center and the near-by Oak Savannah underwent a make-over last Friday as a controlled burn was conducted as part of an on-going restoration project.

Crews from Prairie Restorations Inc. (PRI) in Princeton worked on the sites, setting a pattern of



fire lines designed to contain and manage the progress of the burn.

Curator Maureen Galvin said that it was the first time the area around the Center was being burned. The original prairie grasses and plants had been planted in 2006 by Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) conservationists Gina Hugo and Bill Bronder, Galvin noted.

The purpose of controlled burning is to eliminate unwanted plant species, Hugo said, and also has the benefit of adding nutrients when the burned material mixes with the soil. In the post-burn period at the Center, seeds from 25 species of wild flowers will be planted before the cold temperatures arrive. With the weeds and other alien species removed by the burn, Hugo anticipates that the flowers will produce some spectacular blooms next spring.

A number of other prairie enhancement projects are underway in the area, including a planned burn in Bridgeview Park set for this fall. The park has been under re-development for some time, Hugo said, and the current project is designed to help control and eradicate buckthorn. According to the PRI website, buckthorn has moved to the top of the list in undesirable species, and is classed as a "noxious weed" by the Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources (MDNR). The effort is being funded by a grant from a state soil resource agency.

The park is located just off Co. Rd. 11 just west of the Hwy. 25 intersection in Big Lake Township.

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