

Treeways

2014 - 4

Wild Land Care:

Recommending a planned approach to woodland and landscape management

Everyone in Sunfish Lake is living on the edge ... the edge of the prairie, woodlands, wetlands, waterways or lakes. If we want to take care of, restore, recreate, or reforest our properties we have unique set of problems to solve because each of our landscapes is also a piece of the larger ecological puzzle that is the City of Sunfish Lake.

Sunfish Lake is in the deciduous forest biome and that concept roughly defines the soils, plants, and wildlife we are likely to encounter here. It also suggests which plant/tree species will most likely grow well. Activities we undertake on each of our own properties may benefit or degrade our land, our immediate neighbor's land, and even our neighbor's neighbor' land. We can increase positive ecosystem effects by looking across boundary lines within our neighborhoods and framing our management objectives in the "bigger picture". When we work together across boundaries we all benefit.

"Change is constant on the land. Nature does not stand still. It may be your intent to keep the woods the way they are, but this is not nature's way." (From Beyond the Suburbs, A Landowners Guide to Conservation Management) Without our direct intervention our woodlands, prairies, wetlands, and lakes will naturally continue to change. Whether we work our management plan or do nothing at all our natural landscapes will change. If we do not participate, insects, diseases, storms and invasive species may make our landscapes into places we do not like and do not enjoy.

Even our "wild spaces" in Sunfish Lake require a definite level of care. This writing is too short to go into great detail, however here are the basic parts of a land management plan:

1. What are your landscape goals – lawn, pathways, attracting wildlife, using only native plants/trees?
2. Create an inventory of your property's features – species and numbers of trees, soil type and topography, significant wildlife habitat, wetlands, ponds and waterways.
3. Create or obtain a reasonably accurate map of your property.
4. Develop a description of your property management options.
5. Create an **action plan** describing what you want to accomplish and when.

Here is an example of a simplified **action plan** for the average Sunfish Lake woodland:

1. **Remove invasive species** (buckthorn, honeysuckle, and burdock) during summer and fall 2013.

2. **Survey health of mature trees** during summer 2013 and remove declining, damaged and diseased trees during winter 2013-14. Leave a few wildlife trees standing.
3. **Survey for insect and disease issues and remove problem trees** during fall/winter 2013-14.
4. **Plant well adapted native trees to diversify the species mix** and fill in open spaces created by the above removals during spring 2014.
5. **Create trails and install understory trees and forbs** to reduce competition from invasive plant species during summer 2013 and summer 2014.

For additional information please see:

1. Beyond the Suburbs – A Landowner’s Guide to Conservation Management, Minnesota DNR, 2001.
2. Woodland Stewardship – A Practical Guide for Midwestern Landowners, 2nd edition, University of Minnesota Extension, 2009.
3. Recommended Trees for: Southeast Minnesota, University of Minnesota Extension, 2001.
4. Recommended Trees for: Northwest and Central Minnesota, University of Minnesota Extension, 1997.

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