



STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Semesterly Report

Thank you for your commitment to green initiatives at the University of Illinois. One of the ongoing requirements listed in the terms of the funding agreement for your project is the submission of semesterly reports with key information about your project. In addition to this form, please provide additional financial documentation and/or progress photos if available.

Please be as accurate as possible in describing the project (including possible setbacks or challenges in meeting the initial goals of the project). Not fully meeting your project's goals will not disqualify you from making future funding requests as long as your reports are as complete and accurate as possible. If you have any questions, please contact the Student Sustainability Committee, at sustainability-committee@illinois.edu.

Project Name: Sustainable Restoration and Growth of the Southern Arboretum Woods (Student-led)

Date of Report Submission: 2/10/2021

Project Purpose:

The South Arboretum Woods is located at the south end of the UIUC campus and is in dire need of the establishment of native plant species to support our current restoration work. Supplementing the removal of invasive species, native plantings help to reduce the dominance of invasive species in this ecosystem. Planting native trees can also provide habitat for native insects, birds, and small mammals, as well as increase the aesthetic appeal of the woods. Through the support of the University Arboretum and the SSC, Red Bison is working towards establishing and stabilizing populations of native flora and fauna to increase overall biodiversity in the ecosystem. Red Bison has been working in this area for over six years, applying principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to tackle common invasive species such as honeysuckle, buckthorn, garlic mustard, and others. The organization has also worked on planting native species in this area in the past.

The shed which Red Bison has used for many years to store equipment in the South Arboretum Woods is deteriorating in its condition, resulting in problems with frequent pest infestations. In addition, the shed is no longer large enough to accommodate the growth of Red Bison in its size of membership and purchases of new equipment. In order to better protect the equipment used for restoration in the South Arboretum Woods from pests and harsh weather conditions, the funding provided by SSC for this project has also been used to purchase a larger and more robust shed.

Detailed Accounting of Expenditures to Date:

Thus far, \$9,750 has been spent on the new shed, which was constructed by Bear Creek Yard Creations in Arthur, IL. Site preparation, installation of foundation footings and placement of the shed was conducted by Arboretum Staff at no-cost to our project. This leaves \$246 unspent in our SSC funds, which we plan to use this semester on equipment which will be used for the tree plantings or for invasive species removal.

Project Progress to Date:

In our original application, we indicated that we would begin planting work in the South Arboretum Woods in the Spring 2019 semester and provide an update on the plantings by the end of Spring 2020. The overall timeline of this project extends until May 2021, as specified in the signed agreement. We ultimately were not able to begin planting in Spring 2019, as we reached a time at the end of the semester when it was difficult to acquire native plant material while we still had not received access to the SSC funds yet. Later in the summer of 2019, we submitted a scope change for our project to allocate the majority of the SSC funding towards a larger shed than the size originally planned for at the time of application (10' x 16'). As part of this scope change, it was agreed that more funding for native plant material and equipment would be provided by the University Arboretum.

Plans for the new shed were finalized in the summer of 2019, when an order was also placed for it from Bear Creek Yard Creations at the recommendation of the Arboretum staff. The new shed was recently delivered to the South Arboretum Woods in the summer of 2020. Unfortunately, the construction process and communication with the producer stalled significantly during the Fall 2019 semester. The shed was constructed by the end of the 2019 calendar year, but it was difficult to find a period of time in early 2020 with favorable enough weather conditions to have the shed delivered and set up. This delivery was delayed further by the cancellation of in-person activities on campus due to the COVID-19 pandemic in early Spring 2020. We began discussions with the Arboretum staff in Spring 2019 regarding what plant species to purchase and which suppliers to purchase them from for planting in the South Arboretum Woods. We were in discussion with Arboretum staff to place orders for native plant material in Spring 2020, but these plans were also disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Fall 2020 semester, Red Bison hosted six volunteer workdays in the South Arboretum Woods, averaging approximately twelve student volunteers each week. During these workdays, invasive species (e.g. bush honeysuckle, mulberry) and aggressive native species (e.g. tulip tree, walnut) were removed. In addition, native Indiangrass, big bluestem, and bottlebrush grass seeds were collected and dispersed in areas of the plot where we hope to cultivate more prairie ecosystems. We are currently working with the Arboretum to order plant materials by and to advance with tree plantings in March 2021.

Student Involvement and Outreach to Date:

Students are the driving force of our project through their volunteered time and efforts. Many students have participated in Red Bison through volunteer workdays to work on invasive

species removal in the South Arboretum Woods. This primarily involves cutting and spraying invasive plants such as honeysuckle. In addition, a handful of workdays were hosted where volunteers gathered and spread seeds from native prairie plants (e.g. big bluestem, Indiangrass). In Fall 2020, each meeting averaged about twelve total students, who all observed COVID-19 guidelines and protocols set forth by the University of Illinois to ensure a safe working environment.

Marketing and Promotion Efforts to Date:

This project is publicized through Red Bison's social media (Facebook, Instagram) and weekly email updates. Red Bison also talks about this project publicly at relevant campus events such as ExploreACES, ACES Fall Festival, and Environmental Quad Day. Information about this project is also reported to the University YMCA, which Red Bison is a student program of (in conjunction with being an RSO of the University).

Additional Comments:

We plan to still be able to have plantings take place in the Spring 2021 semester and provide a final report on the project in May 2021. We plan to use the remaining funds in our account prior to the completion of the project to assist in the purchase of necessary equipment.