

Oak Wilt Management Underway at Dorrance Forest Preserve

Port Byron, Illinois- January, 2016. The Rock Island County Forest Preserve District announced today that it will be implementing a forest management strategy on the site in order to combat an outbreak of oak wilt (*Ceratocystis Fagacearum*). Oak wilt is an extremely aggressive fungal infection that effects most oak trees in North America and one of the most serious tree diseases in the eastern United States. The Forest Preserve District will begin removing infected trees and additional trees surrounding the infected areas in order to create a buffer surrounding the infected areas. The buffers are designed to help curb and stop the spread of oak wilt.

The colder weather has given them a good opportunity to begin this management strategy. During the cold dormant months the fungus is less likely to spread from the activities of the management strategy and the frozen ground reduces concerns of soil compaction and erosion from equipment. Park ranger Mike Petersen and his crew of assistant rangers will be on site helping to direct the removal of the stricken trees in a hope to restrain the spread of the deadly fungus across the entire forest preserve site.

Petersen went on to explain how oak wilt is a fungal infection that is transmitted through root grafting (a process where trees grow their roots together to aid in nutrient and water uptake) as well as through insect hosts from infected to clean trees. And how a disease outbreak like this could be devastating to the entire ecosystem of the park especially when 70% of the overstory at Dorrance is red and black oak, the most susceptible oaks to oak wilt. Oak trees offer an enormous amount of habitat to a forest landscape and it would be a shame to see more of these huge old trees disappear from the landscape.

If you have questions about Oak Wilt more information can be found from the University of Illinois Extension here <http://ipm.illinois.edu/diseases/series600/rpd618/>. You may also contact Rock Island County Forest Preserve District at Dorrance Forest Preserve at 309-203-1404 if you have any questions.

The mission of the Rock Island County Forest Preserve District is to; maintain and acquire lands and facilities in Rock Island County with the intent to restore, conserve, and protect the waters, forests, and prairies for the purpose of conservation, education and recreation for its residents with fiscal responsibility.

The Rock Island County Forest Preserve District is governed by the Forest Preserve Commission. Today the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission governs six forest preserve sites totaling 2,529 acres.

For more information on the Rock Island County Forest Preserve District please go to www.ricfpd.org or call (309) 795-1040.