

Report on Common Ground Forest

Background:

Newport Landing has three sections of common ground, two are narrow strips each .12 acre in size bordering Hawkins Road, divided by Newport Landing Drive. The addresses of these properties are 1200 (south section) and 1201 (north section) Hawkins Road. The entrance monument sets on the south section. These strips are 100% cultivated green space planted with grass and ornamental grasses and shrubs, with Pin Oaks, Austrian Pines and one Norway maple. These two sections are not considered forest in this report.

The third section, 1355 Point Mariner Drive, encompasses 6.32 acres. It is bordered by 17 Newport Landing homes on the east and north, 5.0 acres of San Louis common ground to the south, and 16.32 acres of Summerchase common ground to the west. Approximately ½ of our 6.32 acres is cleared green space including the area of the pond.

Report:

On December 27, 2006 I was accompanied by Rob Emmett of the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) for an assessment of the health of our remaining forest. Mr. Emmett has thirty years experience in the Forestry Department of the MDC. His specialty is Urban Forestry. His office is at the Powder Valley Nature Center in Sunset Hills. This assessment was provided at no cost to the residents of Newport Landing.

Mr. Emmett pointed out evidence of earlier logging, estimating this to have taken place about 80 years ago. He also remarked on the absence of intermediate aged trees, which is usually evidence that the area was used for a time for cattle grazing and shelter. We have trees that are 60-120+ years old, and some in the 25 year range, but few in-between.

The overall condition the forest is good, with healthy tree diversity and only a few concentrated pockets of invasive species.

Native Missouri species that were identified were: Shagbark, Shellbark and Mockernut Hickory, Black, White, Pin, Northern Red and Shingle Oak, Hackberry, Red Mulberry, Black Walnut, Black Locust, Smooth Sumac, Box Elder, Flowering Dogwood, Eastern Red Cedar, Eastern Redbud, Cottonwood, Silver and Sugar Maples, White and Green Ash, Sassafras, Black Cherry and Persimmon. . There were also a few dead American Elms.

Non-native species present were Mimosa, Russian Olive and Callery Pear.

The most important recommendation was to remove the brush honeysuckle. The greatest concentrations are between 1330-1342 Mystic Seaport and the San Louis Common

ground, and in the northern arm of the common ground behind 1353 and 1349 Point Mariner and behind 1555 and 1559 Atlantic Crossing.

Brush Honeysuckle is the greatest threat to our St. Louis county forests. It is an exotic shrub that has escaped to our wooded areas. Brush Honeysuckle is the first shrub to green up in the spring and the last to lose its leaves in the fall, effectively shading competing native species. According to the *MDC Saint Louis Region Land Management Survey*, Brush honeysuckle is also suspected to produce allelopathic chemicals that enter the soil and inhibit the growth of other species. If left unchecked, the honeysuckle will evolve into a monoculture, with the only species remaining being the mature trees. When the mature trees die we will have only honeysuckle.

Mr. Emmett suggested several elimination methods. Small bushes can be pulled up roots & all. Larger shrubs should be cut down with chain saw or hand saw, and the stumps treated with a 50% concentration of glyphosate (Roundup) to prevent re-sprouting.

Elimination attempts at Powder Valley have shown a much lower re-sprouting rate when the herbicide treatment is done in the fall – typically October or November.

Mr. Emmett also pointed out a few distressed trees, and noted that these trees would have to be removed if they were in a public forest near any private property or established trail.

There are wild grape vines and some sizable poison ivy vines hanging in the trees, I asked if these vines contributed to tree mortality. Mr. Emmett said that they can stress trees, but are usually not managed, as they are native and contribute to the forest by providing feed for birds. However, in small stands the health of individual trees can benefit from their removal.

Mr. Emmett volunteered to provide contact information with the MDC department of Fish & Game to provide assistance in managing our pond. He did say that we would be advised to remove trees from the dam to reduce leakage due to root rot and the accompanying burrowing animals.

Rick Hayes
12/28/2006