



Above: Skid steer clearing debris.



Above: Off loading equipment that was barged in for forest regeneration efforts.



Above: Trees barged in for planting.



Above: Bogus Island before.



Above: Bogus Island after.

Partnerships Promote Forest Regeneration



The Rock Island District Mississippi River Project team completed two joint projects to promote forest regeneration and prepare an area for a future prescribed burn. Work involved the project's navigation channel maintenance and facilities maintenance teams along with multiple partners.

The team started on Bogus Island south of Muscatine, Iowa partnering with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (ILDNR). A dense growth of mulberry trees was outcompeting native tree saplings and hindering the natural development of a more diverse and healthy forest ecosystem. To tackle this issue, NRM staff cut down all the mulberry that was growing in the area and then barged in two skid steers and a Polaris to clear the cuttings. This successfully exposed large areas of bare ground, creating the perfect conditions for natural seed catch, with the goal of encouraging the establishment of native silver maple and cottonwood. The team also direct planted bare-root and containerized oaks, hickories, Kentucky coffee trees, and others to help hard mast seed trees.

On Blackhawk Island, the project goal was to establish a fire break. This area has a considerable amount of existing forest mortality making it a prime candidate for prescribed burn, but it also had an unique constraint, an old railroad line running through the center of the island. Recognizing the potential risks associated, the team needed to establish a fire break to ensure safety and control. In partnership with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IADNR) and using a barge to offload equipment, the team was able to efficiently move substantial quantities of flood debris that had accumulated over the years and could have obstructed the creation and effectiveness of a fire break. NRM staff worked to cut down remaining standing dead trees within the designated fire break area, further mitigating potential fuel sources and enhancing the overall safety and efficacy of the planned burn.

These two distinct, yet related, efforts show the importance of collaborative partnerships in NRM along the Mississippi River. The work on Bogus Island benefited significantly from the shared conservation goals to enhance habitat with ILDNR. Similarly, the establishment of the fire break on Blackhawk Island was a direct results of the project's partnership with IADNR, aligning efforts to prepare for a prescribed burn that will be managed jointly to improve forest health.

In addition, the crucial logistical support provided by navigation channel maintenance and facilities maintenance staff for both island projects highlight the essential role of internal collaboration within the Mississippi River Project Office in achieving our conservation objectives.