

Winnebago County Success from the Field

Buckthorn Wars



Background

Eric Jones owns a 160-acre forest in Winnebago County that his family acquired in the mid-1970s. At that time, they planted around 90,000 trees. After a few decades of being unmanaged, buckthorn, an invasive species, started to move in. Upon Eric’s return in 2014, after serving in the U.S. military and the police force, the buckthorn was out of control on the property. Eric knew the invasive species was becoming a problem and he needed assistance on how to control it. With the help of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Eric was able to develop a plan.

Highlights

During a site visit with NRCS, Eric pointed out buckthorn was starting to take over portions of the forest. Eric applied for the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program—Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (EQIP-GLRI) Invasive Species funding to complete brush management to follow his Forest Management Plan through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Managed Forest Law Program. With assistance through the EQIP-GLRI brush management practice, Eric was able to clear 38 acres of buckthorn, an invasive species. “The combination of the forestry mower and foliar treatment are proving to be the most cost/time effective way to keep the buckthorn under control,” said Eric. With the removal of buckthorn, more light can reach the forest floor promoting the growth of desirable species. Increasing the diversity of species is making for a healthier forest. Since the buckthorn has been removed, management of the forest has been much easier. Levi Schultz, NRCS Technician, said “Eric and his wife, Sandra, are great to work with. They’re not afraid to try different methods to achieve their goals. They even borrowed goats to help control the invasive buckthorn in their forest!”

Future Plans

Eric will continue to manage the buckthorn with the help of his new machinery. He and Sandra are very interested in a permaculture type system. To implement this, they are looking to construct a high tunnel and plan to plant pollinator



Eric and Sandra in front of their heavy equipment used to clear buckthorn.



Sandra picking some bountiful harvest in their no till garden.

habitat in partnership with NRCS through EQIP. The couple also hosted a regenerative agriculture field day to talk about their conservation efforts. NRCS looks forward to continuing to partner with Eric and Sandra.

