

Restoring Oak Savanna

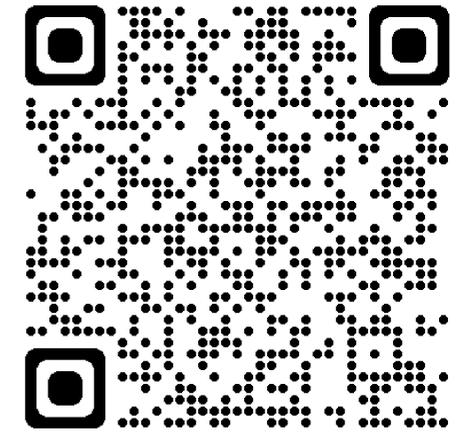
Oak savanna is a transitional ecosystem between prairie and deciduous forest that consist of the same flowers and grasses that grow in the prairie but also feature scattered and sprawling Bur oaks. In order to maintain the open structure, regular fire and grazing is needed to prevent undesirable shrub and tree growth. Prior to European settlement, Oak savanna covered around 10% of the state and was maintained with regular fire by Indigenous people for hunting and forage.

Today, less than 1% of the Oak savanna ecosystem remains. A variety of wildlife including deer, turkeys, redheaded woodpeckers, and the federally endangered Rusty Patched bumblebee call the Oak savanna home. Land managers have recognized the importance and value of the Oak savanna ecosystem and are actively preserving and restoring Oak savanna throughout Minnesota.

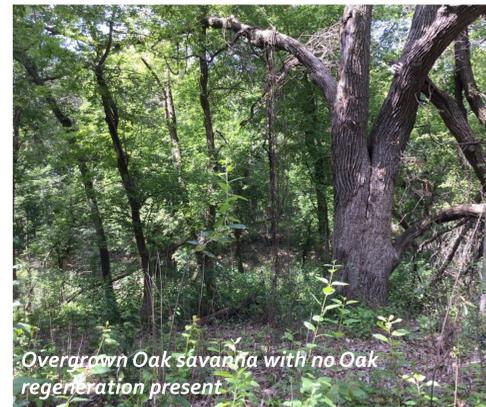
To restore Oak savanna, invasive species such as common buckthorn are removed. Oaks need light and space to regenerate, removal of undesirable and fire intolerant trees like the Boxelder encourages future Oak regeneration and a diverse ground-cover. Ongoing disturbance regimes such as fire and grazing are utilized to reduce competition and allow the Oak savanna to thrive. Please see project area in the map below.

Funding for this project was provided from the Outdoor Heritage Fund as appropriated by the Minnesota State Legislature and recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) to restore, protect, and enhance Minnesota's wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife.

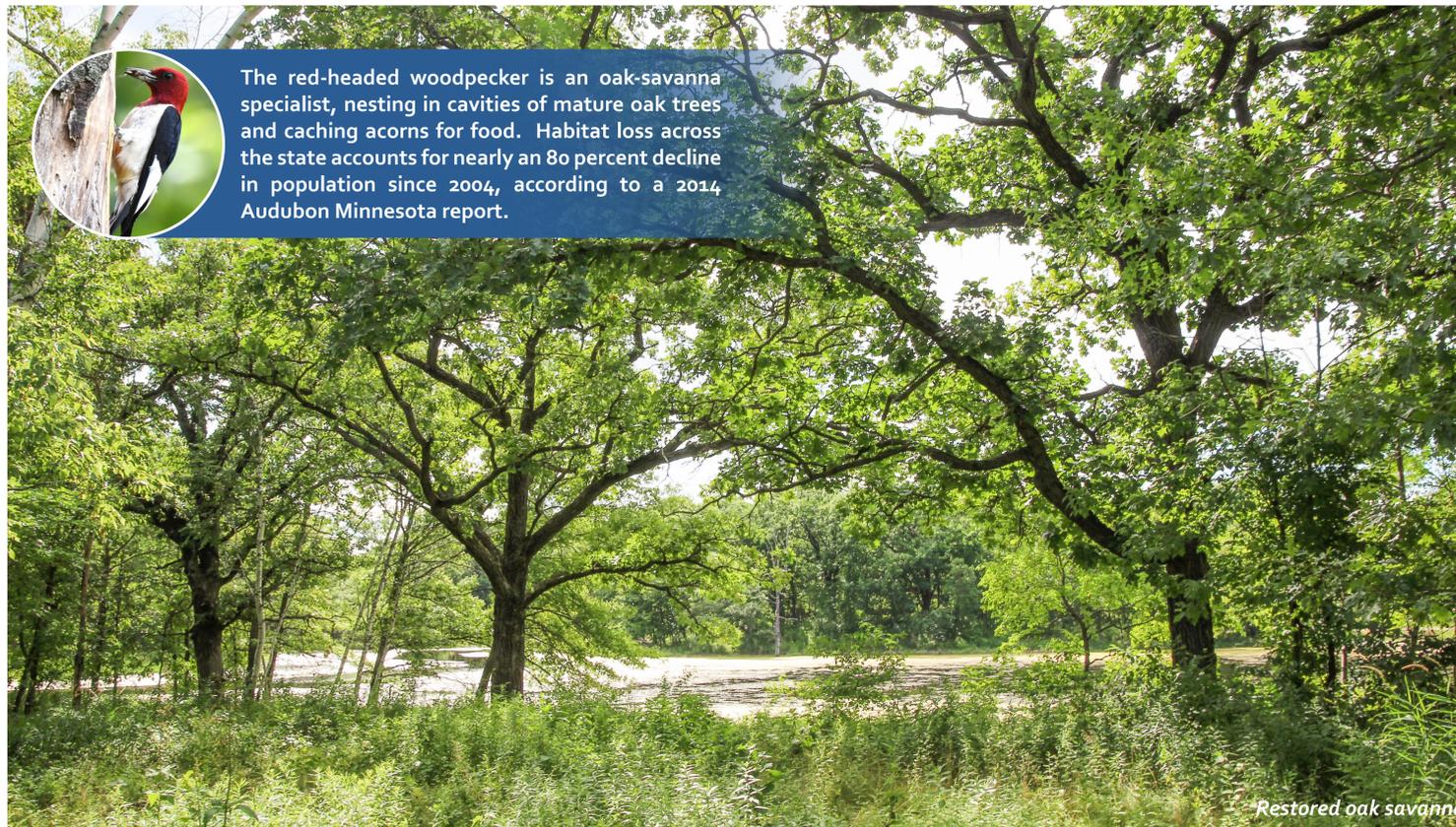
For information on Oak Savanna Restoration at Lake Elmo Park Reserve, scan the QR code to the right or contact the Park Office at 651-430-8370



Degraded condition with Boxelder reducing Oak regeneration opportunities



Overgrown Oak savanna with no Oak regeneration present



Restored oak savanna



The red-headed woodpecker is an oak-savanna specialist, nesting in cavities of mature oak trees and caching acorns for food. Habitat loss across the state accounts for nearly an 80 percent decline in population since 2004, according to a 2014 Audubon Minnesota report.

Lake Elmo Park Reserve Oak Savanna Restoration Phase III



Project Schedule

- Winter 2023-2024:** Boxelder removal for Oak regeneration
- 2024:** Seeding savanna species including flowers, sedges, & grasses
- Ongoing Stewardship:** conservation based grazing & controlled burns

