

## **RESULTS OF CITY ENGINEERING 3 YEAR GREENWAY AND POND MANAGEMENT STUDY**

Report from the City Engineer on FILE# 22319 (5/17/2011) which authorized City Engineering to work with the Parks Department and volunteers to conduct a greenway and pond management study for 3 seasons. This study will manage 10 greenways and ponds (which have been previously planted in prairie) in a more holistic manner and compare the costs associated with this method of maintenance vs. the current standard of mowing two times annually from edge to edge.

April 14, 2014 Results to date revealed cost per acre of pilot prairie greenway is significantly less expensive to maintain than standard mowed greenways.

Cost breakdown:

2013 growing season: Labor and equipment costs for 10 pilot prairie greenways and ponds were \$51.46 per acre compared to \$106.32 for standard greenways.

2012 growing season: The cost of 10 pilot greenways and ponds was only slightly less than standard greenways at \$109.50 per acre versus \$115.48 per acre. Note the costs are similar the first year due to the fact that newly planted prairie needs some maintenance to become established. After becoming established, they require little maintenance.

Note for both seasons: Labor costs do not include volunteer efforts

### **City Engineering's Plan Moving Forward:**

Due to the cost effectiveness of the pilot project, City Engineering will expand this type of management from 10 greenways and ponds to all 65 City greenways and 11 City ponds with existing prairie plantings. These greenways and ponds will be monitored in the 2014 growing season to determine when the best time to mow shall be. Best time to mow shall be determined by which invasive weed species are present in order to eliminate weeds and further establish the prairie plants. Greenway and pond locations and dates to mow will be communicated via work orders in Accela Mobile Office.

In addition to reduced maintenance costs, there are countless other benefits native prairies provide. Today, there is only a fraction of historic native prairies left in Wisconsin. Prairies provide a diversity of habitat to increasingly rare species including songbirds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Since prairies aren't mowed very often, birds have a chance to nest safely in increasingly urban areas. The environment benefits because these native grasses and wildflowers have a very deep root system (unlike turf) that helps improve water, soil, and air quality. Lastly, prairies offer attractive scenery with brilliant wildflower colors from spring to fall. This image can create a distinctive high quality feature in local communities.