Rapp Residents Brave Freezing Temperatures – Remove Invasive Plants

Ruth Ann Welch, RCRFA

Nine Rappahannock residents braved the cold on Friday, November 16 to continue efforts to rid the Rappahannock County Park of decades of invasive plant growth. This effort, led by the Rappahannock County Recreational Facilities Authority (RCRFA) and Old Rag Master Naturalists (ORMN) cleared a 20 by 60 foot section of invasive Japanese Honeysuckle and Ailanthus on the north edge of the Park’s “urban forest” that will add more space to the lawn in the Park.

Spearheaded by RCRFA’s Torney Van Acker, Bonnie Beers, Ruth Welch, and Jean Lillard, they were joined by ORMN Mike Wenger, RappFLOW’s Donna Marquisee, Page Glennie, Lisa Glennie, and Bryant Welch in the battle of “man versus invasives.”

Nearby, Donna Marquesee of RappFLOW, with the help of Piedmont Environmental Council’s Celia Vuocolo and Margaret Murray, took the lead on planting a native pollinator garden that will be the start of several native garden plantings in the Park, including on the Rappahannock Electric Cooperative and Virginia Department of Transportation right of ways.

“This is a very ambitious multi-year project” said ORMN & Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection (RLEP) board member Mike Wenger, author of the Park’s “Invasive Management Plan” and RappU’s “Invasive Plants” course instructor. “We removed some small invasive plants last spring with the help of the RCHS Environmental Science Class. However, removing larger invasive vines and trees is very labor-intensive work.” After the team removed most of the Japanese Honeysuckle vines, Torney Van Acker, RCRFA vice chair and RLEP board member, felled more than thirty Ailanthus trees which make up much of the Park’s forest.

“Next year, we are planning to host monthly sustainability “clean up” days on the second Saturday of each month for local Old Rag Master Naturalists and others to get volunteer hours,” said Bonnie Beers, ORMN and recently appointed RCRFA Board member. “We welcome other groups, individuals, and students to join us in this important ecological stewardship project.”

Watch for announcements about the Second Saturday Sustainability work days in the Rappahannock News, ORMN website and list serve, and on social media.