Illini Prairie & Salt Kettle Rehab Project

Illini Prairie north and south bound Interstate 57 and Salt Kettle rest area, west bound Interstate 74 were all closed by the construction contractor early on Monday, June 16, 2014. Removal of the existing partitions and fixtures began later that day and within a few days the glazed tile block walls behind the sinks and urinals were removed to make the needed plumbing repairs.

Within a few weeks the terrazzo floor refinishing contractor will be on-site to begin work on the existing floors. A meeting was held at the locations June 18, 2014. At the meeting the District selected colors for the new ceramic tile that will be installed on the walls behind the new sinks and urinals and selected the color of the new, one piece sinks.

Work on the projects was on schedule at the time of this printing and the contractor plans to have the project completed by early fall.

The District plans to begin work on the parking lots, curbs and concrete sidewalks starting the week of June 23, 2014. There will also be a project just south of the north bound Illini Prairie rest area to correct a drainage problem.

Funks Grove Update

Work is continuing at the Funks Grove rest area and is on schedule as of this printing. The contractors have completed pumping and repairs to the septic holding tanks near the main building and are currently working on the new sand filters. The sand filters are the last stage of the lagoon system. Soon they will begin work on lagoons one and two. Pictured is the new sink wall after the glazed tile block wall has been removed. Notice the new framing already installed in preparation for the plumbing work. This wall will be finished in a square ceramic tile similar in color to the existing glazed tile block wall.

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Weed or Flower? (continued from p. 1)

3. Daylily beds are usually made up of only one type and color of flower, usually yellow, pink or maroon. All of the leaves of the daylilies are long and wider than grass, and they grow in clumps. Many of the ilies are in locations at the corners of walks, ends of parking lots, in raised beds around buildings. Any plant in these beds that doesn’t look like the rest of the daylilies is a weed and should be removed. Weeds in these areas are usually found around the edges of the beds where they can get light and water. (see photos)

4. As the definition above indicates, weeds usually grow faster and taller than desirable plants. Often when you may not have noticed the weed the day or two before and suddenly here it is, taller and happier than all of the other plants!

5. Most of our annual bedding plants have flowers of bright colors and are found in the beds in front of the buildings, in the flower pots, planters or hanging baskets. These are the flowers we plant each year to add splashes of color and interest around the rest area. Many are planted in patterns or groups of similar plants. Weeds and unwanted grasses will often grow between what has been planted. Usually it isn’t too hard to tell which plant is a weed and which is a flower.

6. It is especially important to pull thistles when they are young and small. When they are small they can be easily pulled and are often less prickly. Once they grow large, their tap-root is also very large which makes them difficult to pull.

Butterfly Milkweed

Butterfly Milkweed, sometimes called Butterfly Weed is a bright orange-flowering perennial plant about one and a half to three feet tall and found in many of our roadside prairies. Scientific name Asclepias tuberosa, butterfly milkweed is a member of the Asclepiadaceae or Milkweed family. It is native to areas of eastern North American, including Illinois. The plants bright orange color and large supply of nectar make it a favorite of bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. Butterfly milkweed, like its cousin the common milkweed, is also a larval food plant of the Monarch butterfly.

We Honored

This month the RAZR will introduce a new monthly section called “We Honored.” In this section we will list the names and hometowns of each person we honored throughout the past month by lowering our flags to half-staff. Governor Quinn has ordered that all state facilities, like our rest area, that are covered by the Flag Display Act fly the flag of the United States of America and the Illinois flag at half-staff from sunset to sunset on the day of the funeral of every Illinois soldier and for the two days before the funeral.

At District 5 rest areas your flag lowering and return to full staff instructions usually come from Janet, our Operations secretary. When she calls it is important that you take down the information correctly and lower the flags promptly if it is an immediate lowering notice. It is also important to inform your supervisor immediately to make sure all shifts know when to lower or raise the flag. If your workshop services two rest areas at one location, it is important that the flags are raised and lowered as close to the same time as possible. If one side of the rest area has flags down and the other up, we frequently will receive calls from concerned citizens inquiring why the flags are different.

We will also begin emailing your workshop contract administrator the Honoring Illinois’ Fallen news releases as they are published by the Governor’s office. Your workshop administrators or supervisors will be able to print these new releases for display in the rest areas.

Butterfly Milkweed (continued from p. 2)

Unlike the common milkweed, butterfly milkweed stems are not “milky” when they are broken open. The seed pods are similarly shaped as the common milkweed, long at about six inches and pointy. Once they break open in late summer they puff out, spreading thin, flat, round, brown seeds on white wispy hair-like threads. The seeds disperse easily with the wind, sometimes floating quite a distance from the parent plant.

Butterfly milkweed blooms in mid-June through August in central Illinois and it prefers dry sandy or gravel soil, although it can sometimes be found in wet areas. It also enjoys full sun. Unlike other milkweeds, butterfly milkweed grows in a clump and does not spread by the roots. This habit and its bright color makes it a favorite of home gardeners and landscapers.

The roots of the butterfly milkweed were often chewed by Native Americans as a cure for pleurisy and other lung ailments. Because of this use, the plant is sometimes called pleurisy root.

The pictures in this issue were taken at one of the prairie plots at the Salt Kettle rest area. Enjoy spotting the butterfly milkweed around your own rest area and enjoy watching the many butterflies and other insects as they drink in their feast! District 5 and IDOT transplant butterfly milkweed as well re-seed it into our restored roadside prairies areas annually.