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Farmland rest area (I-74)
Funks Grove rest area (I-55)
Illini Prairie rest area (I-57)
Salt Kettle rest area (I-74)

All photographs and articles by
Stephanie unless otherwise noted.



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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 sand filters in progress.

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



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.

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.



Salt Kettle ladies restroom after the partition walls were removed.

RAZR D5

D5 REST AREA ZONE REPORT • IDOT DISTRICT 5

July 2014 • Volume 1, Issue 7

Inside this issue

Butterfly Milkweed.....	2
Weed or Flower?.....	2
We Honored.....	3
Funks Grove Update.....	4
Illini Prairie & Salt Kettle Rehab Project.....	4

2014 Illinois Roadway Fatalities to Date

378



Special Points of Interest

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Illinois Department of Transportation

Weed or Flower?



Notice how the leaves and growth habit of the thistle in the center of the photo look different than the daylilies all around it.

Merriam-Webster defines the word weed as “a plant that is not valued where it is growing and is usually of vigorous growth; especially one that tends to overgrow or choke out more desirable plants.” The answer to the weed or flower question then, is where is the plant in question growing and is it supposed to be there?

In many places around our rest areas we have included native prairie plants in our building and grounds landscaping. We have done this for several reasons. Native prairie plants are well suited for our climate and weather conditions, so naturally they grow well. Also, displaying various native plants around the rest areas is a way to educate and introduce plants to the travelers as they stop to visit. Our use of these type of plants, however, can sometimes complicate your work in determining which plants belong and which plants are weeds.

In addition to using prairie flowers we also have a large variety of grasses, annual flowering plants, roses, hosta beds and several varieties of daylilies and ground covers. With all of these different types of plants around, how does one know then, which ones are plants that need saved and which are weeds that need to be pulled or removed from the beds? There isn't really a good rule to help you know which plant is a weed but the following are some helpful hints to use to help you know the difference:

1. If you are in doubt about whether to remove or save a plant, leave it in place until you can ask your supervisor or ask Lee or Stephanie for help with identification.
2. Many weeds are prickly or thorny, like thistles. Except for roses, we don't use plants with thorns or any sharp or prickly parts that might snag or poke an unsuspecting traveler or some curious little fin-

continued on p.2

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.

continued on p.3

Weed or Flower? *(continued from p. 1)*

- gers intent on checking out an interesting plant. It is always a good idea to wear gloves when pulling weeds, especially thistles.
- 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 lilies are in locations at the corners of walks, ends of parking lots, in raised beds around trees, in sidewalk cutouts or used in borders 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)
 - As the definition above indicates, weeds usually grow faster and taller than desirable plants. Often 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!
 - 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



Weeds and grasses will often grow along the edges of planting beds where they can get more sun and water. Here you can easily spot the different types of leaves. Notice the contrast between the grass-like leaves of the daylilies and the fat leaves of the low-growing weeds.

- 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.
- 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.

If they are allowed to bloom, they produce a puffy seed head similar to a dandelion and will re-seed thousands of thistle plants around our rest area lawns and flower beds. When handling thistles, remember your gloves!

Your careful attention and care in keeping our flower beds, pots and baskets free of weeds is a big part of what makes our rest areas beautiful and appealing to visitors. As always, if you have questions please ask Lee or Stephanie on their next visit and keep up the good work!

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 areas, 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 sunrise 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.

We Honored

Private First Class Aaron Toppen
United States Army
Hometown: Mokena, Illinois
June 22 to June 24, 2014

Lance Corporal Steven Hancock
United States Marine Corps
Hometown: Coal City, Illinois
May 30, 2014

Sunrise to Noon
Monday, May 26, 2014
In honor of Memorial Day

Peace Officers Memorial Day
Sunrise to Sunset
Thursday, May 15, 2014

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 poof 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.