

RESTORATION IN PROGRESS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Monmouth County Park System is working to remove invasive species in Big Brook Park. This area was heavily infested with detrimental invasive species called autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) and Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*). Big Brook Park has been identified as a regionally critical area for grassland birds. To preserve this integral habitat and the food sources our sensitive native wildlife requires, stewardship is necessary to restore healthy habitat conditions. Selective land clearing took place on a 7.5-acre portion of Big Brook Park in early 2024. Native grasses were seeded into the cleared areas and herbicide applications were selectively applied to control any regrowth of the invasives. This process will be repeated over many years.



Before: Invasive olive and Callery pear smothered in invasive vines



After: Open field with a diversity of native flowers and grasses

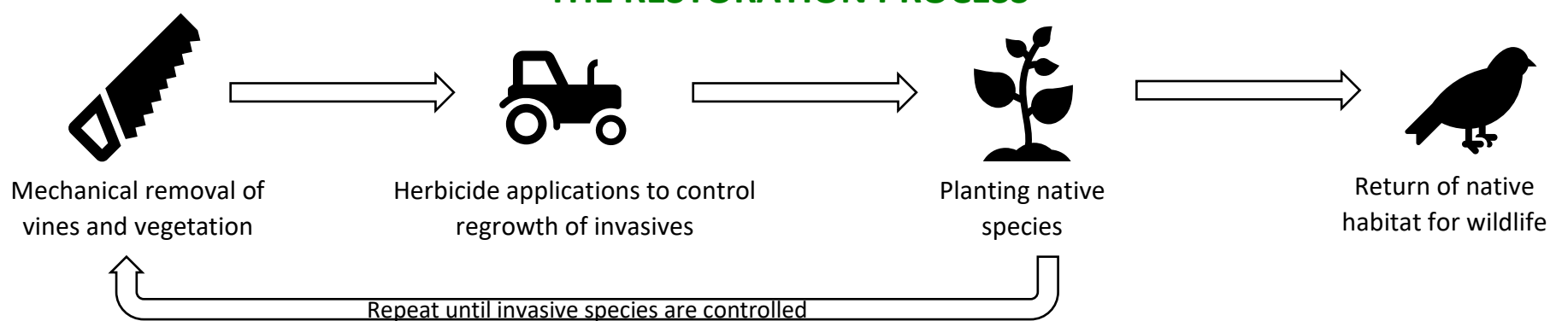
REASON FOR PROJECT

Invasive species are plants and animals that are non-native to an ecosystem and whose introduction causes environmental harm. Invasive plant species degrade native ecosystems by outcompeting native plants for resources such as habitat, water, nutrients, and light. Native plants are important to an ecosystem because native animals depend on them for survival. In the case of autumn olive and Callery pear, these invasive species are fast growing woody plants that quickly outgrow and shade native species. While the successional growth of native trees and shrubs is a natural process, these invasive species begin to dominate the landscape and do not provide resources that native pollinators and other native wildlife require. After removal of the invasive species, native plants and animals can be restored to the area to protect and improve field and forest health.



With the invasive species removed and native plants establishing, many wildlife species were recorded returning to the site by summer 2024 from breeding bluebirds to the wild turkey pictured here.

THE RESTORATION PROCESS



Please excuse the unsightly conditions of this area while the restoration is in progress. Landscape restorations are labor-intensive and full results may not be obvious for many years. The Monmouth County Park System apologizes for any inconvenience throughout the restoration period but expects that the final results will greatly improve the park for both visitors and wildlife.

