

RESTORATION IN PROGRESS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Monmouth County Park System is working to remove an emerging invasive species called chocolate vine (*Akebia quinata*) which has spread across 27 acres of the Claypit Creek section of Hartshorne Woods Park. In 2019, the NJ Invasive Species Strike Team (NJISST) diagnosed this area with “Infested Forest Syndrome” which is a forest clogged with invasive species and lacking native understory species. In order to prevent the invasive vine from further damaging forest health and to restore healthy habitat conditions, stewardship is required. Efforts began in July 2023 when volunteers with the Monmouth County Invasive Plant Strike Force removed several acres of chocolate vine by hand to preserve significant areas of the forest. Future work will include additional mechanical removal and herbicide applications with a temporary blue dye so that park staff can track treatment progress. This process will be repeated over several years. Once the invasive vine is under control, native trees and shrubs can be planted to return the forest to a healthy condition and improve wildlife habitat.



Initial site conditions: chocolate vine blanketing understory

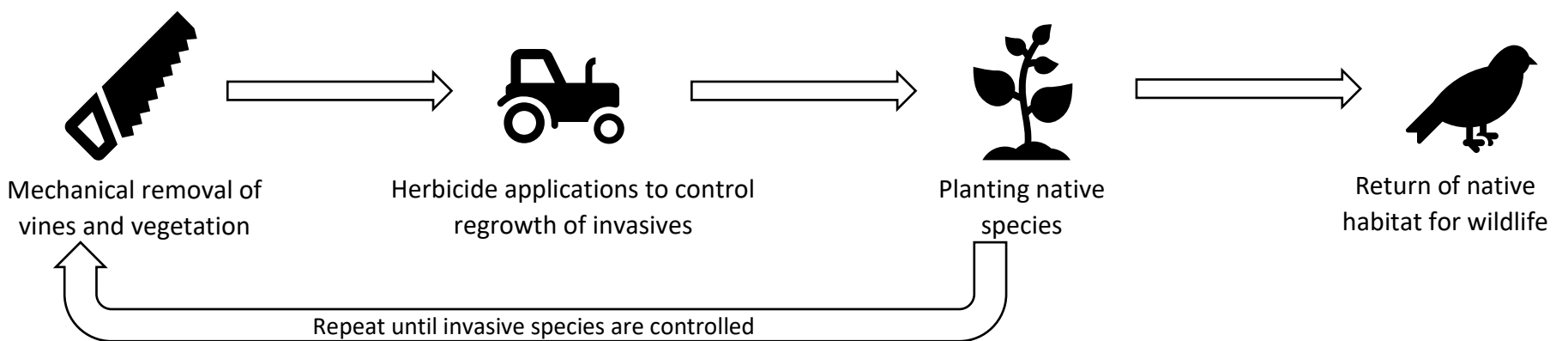
REASON FOR PROJECT

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 chocolate vine, this invasive species is a climbing vine that can topple large trees if left unmanaged. Additionally, chocolate vine spreads quickly and creates dense mats of vegetation that cover and prevent the growth of native vegetation. After removal of the invasive species, native plants and animals can be restored to the area to protect and improve forest health.



Initial site conditions: chocolate vine smothering tall trees.

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.

