

Building Capacity to Restore Ecosystems with People

The focus of ecosystem restoration initiatives at The Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois, USA has historically been centered on *in-situ* conservation of the ecosystems within the Arboretum's property. While the problems of fire suppression, invasive species infestation, and altered hydrology have impacted the ecosystems within the Arboretum, they are not exclusive to our property; they impact many natural areas throughout the region and even beyond. Beginning in 2008, we strategically began a new initiative which can help foster improved restoration efforts throughout the region by training local citizens. This initiative has proven to be successful within the Arboretum by engaging newly trained volunteer stewards, and we are now retooling the program to increase our ability to engage more regional practitioners to manage natural areas beyond the Arboretum.

Since 2004, Kurt Dreisilker has developed and led the natural resource program at The Morton Arboretum. In his current role as Head of Natural Resources he leads and implements ecological restoration programs throughout the 900 acres of natural areas within the Arboretum, including oak woodlands, wetlands, and tallgrass prairies. In this role, he has developed a training program to engage local citizens with basic skills to apply to natural area management, helping improve natural areas within The Morton Arboretum as well as within regional natural areas. Kurt has a Bachelor of Science in Plant Biology and a Master of Science in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.