

Kasota Ponds Buckthorn Removal – Summer 2026 Progress Report

Receiving a 2026 Community Grant through the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization has allowed the St. Anthony Park Community Council to begin the removal of a vast amount of common buckthorn at Kasota Ponds. The area of removal abuts the western edge of the East Pond, the most publicly visible and accessible from the parking lot.

Two workdays were scheduled in early June to cut down the buckthorn to approximately 4' from the ground. This "high-cut method" removes the uppermost branches and leaves the remaining trunk, which will be stripped of its vegetation over the next two years.

Fliers were created in April and distributed to shops, libraries, and restaurants in south and north St. Anthony Park the month of May. Postings announcing the public workday on June 2 was shared via social media and on the St. Anthony Park listserv.

The June 2 evening workday attracted 18 participants, which was close to our goal of 20. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 80 and most stayed 1.5 to 2 hours. Because we were working within 25 feet of the railway, a flagman from Minnesota Commercial was on site giving safety instructions to volunteers.

The second workday on June 3 was reserved for a group of Avalon High School students. The students are required to participate in community service days the last week of the school year, which dovetailed nicely with this event. There were 15 students and 3 teachers/staff who were on site from 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. After a brief presentation about what buckthorn is, how to identify it, and why its removal encourages diversity of plant and wildlife, they worked for 1.5 hours, had lunch, and then worked for another hour before heading back to school.

Although the initial plan was to remove approximately 10,000 square feet of buckthorn (500 ft long x 20 ft wide), about two-thirds of that was achieved. Due to not having organized this sort of project before, what we underestimated was the volume of wood debris that needed to be removed. We thought a few volunteers could rent a U-Haul and dispose of it at the nearby compost site. Instead, we had to hire a company that took most of the vegetation. That was an unanticipated expense and ended up taking two weeks to achieve.

Next steps: In July we will be putting up orange tape and informational signs informing the public of the project. In September we will organize two similar workdays, stripping current cut vegetation of all greenery and cutting down the last 1/3 of the area to 4' stumps.

Attached: Photos of the activities described, promotional event flier, a 1/3 sheet flier to promote awareness of buckthorn, and onsite metal signage explaining project.

Reported by Kerry Morgan, Co-chair, SAPCC Environment Committee