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## For love of nature

By Lisa DeNeal

Anyone who drove past 736 Colfax St. in Gary on Dec. 8 might have noticed several people clearing excess trees and brush. The work was part of a continuing goal to improve a nature preserve managed by the Shirley Heinze Land Trust.

The Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve is one of 15 nature preserves totaling 1,100 acres in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties under the trust. Paul Quinlan is stewardship director of the land trust, which is based in Michigan City.



*Paul Quinlan (left) stewardship director for the Shirley Heinze Land Trust, shows Kathleen Soler of Chesterton, Ind., how to use a chain saw Dec. 8, 2012, at the Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve in Gary, Ind. | Jeff Addison~For Sun - Times Media*

Shirley Heinze Land Trust is a not-for-profit group established in 1981 as a charitable trust through a gift by Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Seidner. The land trust is named after psychologist and University of Illinois faculty member Dr. Shirley Heinze of Ogden Dunes, who was involved in the protection of the Indiana dunes. Heinze died in 1978.

Quinlan said they've acquired 30 acres at the Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve.

“We acquire the acres through tax sales,” Quinlan said. “Along with cleaning and cutting down excess trees and brush, we do legal savannah fires to help clear the property,”

The preserves are habitats for native grasses, wildflowers and animals, including the endangered Karner Blue butterfly. Quinlan added they are perfect for walking, hiking and other outdoor activities.

“No ATVs, mountain biking, littering, he said. “Anything that will harm the preserves, we try to prevent.”



*Volunteers Steve Sass (right) of New Carlisle, Ind., and Martin Smith of Chicago clear brush during a cleanup at the Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve in Gary, Ind., on Dec. 8, 2012. | Jeff Addison~For Sun -Times Media*

Steve Sass of New Carlisle has been active with the Shirley Heinze Land Trust about four years. He helped clean up and document the day’s work.

“I found out about the group through its website and started volunteering with them,” he said. “These preserves are an important part of our lives and should be saved for the future.

“With the help of technology like Google Earth, we find this unique mass of dunes in the region and learn more about what we need to do to preserve them.”



*Volunteer Lee Fiorio of Chicago uses a brush cutter to clear an area during a cleanup at the Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve in Gary, Ind., on Dec. 8, 2012. | Jeff Addison~For Sun-Times Media*