From Trash to Treasure

The story of how a dead ash tree became an easel

Good old fashioned craftsmanship and ingenuity are skills not everyone possesses these days, but two Goose Lake Prairie staff members, Chris Jones and Mike Sokolinski sure do have a hefty dose of both. Year after year, the Goose Lake Prairie Partners used borrowed easels for their annual Nature Photography Contest exhibit. While they are thankful to the Corn Festival Committee in Morris for their generosity in letting the Partners utilize the club's easels year after year, it was time to have a set of their own.

Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area has several ash trees that succumbed to the emerald ash borer and died. Rather than cut down the dead trees and toss them to the burn pile, Site Tech Chris Jones saw this as an opportunity to build Goose Lake Prairie's own set of easels. He, along with Site Tech Mikical Davis, harvested the wood to build the easels. Des Plaines State Fish and Wildlife Area was kind enough to share some dead wood at their location as well.

One section of dead ash cut down by Chris Jones and Mikical Davis

The Craftsmen: Mike Sokolinski & Chris Jones

With an ample supply of dead ash, off to the sawmill they went. Dan Daly of Daly Wood Products, Inc. generously donated his sawmilling services to cut the trees into boards. From there Chris and Mike Sokolinski worked to design the easels and build them. The Goose Lake Prairie Partners supplied the peg boards and hardware.

It takes a lot of vision, skill, time, and dedication to go from standing dead tree to finish product. We are thankful to have such talented craftsman on our

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