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## NORTHWEST ARKANSAS TIMES

### Helpers needed to plant near sewer

BY MARSHA L. MELNICHAK Northwest Arkansas Times

Posted on Tuesday, March 25, 2008

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Volunteers with rubber boots and shovels or sharpshooters are being sought to plant about 500 tree seedlings Thursday on two sites near the new West Side Wastewater Treatment Plant in Fayetteville.

The goal is to restore a savannah ecosystem and to achieve the forest mitigation at the same time, according to Bruce Shackleford, the city's environmental consultant for the wastewater treatment plant.

"I just decided I want to contribute," Shackleford said. "I'm kind of on a mission to get this unique ecosystems under way in Fayetteville."

Savannahs were associated with prairies in Northwest Arkansas 150 years ago, he said. Scattered trees allow sunlight for prairie grasses and other prairie plants.

The trees will be planted immediately north of the wastewater treatment plant on Broyles Avenue in the Woolsey Wet Prairie Sanctuary and near Goose Creek, immediately to the south of the



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treatment plant.

Volunteers will meet in the parking lot at the new treatment plant at 8: 30 a.m. Thursday. Those who would like to volunteer are asked to call Shackleford at (501 ) 765-9009.

Shackleford estimated that it will take about one minute to plant each of the seedlings and that a crew of four could finish both sites in about six hours.

Shumard oak, northern red oak, green ash, black walnut and persimmon seedlings for the project are in cold storage at the Arkansas Forestry cooler in Fayetteville. The seedlings have to be picked up no later than two weeks from Monday.

"These little seedlings are dormant root stock," Shackleford said. "Once you lift them out of their bed in cold storage, you have to plant them within no more than two days or they start coming out of dormancy. If they're not in the ground and having water and nutrients coming into their root system, they're going to die."

Planting does not involve digging a large hole and filling it with potting soil. A sharpshooter's long, skinny shovel blade opens a deep, narrow hole, ideal for planting the seedlings.

"You just basically take a shovel or a sharpshooter and cut a little slit in the ground that's deep enough to put the roots from this little dormant root stock seedling in the ground, then you tramp down the ground next to it," Shackleford said. "It's not going to be extremely hard work. They're little, small trees."

The city is required to plant the trees to offset losses of forested wetlands and riparian forest due to construction of the plant and associated structures and sewer alignments.

"No more than we have to do - I just decided I'm going to do it myself," said Shackleford, explaining it will save time and money.

It will save the city money because Shackleford bought the tree seedlings and because the city won't have to pay for the planting.

He estimated an overall savings of about \$ 80, 000 for the wetlands contract, which includes earlier savings from the land repairing itself after cattle were removed.

Perhaps more importantly, the time saved by not having to go through the bid process for planting the seedlings will help ensure that the trees are planted when they should be.

"We'll get it done at a critical time of the season when those little trees have to be put in the ground before it starts getting too dry,"

Shackleford said. "We'll be just that much closer to achieving our goals with the Woolsey Wet Prairie Sanctuary."

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