

PHS students clean up outdoor classroom site

Knox County watershed coordinator Roy Arthur called it an invasive species removal. But it sure looked like a long afternoon of pulling weeds.

Twenty students from Will Roberts' environmental science class at Powell High joined four AmeriCorps volunteers yesterday in the removal of English Privet and Chinese Honeysuckle from the future site of the PHS Outdoor Classroom on land adjacent to the high school. Arthur said the volunteers cleared roughly one half acre of the invasive species in an hour and a half. The project was held as part of the Knox County Adopt-A-Watershed Program.

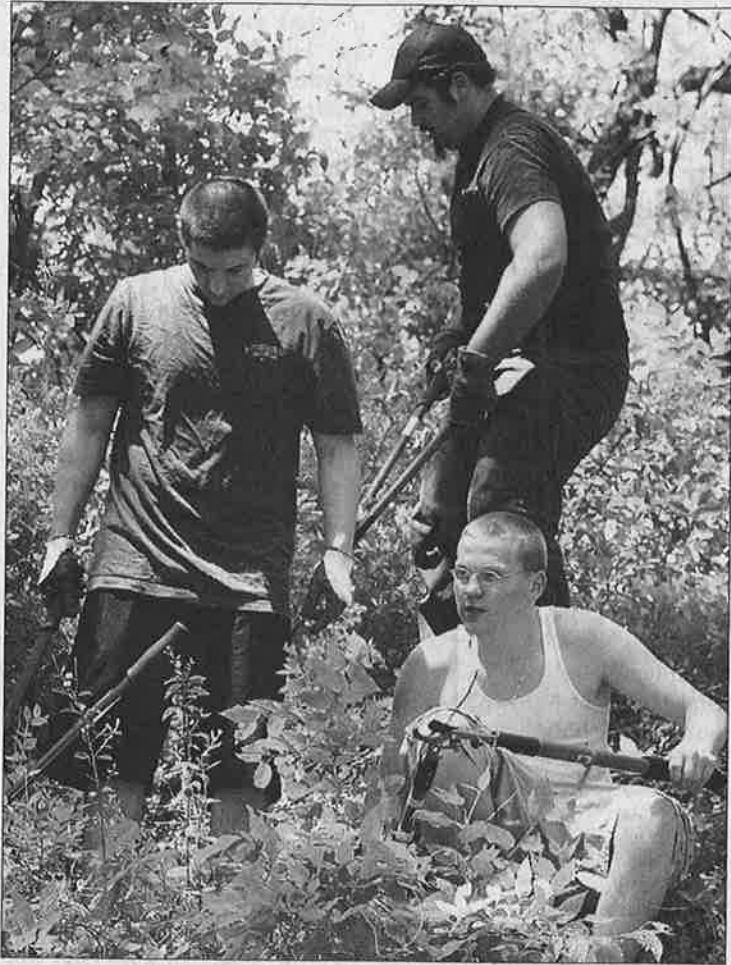
"Invasive species crowd out the native species," Arthur said. "That area was so thick, they had to start on the outside and cut their way in. The (long-term) goal is to clear it all out, kill it and then replant the native species."

Arthur said the goal was to cut a path back to the old Dinky Line Railroad trestle that sits along with 50-60 yards of a rail bed on the outdoor classroom site.

"The railroad was used to transport clay to the old brick yard 150 years ago," Arthur said. "Clay was transported from the present day Food City location (in Powell Place Shopping Center), where it was mined, to the old brick ovens that were located in front of what is now Merita Bakery at the corner of Brickyard and Emory roads. It was a narrow gage rail line and that's why they called it the Dinky Line."

Arthur said the trestle will be preserved as a historic feature in the upcoming Powell Station Park.

"The plan is to put the trestle on the National Historic Regis-



Powell High School students Scott Walker, Garrett Bledsoe and (kneeling) Dustin Capps help clear a path to the old Dinky Line Railroad trestle that sits on the future site of the Powell Outdoor Classroom. (Photo by Ruth White)

ter," Arthur said. "The idea is to preserve it. It's going to be a feature in the new park. We'll hopefully build a trail over it."

The Knox County school board approved a joint agreement between the school system and Knox County to construct a 6.5-acre park on the site in March. Construction is slated to begin later this year. The plan includes the construction of an outdoor classroom for Powell High students.

"It will be similar to what we did at Halls High," Arthur said

of the outdoor classroom. "Today was the beginning. The first step is the invasive species removal, which will continue this spring and summer. We'll get with teachers and students and start the design this fall. We've already met with the faculty and they are excited."

Arthur said native species such as Button Bush, Sweet Shrub, Witch Hazel and Indigo Bush will be replanted at the site once the invasive species are removed.

— Jake Mabe