

# FORESTRY

## notes

<http://nacdnet.org/news/publications/forestrynotes>

## Helping friends in need

### An Illinois district steps up to help several area conservation sites following a wind storm



When a storm ripped through the Quad Cities area on a July morning in 2008, the 95 to 100 mile-per-hour winds it carried with it heavily damaged dozens of acres of forest land in Illinois' Black Hawk State Historic Site and Nature Preserve, located in Rock Island County. The destruction was disheartening to Site officials. Black Hawk staff cleaned up around the facilities, but they didn't have the crew, budget or expertise to manage the process in the forest.

The Collinson Ecological Preserve, a local forest owned by Augustana College, received similar damage from the storm. Fortunately, both Black Hawk and Augustana had already established a working relationship with Rock Island County Soil and Water Conservation District, which was equipped and willing to lend a hand.

On the surface, the project looked a bit daunting. The Black Hawk forest, in particular, was full of downed trees, and access to certain areas of the 200-acre forest was limited.

"The wind storm really did a number on the forest canopy in a number of parks and natural areas throughout the Quad Cities area," says Matthew Schramm, Rock Island County SWCD's Resource Conservationist. In some cases, the tops of mature oak trees had snapped. "Some of these trees were probably on the edge, anyway, from a stocking standpoint and forest health, but the storm precipitated major ecological changes and allowed invasive tree and shrub species to take off. We started to lose the oak-hickory component to the landscape."

Schramm and other conservation leaders were not just worried about fighting off burning bush, buckthorn and bush honeysuckle; Rock Island County SWCD had conducted a number of prescribed burns in Black Hawk dating back to 2007. Says Schramm, "We realized that without doing something to treat the hazardous fuels, we wouldn't be able to continue to do prescribed burning because of the fuel loading and smoke management concerns."

The district looked into a number of federal grant options but failed to receive approval for funding. Then, during a wildland fire training session in November of 2009, district leaders struck up a conversation with Tom Wilson, the forest health manager for the

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## Agroforestry: The time is now



Tom Crowe

In this month's Forestry Notes readers will find a four-page insert dedicated to agroforestry. There has been a lot of buzz about this subject over the past year, and in May I was honored to represent NACD as a member of the newly-formed Interagency Agroforestry Team.

Agroforestry practices have led to better crop yields, improved conservation on the land, and in some instances provided another source of income. But there remains a shortage of natural resource profes-

sionals equipped to answer landowner questions and assist in planning efforts. Conservation districts have the ability to help, and as you'll see in this month's insert there is a wealth of information and opportunity awaiting those districts willing to.

If your district is already working with a landowner on an agroforestry practice, use it as a demonstration site for other landowners who might benefit from one of the five agroforestry practices. For those districts not engaged in agroforestry, consider having a member of your staff attend a local workshop or gain advanced knowledge through an online program.

The time for agroforestry is now. I encourage you to get involved and assist those farmers and landowners interested in exploring all agroforestry has to offer.

Enjoy the insert!

### Tom Crowe

*Regional director for the Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, and a member of the Interagency Agroforestry Team and NACD Forest Resources Policy Group*

# Rock Island County SWCD ... continued from page 1

Illinois' Department of Natural Resources. Wilson suggested they seek funding available through the Healthy Forest Act. Says Schramm, most of the Act's grant dollars had been used to assist wildland urban interface projects in the West, but a few Midwestern projects had also been rewarded. The district enlisted partners and outlined a plan of action.

"I think what helped with the submission was that we put together a coalition to do this rather than trying to tackle it ourselves," says Schramm. "We held meetings with the site managers, Illinois DNR and our partners at the Scott County (Iowa) Conservation Board, and we worked extensively through Interstate Resource Conservation & Development, a multi-state RC&D which includes two counties in Iowa and three in Illinois. Mark Jackson, the RC&D project coordinator, was instrumental in helping us assemble our project team and facilitate development of the grant proposal. Through Interstate, we were also able to bring Scott County into the project to help address storm damage and significant wildland-urban interface issues at one of their forested sites in Davenport."

Other partners in the coalition included representatives from the Black Hawk State Historic State, Augustana College, and the Quad City Natural Area Guardians (RISWCD's volunteer stewards corps). Dr. Sean Jenkins, a fire ecology professor from

Western Illinois University, also offered expertise. The group submitted its proposal in January 2010.

After several months of waiting the coalition was awarded a \$120,500 grant. The grant is administered through the Northeastern Area of USFS State and Private Forestry, and goes through the Illinois DNR to Interstate RC&D, which has subcontracted the work to Rock Island County SWCD. Cleanup efforts began in fall 2010 and the coalition has until June 2012 to complete its work.

Says Schramm, "We tried to time it so we would have two complete burn seasons, realizing you can only safely put so much fire on the ground in any given year."

To start, the district did fuel load assessments for the existing timber stands and developed burn maps. Prescribed fires to reduce fuels (both pile and landscape burns) and mechanical treatments were initiated at the Collinson and Blackhawk sites in November 2010. Because of the amount of heavy fuels, and limited access within the ecological sensitive sites, the district has had to use chain saws, hand tools, and a chipper to reduce the size of the burn piles. In February, a student conservation association crew and a crew boss – both funded by the grant – will join the effort. Local volunteers from the Quad City Natural Area Guardians are also providing significant match resources for the grant to assist with fuel treatments and prescribed fires.



**Black Hawk Historic Site was in rough shape following a 2008 wind storm. Rock Island County SWCD is assisting in the cleanup efforts.**

The coalition also plans to establish 15- to 30-foot wide fuel load breaks within high priority WUI areas in Scott County's West Lake Park. As Dave Murcia, naturalist/director for the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and Scott County Conservation Board explains, "Particular emphasis will be placed on reducing fuels at residential boundaries, communication facilities, and interstate corridors while creating appropriate site conditions for the safe applications and management of prescribed fire. The unique partnership between the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center, the Interstate RC&D and the Rock Island SWCD will also allow us to conduct educational opportunities for hazardous fuels management, wildfire suppression, and prescribed burning for a wide range of participants and local audiences."

Schramm says the chipped material from Black Hawk will be used as mulch in areas where there are erosion problems on trails. A portable sawmill will also be used so that some of the salvageable timber located outside of the nature preserves can be turned into lumber to help Black Hawk restore deteriorating park benches, picnic tables and signage.

For more information on the forest restoration work being done in the Quad Cities area, contact Matthew Schramm, Resource Conservationist for the Rock Island County Soil and Water Conservation District, at 309-764-1486 ext. 3, or via email at [matthew.schramm@il.nacdn.net](mailto:matthew.schramm@il.nacdn.net).



**A fire crew takes care of some burning bush at the Collinson Ecological Preserve in Milan, Illinois.**



## Oregon State curriculum assists with transition

Oregon accountant and forest landowner Clint Bentz was tired of seeing families struggle to work through ownership issues during times of transition. Without a healthy dialogue and a connection to the land, he learned, siblings were unable to settle their differences, and often the property was parceled and sold off.

Bentz and a colleague with the Austin Family Business Program began offering workshops to help Oregon families through these issues, but ultimately the demand for these workshops began to put a strain on Bentz's career. In 2004, he began working with Oregon State University Forestry Extension to develop educational materials that natural resource educators without succession planning expertise could use to educate landowners. In 2008, with funding from the American Forest Foundation, the Ties to the Land Initiative was founded to establish partnerships and collaborations that make succession planning education available to landowners everywhere.

The Ties to the Land curriculum identifies the common problems forest and other types of landowners face in planning for intergenerational transitions and guides them through the necessary discussion and planning phases. For a minimal fee – set by the host organization in each state – landowners can attend a six-hour workshop (usually presented in two sessions). The workshop is presented on video by two highly qualified succession planning professionals who instruct on the relational, financial, and legal factors involved in succession planning.

So far, more than 1,500 families have attended the workshop. Based on follow up evaluations, Mary Sisock, the Initiative's director, estimates the program has de-

creased the probability that up to 50,000 acres will be broken off and sold. She points out that estate planning is not enough. "Taxes are important," she says, "but they shouldn't drive the legacy. There has to be a shared vision."

In 2009, the Initiative launched an updated website and plans are in place to add more interactive options online. Ties to the Land workshops are offered in 14 states through various conservation assistance offices. In addition, for \$25 families in locations without workshops can order a workbook that helps them walk through the process. A DVD included in the workbook also features three case studies for what can happen if a family waits too long to build a plan. "People find those enlightening," says Sisock.

"What's really exciting is that two-thirds of the families going through this curriculum have already made progress on their plans. Making progress is important because succession planning is a process that takes time," says Sisock. Succession planning professionals warn that it may take families with a large amount of forested acreage or in complicated situations three to 10 years to build a plan. One couple sent Sisock a note stating, 'we are in our 80s and don't expect to deal with this for some time.' Sisock hoped they were right, but thought it was optimistic. She uses it to emphasize a key point: "People don't want to face problems until they have to, and no one wants to think about their own mortality. They really need help to face and take action on succession planning."



**Families face many obstacles when dealing with a land transfer. A new program through Oregon State University is offering some help.**

Women play a big role in helping to make for a smooth transition, Sisock believes. "Women are the chief emotional officers of families," she says. "Since a big part of this is about communication, women are able to have those conversations and help people pull together." Another reason that it is important for women to be involved is that they live longer than men. "The first transfer of property is actually to a surviving spouse which is generally the woman. Too often, wives inherit but have little knowledge about the value and management of the trees and land. This adds stress and makes them vulnerable. The conversations that are part of succession planning eliminate this problem," says Sisock.

Ties to the Land was designed to keep landowning families ahead of the legal and emotional stresses that face those who fail to plan. For more information about Ties to the Land, visit <http://tiestotheLand.org>, or contact Mary Sisock at 541-737-6014, or via email at [mary.sisock@bus.oregonstate.edu](mailto:mary.sisock@bus.oregonstate.edu).



### Annual Idaho conference slated for March

Forest landowners are invited to the 23rd annual Family Forest Landowners & Managers Conference & Exposition on March 21-23 at the University Inn-Best Western in Moscow, Idaho.

## Forestry Briefs

This year's conference theme is "International Year of the Forest: What Does That Mean on My Land?" Presentations will focus on four main topics: what we have learned from international forestry; small-scale operations and equipment; burning on your property: flames, fears and benefits; and bugs, cruds and trespass.

Additionally, a special session of "Ties to the Land-Your Family Forest Heritage" will be offered on March 24 to help families with intergenerational planning for transitioning forestland to succeeding generations. This session is limited to 25 people.

For registration information, contact University of Idaho Extension-Kootenai County, at 208-446-1680 or [kootenai@uidaho.edu](mailto:kootenai@uidaho.edu). For program information, contact 208-683-3168 or [info@idahoforestowners.org](mailto:info@idahoforestowners.org).



### Woody Biomass Utilization Grants available

The U.S. Forest Service is accepting applications for Woody Biomass Utilization

Grants. The funding will help applicants complete the necessary design work needed to secure public and/or private investment for construction. Fifteen grants will be awarded, at a maximum of \$250 each. The projects funded will use woody biomass material removed from forest restoration activities, such as wildfire hazardous fuel treatments, insect and disease mitigation, forest management due to catastrophic weather events or thinning overstocked stands.

The grants are available through the Forest Service's State and Private Forestry Technology Marketing Unit, located at the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wis. For more information, visit <http://www.grants.gov> and search 'woody biomass'.



## Tax Tips available for download

With spring around the corner, forest landowners must begin to prepare for the tax season. This is sure to bring complex questions, especially for people who have recently inherited forested property. To add to this frustration, those landowners may find help is hard to come by.

“A lot of CPAs are not familiar with these issues,” says Linda Wang, the U.S. Forest Service’s National Timber Tax Specialist. “It’s not their fault because most of them do not specialize in timber taxation.”

For the past five years, Wang has helped draft the Forest Service’s popular “Tax Tips for Forest Landowners.” Wang, and John L. Greene, a research forester at the Southern Research Station, co-authored this year’s guide.

The easy-to-follow, two-page document addresses several common topics, including: timber sales, timber management expenses, reforestation costs, and casualty losses. Each topic provides examples and directs CPAs and landowners to the proper tax form to use.

Tax Tips’ mission is simple – to assist landowners, foresters and tax profession-

als in finding timely solutions for timber tax-related questions. One common hurdle forest landowners face is determining the cost of their timber, which is key in reducing taxes when reporting timber sale or casualty losses.

“If you inherited the property years ago, like many people do, you really need to dig up records to see if someone established a value on the timber back then. If not, work with a forester to set it up,” says Wang. “Most people don’t realize the importance of the cost records until they have a timber sale or casualty. The best time to do it is when you acquire the timber. It’s just like when you buy or inherit a house – you know the value, the purchase price and other related costs the best at that time– only timber is a bit more complicated. It takes three people, really – the tax professional, forester and landowner – to work together to establish that cost.”

To view “Tax Tips for Forest Landowners for the 2010 Tax Year,” visit [www.timbertax.org/developments/TimberTaxTips2010.pdf](http://www.timbertax.org/developments/TimberTaxTips2010.pdf).

## Conservation Calendar

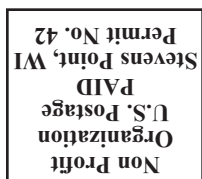
- **March 21-23** – 23rd Annual Family Forest Landowners & Managers Conference, University Inn-Best Western, Moscow, Idaho. Contact Kirk David at 208-683-3168 or [info@idahoforestowners.org](mailto:info@idahoforestowners.org)
- **March 23-25** – 2011 Timberland Investment Conference, The Ritz-Carlton Lodge, Lake Oconee, Ga. Visit <http://www.ugacfb.com/timberlandasset>
- **March 23-25, 2011** – Small Log Conference, Coeur d’Alene Resort, Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. Visit <http://www.timberbuysell.com/slc>
- **May 2-5, 2011** – International Biomass Conference & Expo, America’s Center, St. Louis, Mo. Visit <http://www.biomassconference.com>
- **June 4-9, 2011** – 12th North American Agroforestry Conference, hosted by the University of Georgia. Visit <http://hosting.caes.uga.edu/2011NAAC>
- **June 28-July 1** – 4th Annual Ecosystem Markets Conference, sponsored by the World Resources Institute and American Forest Foundation, Madison Concourse Hotel, Madison, Wis. Contact Todd Gartner at [Todd.Gartner@wri.org](mailto:Todd.Gartner@wri.org).

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email: [forestrynotes@email.nacdnet.org](mailto:forestrynotes@email.nacdnet.org)  
news deadline - 15th day of the proceeding month

## Share Your Success Stories

Have you implemented a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, successfully implemented fuel-load reduction practices or assisted with agroforestry practices? Your successes can be shared with other districts through NACD’s communication tools. Tell us about your district’s work by sending us a note at [forestrynotes@email.nacdnet.org](mailto:forestrynotes@email.nacdnet.org)



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