

FORESTRY

notes

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Forestry news from Nashville



Conservation district leaders talk forestry at the 2011 NACD Annual Meeting

Forest issues were highlighted at the 2011 NACD Annual Meeting, held in Nashville last month. One of the general session speakers was Scott Jones of the Forest Landowners Association (see story on page 3), and the session's keynote speaker, NRCS Chief Dave White, touched on forest topics during his presentation, as well.

The 2012 Farm Bill dominated much of the talk during the four-day meeting, with forestry having a part in some of that discussion. As is true in all areas of the bill, forest leaders may need to prepare for the challenges ahead. Congressman Frank Lucas, Chairman of the House Ag Committee, said via teleconference, "The best-case scenario in this Farm Bill, my friends, would be to keep what we have." Even that, said Lucas, would require a \$6-8 billion increase.

The process of crafting the next Farm Bill will take time, he explained; this next year will be used to get the rash of new congressional members educated on the Farm Bill's key points. Lucas expects a budget number to be released by the spring or summer of 2012. Nothing is safe, he said. "There are no sacred cows, so to speak. During these tough economic times we're going to look at every program."

Lucas encouraged NACD leaders in attendance to participate. "Your organization's leadership on this Farm Bill cannot be understated. It's critical that NACD be involved in the process."

The NACD Forest Resources Policy Group also met in Nashville to discuss topics, including NACD's participation on the Joint Forestry Team and Interagency Agroforestry Team. The group reviewed its 2011 priorities and listened to reports from all of the partners in attendance.

The group also discussed longleaf pine restoration. The Department of Defense (DoD) is currently working with NACD to outline a relationship where districts could assist DoD with conservation objectives, including forest planning. Said Bruce



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District leaders who attended the Annual Meeting visited the many displays in the Conservation Expo area of the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Conference Center

Next Month

A California district chipping service helps landowners accomplish several goals





Partnership aims to tackle burning issue



District, local agencies help set up burn group to address red cedar in Oklahoma

Eastern red cedar has been a concern for Oklahoma landowners for a number of years. A mature tree can soak up as many as 30 gallons of water a day, suffocating much of what exists around it, and the lack of natural fire in the state has allowed eastern red cedar to spread at a rapid rate.

In fall 2009, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director Clay Pope told the state's House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, "This is a scary situation. We're losing 700 acres to this invasive species every day."

Conservation leaders in the state have tried a number of ways to address the problem in recent years; as one district can attest, sometimes success requires more than one effort.

In 2005, The Nature Conservancy hoped to develop a prescribed burn cooperative in the Pontotoc County region to take advantage of equipment purchased through grant funds. After a few meetings, discussions dissolved.

Undeterred by the failed attempt, the Pontotoc County Conservation District and the local NRCS office decided a burn group was worth another try. Landowners were regularly complaining to both offices about how the red cedar problem was out of hand.

NRCS and the district decided to host a local meeting, where forest health and prescribed burn experts could help to educate landowners. Groups represented at the meeting included the Farm Service Agency, the Oklahoma State University Extension office, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, and The Nature Conservancy. After the initial organizational meeting the next step in the plan was simple: find strong leadership and assist the group any way possible in getting work done on the ground.

"The first time, the agencies involved didn't give the local landowners sufficient follow-up support," said Clay Horton, the acting district conservationist for NRCS' Ada Field Office. "This time we agreed to make a conscious effort to provide the support needed to keep the ball rolling."

Two months later, in March, the Pontotoc Ridge Prescribed Burn Association

(PRPBA) held its first monthly meeting at a local Coca-Cola plant. In the past year, the association has met regularly and this month plans to assist in the first of many prescribed burns planned for 2011.

Talk to any of the key agency representatives, and all will agree the reason it worked this time around boils down to one word: partnerships.

"The partnerships we have are the only reason we've been able to get this far," said April Casiano, the Pontotoc County Conservation District secretary and an active participant in assisting PRPBA. "All of us have contributed as much as we can to this effort, and because all of us are working together it's been so much easier."



Local landowners volunteered to act as the leaders of the group. Association Chairman Rance Walker is in a good position to help, as both a landowner and the chief of the Vanoss Volunteer Fire Department. And PRPBA has been creative in getting other tasks accomplished; the group worked with East Central University student Ryan

Ringle to develop a logo.

Horton points out that Oklahoma will never fully "solve" the red cedar problem, but with a strong effort like the one he is a part of in Pontotoc County, he believes the red cedar count can be reduced to a manageable level.

"It's all about helping landowners to reintroduce fire into their land management plans," said Horton, who added there is cost share assistance available through EQIP and with experience association members will be able to develop their own burn plans.

The association will also help to manage other invasives and assist with bobwhite quail habitat concerns.

To ensure PRPBA continues its work, many of the partnering agencies intend to stay involved. Pontotoc County Conservation District handles much of the association's administrative work, such as helping

to locate avenues for advertising, updating contact information for members and organizing monthly meetings. The district also assists NRCS in directing interested landowners to the association. Casiano believes this assistance allows association members to concentrate on drafting burn plans and doing field work instead of getting bogged down with paperwork.

Oklahoma State University Extension has also been a big help. John Weir, a research associate for Extension, was a presenter at both the 2005 and 2010 meetings, and continues to have an active role in educating landowners in Pontotoc County. And last May, PRPBA received a burn trailer thanks to the OSU Natural Resource Ecology and Management Extension program's Renewable Resource Extension Act (RREA) funds. "(Our) main focus with RREA is the promotion of prescribed fire in Oklahoma and what better way to promote fire than to equip landowners with good equipment to safely conduct prescribed burns," said Weir, who also serves as the chairman of Oklahoma's Prescribed Fire Council.

The six-foot by 10-foot trailer comes equipped with drip torches, and swatters, a leaf blower, ATV sprayers, a backpack pump sprayer, burn signs to post on the road, weather instruments, and first aid kits. The association plans to make it available to any landowner that has completed an approved burn plan.

According to Casiano, the district has used cost-share money to fund eastern red cedar control, and it continues to apply for grants that may help purchase needed equipment.

Added Casiano, "I hope to see that, 10 or 15 years from now, whenever a landowner considers a burn to deal with eastern red cedar that they don't have to think twice - that they automatically know there is a local burn organization that is set up, and it's strong, and it can help them."

To learn more about the Pontotoc Ridge Prescribed Burn Association, contact April Casiano, district secretary for the Pontotoc County Conservation District, via email at April.Casiano@ok.nacdnet.net.

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



Q&A with Forest Landowners Association CEO

Scott Jones understands the needs of private forest landowners. As the chief executive officer of the Forest Landowners Association (FLA), his primary job is to provide FLA members with education, information and national grassroots advocacy.

Established in 1941, FLA's membership has grown to include landowners in 48



Scott Jones
Forest Landowners Association, CEO

states, with ownership of more than 40 million acres of forestland.

The group produces a bi-monthly publication (*Forest Landowner*), organizes an annual conference, and provides members with discounted rates for comprehensive insurance policies.

Prior to joining FLA,

Jones worked for a Florida paper company, the Georgia Forestry Association and the Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association. He has attended a number of conservation district meetings, and in February he attended NACD's Annual Meeting in Nashville where he spoke about some of the challenges facing private forest landowners. Afterward, Jones shared time with *Forestry Notes* ...

Q: What did you intend to be the key take-away from your message to conservation district leaders in Nashville?

A: Since 60 percent, or 640 million acres, of our nation's forest are owned by individuals and companies, we must develop strategies to ensure their sustainability first so they can continue to manage their forests.

Q: What forestry topics or challenges cause FLA members to seek the most assistance from your organization?

A: Understanding how policy might impact the legacy they have created with their forest ownership. It can be very difficult to understand current statute or pending legislation and its impact on a long term investment such as forests, but FLA strives to make it easier to understand and act upon.

Q: Give our readers an area of growth that small forest landowners can take advantage of.

A: Renewable energy markets appear to be positioned to offer the best opportunity to ensure a marketplace for low-valued wood products. With the reduction in the number of pulp and paper mills it is important to have this market and all indications are that our country will be moving to an increased amount of renewable energy that includes wood.

Q: Based on what you've seen so far, how have your members taken advantage of forestry opportunities in the Farm Bill?

A: It's a mixed response. With the low level of funds available to forest stewardship projects the overall percentage of private forest landowners that can participate in projects is low. However, this in my mind has not led to any decrease in the level of stewardship of privately owned forests.

Q: How do you expect forestry's involvement in the next Farm Bill?

A: Unfortunately, I see a reduction in funding in the existing programs that are out there, and a hesitancy to add any new programs. I think it's just a reality we're all going to have to live with in the budget situation we're in. I think forestry should be happy to hang on to what they have, and not get their hopes up to add anything new.

Q: How do you see the average forest landowner changing 20 or 30 years from now?

A: I see more landowners managing smaller tracts of land. With this in mind it becomes even more urgent to ensure that policy is developed as a carrot not a stick for private landowners or the incentive to invest and

care for these lands might be removed causing a shift in land use patterns away from forests management.

Q: From what you know about conservation districts, what more can (or should) they do to assist forest landowners?

A: Private forest landowners need to be presented with educational opportunities in as many formats as possible so we can ensure we reach the largest number possible. As no one American is alike the same holds true for landowners. Therefore, we must recognize the diversity of this owner and make educational opportunities available to them if possible.

Q: How might FLA and conservation districts work with one another – at any level – to assist forest landowners?

A: Partnership is the key to make the most efficiencies out of limited resources and I truly believe that both organizations can expect to provide better services to their members with increased collaboration.

To learn more about the Forest Landowners Association, visit the group's website at <http://www.forestlandowners.com>. Districts are also able to sign up for FLA's free e-newsletter, Fast Facts, on the site.



Council seeks applicants for five openings

The National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council is seeking to fill five expired positions. Interested applicants may download a copy of the application

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from the U.S. Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/ucf>. Applications must be received by March 29, 2011. Email applications to: nucfac_ucf_proposals@fs.fed.us.



Wyoming officials identify heavy tree mortality rates

In early January, officials from the U.S. Forest Service and Wyoming State Forestry Division revealed that more than 300,000 acres of Wyoming forestland has been ravaged by the mountain pine beetle epidemic. The state has now identified more than 3 million lost acres since it began tracking the data in the mid-1990s.

At present, officials are focused on removing hazardous trees that pose a risk

to public areas. The material will be used mostly for firewood, although leaders in Wyoming are considering biomass options.

Forestry officials found another 314,000 acres of tree mortality across Wyoming in 2010, bringing to 3.1 million acres the total forest area lost since the mountain pine beetle epidemic appeared in the state in 1996. The U.S. Forest Service, along with the Wyoming State Forestry Division, shared the findings of a recent aerial survey with members of the Wyoming Legislature in early January.



New USFS report raises concerns over at-risk species

The projected increase of housing density in America's private forests have U.S. Forest Service officials concerned for the safety of thousands of at-risk species. These potential dangers are highlighted in the Forest Service's recently published, "Threats to At-Risk Species in America's Private Forests." The report updates methodology and findings of the Forests on the Edge study of the development impacts on at-risk species habitats. To view the full report, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace/fote/at-risk.html>.



Maryland is latest to sign MOU

In January, several Maryland agencies came together to sign a Memorandum of Understanding dedicated to keeping healthy and productive forests throughout the state. The Department of Natural Resources is leading the effort, with support from the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts, the Maryland Association of Forest Conservancy District Boards, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, the University of Maryland Extension, and the U.S. Forest Service and NRCS.

Maryland is the latest state to take the Joint Forestry Team's lead at the state level. Said Maryland State Forester, Steve Koehn,

"By improving how our partnerships function, and improving how we plan the delivery of our respective programs, we anticipate the forest landowner will get better service and working landscapes will benefit."

The agencies have agreed to work together to be more effective in providing forest landowners and managers with technical and financial assistance to improve the health, diversity and production of forests on privately owned lands — 76 percent of all forests in Maryland.

For more information on Joint Forestry Team activities, visit <http://jointforestry-team.org>.

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Beard, the DoD's Assistant Director for Environmental Readiness, "The key to the long-range plan is working with private landowners. That's why we're interested in working with conservation districts — you have the contacts."

The NACD Urban RPG also shared time in the Forest RPG meeting to discuss cross-over areas of interest for the two groups. In August, the Forest RPG plans to hold its annual meeting at Grey Towers National Historic Site in Pennsylvania.

Forest issues were central to a number of breakout sessions in Nashville. Forest RPG member Garth Davis gave a presentation on defensible space for a session on

districts' role in disaster response, while Rick Gruen of the Placer County Resource Conservation District spoke of how his district has successfully used its chipper program to reduce the threat of wildfire (a feature story is planned for next month's *Forestry Notes*).

In another session, representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, Project Learning Tree and NACD spoke about forest-related activities and community outreach. NACD's Susan Schultz announced a number of activities planned throughout 2011 to celebrate the International year of Forests.

Conservation Calendar

- **March 23-25** – 2011 Timberland Investment Conference, The Ritz-Carlton Lodge, Lake Oconee, Ga. Visit <http://www.ugacfb.com/timberlandasset>
- **March 23-25** – Small Log Conference, Coeur d'Alene Resort, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Visit <http://www.timberbuysell.com/slc>
- **May 2-5** – International Biomass Conference & Expo, America's Center, St. Louis, Mo. Visit <http://www.biomassconference.com>
- **June 4-9** – 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.
- **Aug. 2-4** – NACD Forest RPG Meeting, Grey Towers National Historic Site, Glenside, Penn. Contact Yenjie Tran at [yenjie-tran@nacdnet.org](mailto:yenie-tran@nacdnet.org)

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