

FORESTRY

notes

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Celebrating our forests



Year of Forests gives districts an opportunity to educate, build partnerships

In March, the U.S. Forest Service, National Association of State Foresters (NASF) and American Forest Foundation (AFF) hosted an event to kick off the U.S. celebration of the International Year of Forests. The year-long celebration – as so declared by the United Nations General Assembly – was designed to be a ‘global platform to celebrate people’s actions to sustainably manage the world’s trees and forests.’

More than 350 people attended the event, including USDA Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Forest Service Associate Chief Mary Wagner. Vilsack used the event to announce the USDA’s strategy to promote the use of wood as a green building material. Even Rolling Stones keyboardist (and noted conservationist) Chuck Leavell made an appearance. “It was a little bit of glamour that the forestry community doesn’t always get to experience,” laughs NASF Communications Director Sarah McCreary.

The U.S. has created a list of priorities for the global celebration, which can be found on the International Year of Forests website (<http://celebrateforests.com>), and participating organizations have several ways in which to use it as a tool to advance forest objectives.

A good time to partner

International Year of Forests is an opportunity for organizations with common forest-related interests to come together and share ideas. And even though the celebration will be contained to just 2011, the partnerships that are formed have the potential to last many years.

All it takes is for representatives from those groups to come together for a singular purpose. “(The kickoff event) was a good example,” says McCreary. “You saw a diverse list of groups that aren’t always able to unite so seamlessly.”

Partnerships in the forest can help to overcome boundary disputes that sometimes disrupt progress, and can enhance the work being done on the ground through a more efficient use of staff resources and time.

Education is key

Just because one does not live near a forest does not mean he or she cannot appreciate it. The forest helps to provide the clean air, soil and water on which we rely every day. Districts can help people make this natural resource connection.

People also need to be reminded that the forest generates many of the products we use on a regular basis.



See 'Year of Forests' on Page 3



USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack speaks to elementary school students about their participation in Project Learning Tree. (Chris Kleponis/NASF)

Next Month

A new look for
Forestry Notes





SUFC works to advance urban issues

In April, the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUFC) held its advocacy day and annual meeting in Washington D.C., where representatives from partner agencies and organizations spent time on Capitol Hill and discussed the Coalition’s priorities for the upcoming year. Western Issues and Forestry Specialist Yenie Tran and Grassroots and Policy Advisor Danielle Dills represented NACD.

Says Jennifer Judd Hinrichs, SUFC’s convener, the objective of this year’s advocacy day was two-fold: to advocate for the Urban and Community Forestry Program within the U.S. Forest Service, and to discuss the Urban Revitalization and Livable Communities Act (HR709). The act aims to revitalize urban settings by re-investing in community parks and recreational facilities. “Obviously urban trees play a significant role within that,” says Hinrichs.

While in Washington D.C., representatives from a number of SUFC’s two dozen

partners met with congressional leaders to discuss the economic and environmental benefits of urban forestry. It’s a tough sell in a challenging fiscal climate, Hinrichs admits, but the results were encouraging. “The feedback I got from those 30-plus meetings was that their message was well received and several staffers actively encouraged our members to provide more information and cultivate bi-partisan champions for urban trees and healthy communities,” she says.

SUFC came together in 2004 as a result of an urban forestry roundtable held in Savannah, Georgia. The goal of the groundbreaking meeting, sponsored by the Forest Service, was to effectively raise the profile of urban forestry by building a stronger and more diverse urban forestry community. “By working with diversified stakeholders, the urban forestry community was less constrained, could leverage more resources, and generally increase our collective capacity to support



more livable and sustainable communities,” says Hinrichs.

The group decided to form a coalition – what Hinrichs calls “the most diverse urban-focused environmental group” she’s aware of – and over time partners began to share ideas and resources. This collaboration spawned projects such as the Planning for Urban and Community Forestry: A Best Practices Manual for Urban Planning and Development Project Review produced by the American Planning Association and several SUFC member organizations. The report was the culmination of a three-year research project and is a best-practices manual about integrating urban forestry into municipal

See 'SUFC' on Page 4

Wyoming district plays key role in forest rehab

Like so many areas in the West, much of Wyoming’s forestland has been infested by the pine bark beetle. In just the last few years, more than 75 percent of the 400,000 acres of lodgepole pine in the Medicine Bow National Forest has been ravaged by the pest.

It’s a growing problem. Little Snake River Conservation District is working on a solution.

Back in 2005, the district entered into a five-year stewardship contract with the U.S. Forest Service to address the buildup of hazardous fuels in Medicine Bow National Forest, thereby reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfire. That work has spawned two efforts that have proven compatible with the original design of the stewardship contract – one to market the removed dead or diseased wood, and another to revitalize the area’s declining aspen population.

Says Larry Hicks, the district’s natural resource coordinator, “What we’ve tried to do is strategically target where we can combine our efforts to create a forest canopy that’s advantageous to the wildlife and watershed health.”

As part of its agreement with the Forest Service, the district was able to find ways to utilize the material it pulled out of the forest. Some of the removed material was used for commercial products, such as posts and poles, and wood chips were marketed for reclamation mulch. And, as part of its thinning efforts, the district worked with the Forest Service to provide families and individuals with an opportunity to harvest their own

Christmas trees in the National Forest.

The Aspen Initiative Joint Venture aims to reduce the encroachment of conifers and re-establish aspen habitats. The project is made possible with contributions from the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and landowners’ contributions from Farm Bill funding. Over the next five years the district hopes to revitalize 10,000 acres of aspen in Carbon County. The project will also enhance habitats for Wyoming’s moose, mule deer, elk, aquatic and avian species.

Hicks says restoring the aspen population has also aided the district’s fuel reduction work. “Aspen is the most fire-resistant forest canopy type we have,” he says. “By encouraging the aspen, it reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire.”

To further assist in reducing the threat of wildfire, the district partnered with the Wyoming Department of Transportation on an ambitious fuel break project. In 2009, the district logged approximately two million board feet of hazardous material out of the forest along a 9.3-mile stretch of Battle Highway. Harvested trees were sent to a wood pellet mill in Colorado, and firewood was provided to district residents at no cost.

In little more than six years, Little Snake River Conservation District has helped to get a lot accomplished on the ground, much of which wasn’t considered in the original stewardship contract.

At the time the contract was signed, Forest Service officials were most concerned with spruce bark beetles in the area; the pine bark beetle had yet to make its entrance. But thanks to a flexible working relationship, the focus of the work changed to suit the needs of the forest. “The project evolved, as a good stewardship contract should,” says Hicks.

The original stewardship contract allowed for roughly \$50,000 in Forest Service funds. Thanks to assistance from its growing list of partners, more than \$1 million has been funneled through the district over the last four years to help with forest restoration projects – a number Hicks says will continue to grow.

“This year we have the largest budget we’ve ever had,” he says. “There’s a lot more to do. This is going to be a bigger, more robust program as we go along these next few years.”

Hicks says Little Snake River Conservation District has just entered into agreements with the Bureau of Land Management and the Wyoming Forestry Department to assist with similar treatments, and is exploring Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative funds through the Farm Bill as a source for future project work.

To learn more about the fuel reduction and forest restoration work being done by the Little Snake River Conservation District, contact Larry Hicks, natural resource coordinator, at 307-383-7860, or via email at lsred@yahoo.com.



Year of Forests ... continued from page 1

“People often will say ‘We don’t need to worry about forestry issues because we don’t have forests in our community,’” says NACD Stewardship and Education Coordinator Susan Schultz. “This is an opportunity to showcase the forest products they use in their everyday lives, whether it’s the paint they put on their walls that has cellulose, or the toothpaste they use, or the newspaper they read. Everybody has a connection to the forest.”

Conservation districts and other organizations can use the year-long celebration as a way to bring attention to forest issues, and to showcase work being done. McCreary says NASF will use this year’s celebration to bring awareness to the forest action plans that were completed by all states and territories last spring. The International Year of Forests is “a rallying point for the forestry community,” says McCreary. “We all have goals and challenges we’re addressing, and this allows us to come together and elevate our voice.”

Fun in the forest

Of course, with work should come a little play time – thus the U.S. International Year of Forests’ theme: ‘Celebrate Forests. Celebrate Life.’ There are a number of

organizations that provide forest-related activities for both children and adults. Conservation leaders can work with these organizations to bring the celebration to their districts.

The Nature Explore program encourages educators, designers and families to connect children with the nature that surrounds them. The program offers several classroom experiences – including science, social skills, math and music – and workshops for educators. Nature Explore is a collaborative project of The Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation. To learn more about it, visit www.NatureExplore.com.

Perhaps no organization offers as many ways to celebrate forestry as Project Learning Tree (PLT), an AFF-sponsored program. PLT is a hands-on set of teaching activities to help young people learn “how to think, not what to think” about environmental issues. The organization has a wealth of modules for districts to use during the International Year of Forests. Says Schultz, “The Places We Live module is perfect for use with district employees, board members, decision makers and others.”

According to Director of Education Programs Al Stenstrup, PLT is preparing to

launch another module in June: ‘Exploring Environmental Issues: Focus on Forests.’

“It promotes a broad understanding of the importance of forests at the local level,” says Stenstrup, “and ways to promote sustainable forest management and conservation for future generations.” This particular module’s activities cater to high school-aged students and adults and cover the following topics: forest health, climate change, and forest connections to watersheds. Stenstrup indicates that PLT has activity guides for educators that target students from PreK to High School.

PLT has a coordinator and facilitators in each state, allowing districts to make local connections. To locate your state’s PLT coordinator, visit http://www.plt.org/cms/pages/25_120_0.html.

More information on the U.S. celebration of the Year of Forests can be found on the official website (<http://celebrateforests.com>), which offers a variety of tools and educational materials. Districts can use the site to locate or post forest-related events going on in their area, and take advantage of the event toolkit to plan activities.

NACD releases forestry education materials

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) has developed ‘Forests for People: More Than You Can Imagine!’, a series of forestry education booklets for students in grades kindergarten and up. The booklets are available in English and Spanish.

Level 1 (grades K-1) covers leaves in various sizes, shapes and colors, why we need trees, and celebrating trees; Level 2 (grades 2-3) instructs on the importance of tree planting, what’s a tree cookie, and trees and biomes; Level 3 (grades 4-5) introduces careers in forestry, forest products in our homes, and renewable and non-renewable resources; and level 4 (grades 6 and up) makes the connection to forests in our everyday lives, and allows students to solve a wildfire scene investigation.

A CD has PowerPoint presentations to complement each student booklet, adult presentations, clip art and other forestry

resources. NACD provides an educator’s guide with additional booklet information, education standards and activities, as well as resources available on the NACD website.

(<http://www.nacdnet.org/education/resources/forestry>)

Additional forestry education materials include the activity sheet/placemat that can be used for students or adults at field days, local restaurants, annual meetings, senior centers and other outreach projects. The forestry bookmark and Forests for People poster provide a visual connection to the benefits of trees and forests.

The Plant A Tree booklet/poster gives an overview of the importance of planting trees and instructions on how to plant a tree. A big book covering forests and trees through the seasons, as well as products derived from trees provides a way to reach pre-kindergarten through grade 3 students. It measures 14 by 19.5 inches and contains large, beautiful photos that help bring the story to life.

NACD collaborated with the U.S. Forest Service Conservation Education on the development of the forestry student booklets and posters. This collaboration assisted in the promotion of the International Year of Forests.

Says project coordinator Susan Schultz, “Working with students in schools, homeschool and afterschool programs will assist in educating our youth about the importance of forests.”

Districts are encouraged to work with their local school district, public library, 4-H, scouts and other service groups to share the materials.

To order materials, visit the NACD Marketplace at <http://www.nacdstore.org>. To learn more about the materials, visit <http://www.nacdnet.org/education/resources/forestry>. For additional information, please contact Susan Schultz, NACD Stewardship and Education, Marketplace Project Manager, at 317-326-2952, or via email at susan-schultz@nacdn.net.

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Susan Schultz
NACD Stewardship and Education





SUFC ... continued from page 2

planning activities. SUFC is guided by a steering committee, and relies on members to lead its communication and policy groups. "It's so inclusive," Hinrichs adds. "It encompasses everything from national management organizations to grassroots organizations."

Following its annual meeting, SUFC is ready to tackle its next wave of projects to advocate for greener and healthier cities. It is helping to promote iTree, a collection of tools that help civic leaders understand the economic benefits trees offer to their community, be it environmental or job related. And in the coming months, Hinrichs says

SUFC may focus much of its attention on the next Farm Bill. SUFC is forming an urban forestry advisory committee to advise the Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition on urban needs. "(Urban forestry) is not something that has been brought to the forefront in the past," says Hinrichs. "Our organization has an opportunity to step forward and be that voice."

To learn more about the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition, visit the group's website at <http://urbanforestcoalition.com>. To learn more about iTree, visit its website at <http://www.itreetools.org>.

Conservation Calendar

- **June 4-9** – 12th North American Agroforestry Conference, hosted by the University of Georgia. Visit <http://hosting.caes.uga.edu/2011NAAC>
- **June 19-21** – Forest Products Society's 65th International Convention, Portland Ore. Visit <http://www.forestprod.org/ic65>
- **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
- **July 17-19** – NACD Summer Legislative Conference, Washington, D.C. Contact NACD at 202-547-6223 or meetings@nacdnet.org
- **Aug. 2-4** – NACD Forest RPG Meeting, Grey Towers National Historic Site, Milford, Penn. Contact Yenie Tran at yenie-tran@nacdnet.org
- **Aug. 9-11** – 2011 National Tree Farmer Convention, Santa Ana Pueblo, N.M. Visit www.treefarmssystem.org
- **Sept. 18-22** – 2011 NASF Annual Meeting, Renaissance Hotel, Baltimore, Md. Visit <http://www.stateforesters.org>

A joint project of NACD, USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters for the purpose of keeping America's conservation districts informed. Our services and programs are provided without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, handicap or religious affiliation. This publication is funded in whole or in part through a grant awarded by the USDA Forest Service, State and Private Forestry.

Send news items to: Yenie Tran, Managing Editor
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news deadline - 15th day of the preceding month



Districts asked to complete rangelands survey

At the end of 2010, NACD entered into a working relationship with the U.S. Forest Service's Rangelands office. As part of this partnership, the two organizations

Forestry Briefs

have developed a survey to gauge the rangeland and pastureland work being done by conservation districts

around the country. During the months of May and June, districts will receive a link to an electronic survey. All districts are asked to complete this survey, whether they are actively involved in rangeland or pastureland work or not. The survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. The deadline is June 30.



NACD Forest RPG welcomes new members

In April, NACD Forest Resources Policy Group Chairman Charles Holmes sent appointment letters to the seven members of his group. Joining the group as first-time members are Jeff Gossert (Northeast Region) and Steve Gatewood (Southwest). Both regional appointments were open this past year. Gossert owns J.L. Gossert & Co. Forestry and serves as a board member for the York County Conservation District in Pennsylvania. Gatewood is a board member for the Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District in Flagstaff, Arizona. Profiles for all of the group's members will be provided in the September issue of Forestry Notes.

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