

FORESTRY

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Getting the word out on fire

Jefferson County CD prepares handbook to help districts to address wildfire



Jefferson Conservation District in Lakewood, Colo. recently released a handbook entitled, "The Phoenix Guide: A handbook for watershed and community wildland fire recovery." The booklet is a product of information gathered from a number of western districts which have dealt with wildfire up close.

"We thought it would be great to gather the information together so that others could learn from our mistakes and successes," said Karen Berry, an official on the Conservation District's Board.

To download a copy of the handbook ...

go to http://www.jeffersonscd.org/Phoenix_Guide/Phoenix_Guide.htm.



Jefferson CD realized there was a need for the resource some time ago, after it had already assisted on several fires. According to Berry, "At the start of one fire season, districts contacted us to gain knowledge." The District organized a series of meetings, but then the Hayman Fire of 2002 arrived, demanding all of its attention. That fire consumed 133 homes in an area 30 miles southwest of Denver.

The devastation created by that fire, coupled with an even greater need for fire information from area respondents, led Jefferson CD to develop the full-color handbook. The district used a \$7,000 U.S. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry grant, via a subcontract with NACD, to fund the project, which began as a much smaller booklet that grew into a 126-page undertaking.

"Once we started talking to other organizations and conservation districts we realized there were so many aspects. It just naturally expanded," said Berry. "There are so many people doing good work out there."

The handbook is helpful to communities trying to recover from catastrophic wildfires, but Berry emphasized that it is of most help to those looking to prepare before a disaster sweeps through their community.

Said Berry, "One of the things we've tried to do in the manual is to help others get up emergency response methods ahead of time. It's not for post-fire, it's meant to help things go more smoothly ahead of the fire."

See 'Handbook' on Page 4



According to the handbook, one key to establishing a successful plan against wildfire is to build relationships with volunteers. (Ed Spence photo)

Next Month

Joint Forestry Team
 advances partnership





SFI external review panel welcomes Abusow as president

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) held its annual meeting September 24-27, 2007 in Snowbird, Utah. SFI is a fully independent, registered non-profit forest certification system with a governance structure having equal representation across three chambers: social, economic and environmental. The SFI program is a comprehensive and rigorous sustainable forestry certification system that encompasses more than 133 million certified acres in the U.S. and Canada and includes over 200 program participants.

SFI is endorsed by the Program for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), a globally recognized organization that has strict requirements for endorsement of forest certification systems.

The SFI External Review Panel (ERP) is composed of 18 independent experts representing conservation, environmental, professional, academic, and public organizations. The mission of the ERP is to provide a framework to conduct an independent review of the SFI program and to ensure the SFI Annual Report fairly states the status of SFI program implementation. The volunteer Panel provides external oversight with

their independent review of the current SFI program while seeking steady improvements in sustainable forestry practices. NACD is a member of SFI's External Review Panel.

The Snowbird meeting provided the ERP a first hand introduction to Kathy Abusow, the new President and Chief Executive Officer of SFI, Inc. "Kathy brings a tremendous amount of credibility to SFI" said Fred Deneke who currently serves as NACD's representative on the External Review Panel.

Before joining SFI, Inc., Abusow operated Abusow International Ltd., a successful forest certification and market acceptance consultancy. She is highly respected internationally as both a technical expert on certification standards (SFI, CSA, FSC, PEFC) and related marketplace issues such as procurement policy design and green building rating tools acceptance of wood and certified products.

Abusow is a member of the Canadian Institute of Forestry, Board member of the Canadian Forestry Association, and past-chair of the Society of American Foresters' Sustainability and Certification Working Group.

For more information on SFI visit <http://www.sfiprogram.org>.

Farrell named NASF executive director

Jay Farrell has been appointed as the new Executive Director of the National Association of State Foresters, a non-profit organization comprised of forestry agency directors representing all 50 states, eight U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. He joined NASF on Nov. 5.

"I am humbled and honored to be selected to serve the nation's state foresters. Through a unified vision and visible leadership, NASF has made positive impacts on forestry that serve the public interest. I look forward to contributing to that proud tradition," said Farrell.

Prior to joining NASF, Farrell was Manager, Field Operations, for the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), North America's largest forest certification program. He helped establish SFI as an independent non-profit organization and managed a grassroots network of 37 SFI Implementation Committees in the U.S. and Canada. Farrell guided the development of many of the logger training, landowner education, and public outreach requirements



Jay Farrell
NASF
Executive Director

in the SFI Standard.

"Jay is uniquely qualified and an excellent fit for this position," said NASF President and Arizona State Forester Kirk Rowdabaugh. "His extensive experience in forestry, business administration, and association management will allow him to immediately exercise leadership as NASF seeks to advance sustainable forestry, the conservation and protection of forest lands and associated resources, and the establishment and protection of forests in the urban environment."

Farrell comes to NASF with a wide range of professional experience including eight years as a forest policy specialist with the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA), eleven years as a forester for Westvaco Corporation (now MeadWestvaco) including service as Public Lands Committee Chair for the West Virginia Forestry Association; and two years as corporate Material Acquisition Manager for American Wood Fibers, Inc.,...

Farrell holds a BSF in Forest Resources Management from West Virginia University, an MBA from Averett University, and is a Certified Association Executive (CAE). He is a member of the Society of American Foresters (SAF) and the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).

Joint Forestry Team explores strengths

State foresters, conservation districts, NRCS and the U.S. Forest Service are exploring ways to better work together. Texas State Forester James Hull outlined well the challenge ahead for all that provide landowner assistance as he opened the recent National Association of State Foresters' meeting in San Antonio. He said "Although the total forest acreage has remained at about the same level over the last 100-years, we have 100 million more people in this country and we have shifted to an urban society." Hull said that with the increase in population and the increased number of landowners, "State forestry agencies were not created to handle things at the scale we have today." He went on to describe how state agencies and others in the forestry community will have to partner together to keep forests as forests. Hull offered an open challenge to traditional and prospective partners: Changing landowners + changing forests = changing roles.

NACD board members and state foresters are participating on a Joint Forestry Team (Team) with USDA's Forest Service and NRCS. This ongoing forum shares information and ideas about the delivery of forestry and related conservation services on working farms, forests and ranch lands. Three members of NACD's Board of Directors serve on the Team - Charles Holmes from Alabama and Chairman of the NACD forestry committee, Dr. Orval Gigstad from Nebraska and NACD forestry committee member; and Johnny Sundstrom from Oregon and NACD legislative committee member.

Over the next few months, the Team will revise the old 1995 memorandum of understanding between NRCS, USFS and NASF to improve the signatories' coordination of their forestry work. The updated MOU will also include NACD as a cooperater in this effort. Organizations are also polling themselves to find experiences with forestry and conservation assistance to see what part of on the ground implementation is working and what could be improved. NRCS, USFS, NASF and NACD leaders will be advised of potential steps that can be taken to improve collaboration, beginning with an interagency briefing the end of this month.



Washington district makes CWPP a priority

On the Cascadia Conservation District Web site, atop its section on wildfire preparedness, reads a quote from Benjamin Franklin: "By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail." The district has made preparing for wildfire one of its primary goals over the past few years, with the hope of minimizing the after-effects it leaves behind.

Five years ago, the Washington district was contacted by Chelan County officials who were looking to invest grant funds they had received from another source.

"The grant didn't provide much direction

and the timeline was about to expire," said Michael Rickel, Cascadia program manager. "At the time, the Healthy Restoration Act of 2002 had passed, with an outline for community wildfire protection plans (CWPP)."

Because Chelan County had a history with wildfire, and because CWPPs were eligible under the County's existing grant, it was a good fit. "The folks that had seen those previous fires became very interested," said Rickel. The area is heavily forested, said Rickel, with wildland urban interface being a concern.

To act, the district took out a number of newspaper advertisements and outlined the boundaries to 10 fire districts, each anywhere from 10,000 to 25,000 acres. Then landowner steering committees were organized, and a series of meetings were held.

"It provided the fire districts an opportunity to talk to folks about what could be done to

minimize the risks of wildfire," said Rickel.

Since then the District has signed six CWPPs. To accomplish this, Cascadia has worked with county fire district staff, the Washington State Department of Natural Resource, U.S. Forest Service staff and interested landowners.

In September, District staff organized a meeting in another fire district and plans to complete it and two other CWPPs by year's end.

Once completed, a county-wide plan is then developed to coordinate a prioritization strategy under the National Fire Plan and the Healthy Forest Restoration Act.

"In addition to these efforts, we have led independent but related projects with landowners of the County and obtained funds for fire education and fuels reduction projects," said Rickel.

For more information on Cascadia Conservation District, visit the Web site at <http://www.cascadiacd.org>, or contact Michael Rickel at 509/664.0268, or email him at mike.rickel@wa.nacdnet.net.



Workers chip away at brush material. (Submitted photo)

Pinchot Institute holds bioenergy meeting

The Pinchot Institute for Conservation hosted a September meeting titled "Ensuring Forest Sustainability in the Development of Wood Bioenergy in the U.S" at the Pocantio Rockefeller Retreat Center in Tarrytown, N.Y. The session outlined recent trends in the development of wood-based bioenergy and identified opportunities to achieve desired societal goals while protecting environmental values and sustainable development.

Participants included a wide range of organizations interested in wood bioenergy developments from a variety of perspectives, including environmental organizations, federal agencies, universities, state forestry, forest industry, wood energy, forest certification entities, along with a number of community based groups.

Although there were concerns, there was also recognition that wood for energy, if done sustainably, had the potential to create good things on the land (hazardous fuel reduction, the improvement of forest health and wildlife habitat, creation of jobs and improved economies for rural communities).

Leaders of the two principal forest certification programs in the U.S -- The Sustain-

able Forestry Initiative (SFI), and The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) -- outlined their forest based sustainability criteria and stated that they will be reviewing to see if they need further standards relative to bioenergy production. Both SFI and FSC already have certifying processes with accompanying third party certification as well as the ability to provide verification of chain of custody for those wanting to ensure their energy comes from sustainable sources. No such formal certification or chain of custody systems currently exist for agriculture energy production.

Participants recognized that wood based bioenergy had regional dimensions with most seeing combined heat and power, and electrical energy production being the primary focus in the Northeast, Lake States, and the West, while forest biorefinery and wood based transportation fuels along with larger pellet exporting operations occurring in the Southeast.

Attendees were supportive of continuing the effort, perhaps with regional workshops to develop a set of guidelines for sustainable forest bioenergy production. For more information check out www.pinchot.org.

2007 tax tips for forest landowners

The US Forest Service has just released a short guide to assist owners of forest land with new timber tax information. Written this year by Linda Wang, Forest Taxation Specialist, Cooperative Forestry, and John L. Greene, Research Forester, Southern Research Station, it highlights important considerations when owners of forestland prepare their tax return for 2007. It can be found on the web at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/library/taxtips2007.pdf> and additional information can be found at the National Timber Tax Website: <http://www.timbertax.org>.

National Forests on the Edge report released

The US Forest Service recently released "National Forests on the Edge," the second in a series of reports outlining the changing use of forestland. The report projects that 21.7 million acres (about 8 percent) of rural lands located within 10 miles of national forests and grasslands are projected to undergo increases in housing development by 2030.

The full report can be downloaded at http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace/fote/national_forests_on_the_edge.html



Handbook ... continued from page 1

The handbook is broken into nine chapters. They include:

- What's in the handbook
- Impact of wildfire
- On the brink of disaster: What you can do to be ready
- Community engagement
- The recovery process: Immediately after the fire
- Toward the recovery: Organizing and utilizing volunteers
- Restore landscapes and rebuild communities
- Liability: Volunteer protection and Good Samaritan laws

To add perspective, Berry sought opinions from districts in California, New Mexico, South Dakota and Montana which had helped communities rebuild after experiencing catastrophic wildfire. That collaboration, along with a working relationship with USFS Urban and Community Forestry and the Coalition for the Upper South Platte has created one of the most comprehensive handbooks available to districts with regard to wildfire.

"I know the Jefferson District well, and I couldn't be more pleased that it was the one to take on this project," said Larry Payne, director of cooperative forestry for the U.S. Forest Service. "It's always a thrill for me when districts work with other districts on anything to do with addressing wildfire. This handbook is going to be incredibly useful and I'd like to see it get into the hands of as many district folks as possible. I think it's that valuable."

Catastrophic wildfire continues to be a problem, not only in western states but across the country. As Payne said, "The job we're facing is getting bigger and more complex each year." For this reason, Berry considers the handbook a constant work in progress.

For more information on Jefferson County Soil Conservation District, visit the Web site at <http://www.jeffersonscd.org>, or contact Karen Berry at 303/866.2018, or email her at kahberry@mac.com.



Volunteers spread hay after the Hayman Fire rips through Colorado. (Ed Spence photo)

Conservation Calendar

- **Dec 10-12** – Roundtable on Sustainable Forests: challenges with scaling indicators and format issues regarding the 2010 edition of the National Report on Sustainable Forests, Cockeysville, Md. Contact Shawn Walker at shawnwalker@merid.org or at 202-354-6450 to register
- **Jan. 28-31, 2008** – "Fire in the Southwest: Integrating Fire into Management of Changing Ecosystems," Tucson, Ariz. Contact: Erik Berg, Wildland Fire Science Lead, 703/648-4243, or eberg@usgs.gov
- **Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 2008** – Missouri Natural Resources Conference, "Get Ready for Change: Ensuring Resource Sustainability in an iPod® World," Osage Beach, Mo. Information available <http://www.mnrc.org>
- **Feb. 10-13, 2008** – NACD 2008 Annual Meeting, "Conservation Beyond Boundaries," Reno, Nev. Information available at <http://nacdnet.org/events/annualmeeting>
- **March 10, 2008** – Conference on the Ecological Dimensions of Biofuels, Washington, DC, hosted by the Ecological Society of America. Information available at http://www.esa.org/science_resources

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