

NAFO, state attorneys general challenge recent point source ruling

A group consisting of landowners, forest industry advocates and 26 state attorneys general filed a brief in October asking the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals' ruling that rainwater runoff from forest roads used for timber harvest is a "point source" of water pollution under the Clean Water Act (CWA).

NEDC v. Brown overturned a 35-year-old Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulation treating forest roads as nonpoint sources. The Court declared that rainwater control systems on forest roads must now have CWA permits.

"Forestry has never been a major contributor to water pollution, and has been successfully regulated by the states," said Dave Tenny, President and CEO of the National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO). "We support EPA's current system of oversight which has a proven track record of maintaining

clean water, high quality jobs, and continued access to forests and wildlife across the nation."

NAFO was joined on its brief by the American Farm Bureau Federation and 11 forestry organizations from around the country.

"By requiring industrial discharger permits for working forests, the Court is replacing flexible and highly effective [best management practices] with onerous permit requirements that will create unnecessary red tape for forest owners and managers and expose them to private lawsuits filed by individuals opposed to timber harvest." That will make sustainable forest management much less affordable and impact hunting and recreational uses of forestland, Tenny argued. "The Court's decision is both bad law and bad policy," he said.

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

CONSERVATION CALENDAR



Nov. 14 – Alliance for Community Trees Annual Meeting, Orlando, Fla. Visit <http://actrees.org>

Nov. 15-17 – 2011 Partners in Community Forestry National Conference, Disney's Coronado Springs Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. Visit <http://www.arborday.org/shopping/conferences/brochures/pcf/2011/call.cfm>

Jan. 16-18, 2012 – Pacific West Biomass Conference & Trade Show, San Francisco Marriott Marquis. Visit <http://www.pacificwest.biomass-conference.com>

Jan. 29-Feb. 1, 2012 – NACD Annual Meeting, Cosmopolitan Hotel, Las Vegas, Nev. Visit <http://www.nacdnet.org/events/annualmeeting>

Feb. 9-12, 2012 – 36th Annual NWF National Convention and Sport Show, Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center, Nashville, Tenn. Visit http://www.nwtf.org/special_events/convention.html

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FORESTRY NOTES

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS



The value of fuel treatments

Districts are helping to reduce the threat of wildfire by cleaning up the forest

This fall, the U.S. Forest Service released a report crediting fuel reduction treatments for helping to limit damage from this summer's Wallow Fire. The largest documented fire in Arizona history consumed more than 800 square miles and nearly 40 homes. Most agree it could have been much worse.

According to "How Fuel Treatments Saved Homes from the 2011 Wallow Fire":

By noon on June 2, fire behavior becomes even more intense as the Wallow Fire makes an extended crown fire charge toward the community of Alpine, Az. Within three hours, this crown fire crests the ridge above Alpine. The blaze quickly moves downslope toward numerous homes located along the southwest outskirts of town. Soon, this crown fire threatening these Alpine homes starts showering embers as far as one mile downwind—igniting numerous spot fires out ahead of the main fire.

As the main fire enters the half-mile-wide White Mountain Stewardship Fuel Treatment units located above Alpine, the blaze drops from up in the tree crowns down to the surface level. The fire's rate-of-spread dramatically slows. Thanks to the influence of these previously developed treatment units—implemented beginning in 2004—flame lengths are now low enough to allow firefighters to safely attack the fire and protect homes and property.

The fuel treatments not only protected homes, but they also assisted firefighting efforts. Offers Springerville District Fire Management Officer Rob Lever in the report: "Without the fuel treatments, I would never have had a firefighter there."

The Apache and Navajo Natural Resource Conservation



In September, Nevada County RCD in California finished up a 15-mile fuel break expected to assist firefighting efforts.

Districts (NRCD) both played a key role in assisting with the fuel treatment work credited in the Forest Service's report. The work included a \$1 million grant through University of Arizona Extension Service. Part of Navajo NRCD's work included helping to organize the state's first Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

"We can say with certainty that if the communities of Alpine and nearby Nutrioso hadn't done treatments, there would have been hundreds of homes lost instead of dozens," says Steve Gatewood, an advisor to neighboring Coconino NRCD and a member of NACD's Forest Resources Policy Group.

This is only one example for how conservation districts have assisted with fuel treatment projects that have helped to limit fire damage:

- Gatewood's district, located three hours west of where the Wallow Fire occurred, has assisted with fuel treatments on private land as part of the Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP). The GFFP just passed the \$500,000 mark in cost-share assistance for fuel treatment work. The results of that work were visible last year when the Hardy Fire broke out within Flagstaff City limits. The rapidly moving crown fire scorched 280 acres but dropped to the ground and was easily suppressed when it reached a 93-acre parcel that Little America Hotel had treated in 2008. Just downwind was

See 'Fuel Treatments' on Page 3



A Minnesota district adds to its certificate program

NEXT MONTH



FORESTRY NOTES

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Female forest landowners gather, share ideas

For four days in October, female forest landowners gathered in Lycoming County, Pa. for "Women and Their Woods Educational Retreat." Women representing 12 Pennsylvania counties, as well as a few participants from New York and West Virginia, attended the workshop to share ideas for how to more effectively manage their forestland.

The workshop was coordinated by the Delaware Highlands Conservancy and Penn State Natural Resources Extension.

The participants immediately got to work. "All of the women gathered around this one small table and were talking about forestry the second they arrived – what they do with their forestland, who to call for management techniques," said Amanda Subjin of the Delaware Highlands Conservancy.

This was the fourth year Delaware Highlands Conservancy has offered a workshop catered to female forest landowners, but the first to cover the entire state. According to Subjin, the goal of the workshop was to train participants so that they might become men-

"Conservation districts could put on a workshop like this just as Extension or a state agency can."

- Paula Randler, USFS

tors to other female forest landowners in their region.

The workshop is part of a growing movement to assist female forest landowners. Paula Randler of the U.S. Forest Service has spent the past year helping to build an online clearinghouse that will soon serve as a one-stop resource for women looking to find answers for a number of forest management-related issues. Randler was one of 13 presenters at the Pennsylvania workshop.

"I was really impressed with everyone's eagerness to learn from one other," said Randler. "Some of the women have been timberland owners for a long time, while others

were new to it, but everyone had something to offer."

Another presenter, Nicole Strong of Oregon State Extension, has helped to organize similar women's groups in her state. Earlier this year, Strong secured a National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grant that will help to provide a toolkit and training for female forest landowners in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Arkansas. The \$110,000 grant will also be used to assist Randler in developing the online clearinghouse.

Randler believes conservation districts can play a role in helping to direct women to resources available to them, and adds: "Conservation districts could put on a workshop like this just as Extension or a state agency can."

Randler said the online clearinghouse is making progress, and in November plans to begin working with volunteer regional editors who will collect information from their respective areas of coverage.

FORESTRY BRIEFS

NUCFAC seeks grant applications

The National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC) has posted the U.S. Forest Service 2012 Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Cost-Share Grant Program.

The Council supports innovative urban and community forestry projects that have national or multi-state application and impact. The Grant Program offers \$900,000 in funding for three or more innovative grants for fiscal year 2012. Proposals must demonstrate the reach, resources and expertise needed to address the following three strategic priority issues: climate change, public health, and economic development.

This opportunity is available to any U.S. non-federal organization, and all grant funds must be matched at least equally (dollar for dollar) with non-federal source funds. Applications are due by December 1.

For more information on this funding opportunity, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/ucf/nucfac.html>.

New export pellet testing lab first of its kind in U.S.

U.S. pellet manufacturers can now have their products tested by Georgia-based Biomass Energy Laboratory (BEL). Up until

now, manufacturers exporting to Europe have sent samples to a lab in Holland for analysis and verification of compliance.

"... For the most part, all the U.S. producers want some kind of state-side laboratory that can run the analysis compared to having to ship the samples overseas," said Chris Wiberg, BEL's manager.

BEL is a joint venture between Control Union and Timber Products Inspection.

Dixie National Forest, NWTf form partnership

Utah's Dixie National Forest soon will allow the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) to cut timber commercially and use any proceeds to help improve forest lands.

Kenton Call, spokesman for the forest, said NWTf will be able to haul out timber on nearly 2,000 acres in Garfield County. In return, the group will conduct service projects, including thinning the forest and improving aspen stands. Dixie is the largest national forest in Utah.

The project is expected to improve habitat for turkeys and other wildlife by opening up areas of the forest for growth of grasses and other flower-bearing plants. It will also clear fuels that could feed wildfires.

"Together we are making the forest healthier, providing jobs to the local com-

munity, and improving wildlife habitat, especially for turkey," said Dixie National Forest Service Superintendent Rob MacWhorter.

Part of the aspen rejuvenation project will also include constructing fencing to protect the new trees from foraging deer and elk that have a preference for the young shoots.

New SAF special issue

In October, the Society of American Foresters (SAF) released "Managing Forests because Carbon Matters: Integrating Energy, Products, and Land Management Policy." This 46-page special issue follows a 2008 report from SAF's Climate Change and Carbon Sequestration Task Force titled "Forest Management Solutions for Mitigating Climate Change in the U.S."

The special issue includes sections on: Climate-Forest Interactions; Wood-Fossil Fuel Substitution Effects; Forest Carbon Policies; and Integrating Forests into a Rational Policy Framework.

SAF members will receive a hard copy of the special issue as a supplement to their October/November 2011 Journal Forestry. To view the online version, visit <http://www.safnet.org/documents/JOFSupplement.pdf>.

DISTRICT EXPERIMENTS WITH BIOCHAR



It's a problem common to the forest: How to affordably dispose of slash and less-desirable material? For the past year, Colorado's Jefferson Conservation District has been testing one potential option

by manufacturing biochar.

Biochar is created through pyrolysis, where agricultural waste is converted into a soil enhancer that is believed to increase crop productivity and improve water quality. It sounds like a cure-all for helping to clean up Colorado forestland that has been ravaged by a bark beetle epidemic and catastrophic wildfire. But, according to Jonathan Guerts, an NRCS soil conservation technician who works with the district, results have been mixed.

Over the past year the district planted 510 ponderosa pine seedlings spread out over 17 plots of land near where the Hayman Fire stormed through Colorado in 2002. A half-pound of biochar was added to some of the plantings. The seedlings with the biochar showed 10 percent more moisture content on average as compared to those without. While encouraging, Guerts says that number does not guarantee a more successful growth rate.

And Guerts adds that the biochar unit

the district purchased through the Conservation Innovation Grant it was awarded in 2009 has not operated as efficiently as advertised. At times it only produces 30 pounds of biochar per hour, as opposed to the expected 250 pounds, and operators have had trouble with needles, bark and other material mixed in with the woody matter.

"A lot needs to be done on the production side to make a machine that is easy to transport and operate in field conditions," says Guerts. "But once that's in place, there is cause for hope that it will help as a soil amendment."

Guerts and Jefferson Conservation District plan to continue to monitor the plantings and will explore other uses for the biochar unit, including an edible mushroom study that was part of the original grant.

Biochar projects are beginning to pop up in other areas of the country. In early October, a team of University of Washington students was selected to advance a project that will turn forest refuse into biochar. The students developed the C6 Systems blanket – a low-technology solution which covers and accelerates a slash pile's gradual conversion into char. The blanket is designed to limit the oxygen flow to the burning pile.



Biochar (above) is believed to increase crop productivity and improve water quality.

According to Dan Schwartz, chair of the University's Department of Chemical Engineering, the biochar could sell for as much as \$1,500 per ton. "This could transform what is a big problem and money sink into a money-making and job-producing engine for landowners, while helping to improve soil conditions and reduce smoke," he says.

Fuel Treatments ... continued from page 1

extensive development including several residential subdivisions and a large W.L. Gore Medical Devices manufacturing plant with outside chemical storage units.

• In September, California's Nevada County Resource Conservation District (RCD) finished a 15-mile, 1,500-foot-wide shaded fuel break. Begun in 2004 with numerous partners, the district received a grant in 2008 to complete the last 30 percent of the fuel break. Even with California's economic crisis, which put the project on hold in 2009, and various weather constraints along the way, the fuel break was completed in 2011.

According to Nevada County RCD District Administrator Jan Blake, more than 250 acres were treated. Partners included NRCS, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County and the Nevada Irrigation District, as well as numerous private landowners, foresters, fire agencies, and environmental groups. "Lots of people were involved," says Blake, who adds that despite initial concerns from some of the area landowners, the project did not have a drastic impact on the esthetics of the landscape. Landowners were offered flexible

alternatives regarding the "prescription for vegetation treatment" and the contractors and managers worked closely with landowners to ensure a successful outcome for all involved.

The project focused on treating fuels throughout a strategically located ridge top that had a history of wildfire and was subject to high wind patterns. The fuel treatment will help protect surrounding communities such as Cascade Shores and the cities of Grass Valley and Nevada City in the event of a catastrophic wildfire that could be devastating to the many homes located in the wildland urban interface. The fuel break will aid fire personnel in fighting such a fire.

Nevada County RCD's involvement in the project began not long after board member David Vertin shared the NACD publication "Trees are the Answer" with fellow district board members in 2003. The booklet suggested districts organize a forestry committee, which Nevada County RCD did; a year later the district began working on the fuel break through public meetings, powerpoint presentations and other public forums to inform landowners in the area of the proposed project.

Now that the project is finished, Blake says future goals would include maintenance of the fuel break to ensure that it remains a

strategic area in fighting fires, and to use the completed project as an educational tool.

• Back in 2005, Wyoming's Little Snake River Conservation 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 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.

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 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. (For the full story, see the May 2011 issue of Forestry Notes).