



Sierra SWCD Makes Strides With CWPP ... continued from page 1

additional grants to take care of fuel treatments and safety, and for education projects," said Joy Esparsen, intergovernmental relations manager for NMAC.

Sierra has plans to use more grant assistance in 2006 for a fuels treatment project. Parker said the CWPP has helped to open many new doors.

"Without a CWPP in place," said Parker, "you're really not in the game."

And, according to Esparsen, CWPPs have helped to protect those communities that were not receiving funding after New Mexico's catastrophic wildfires of 2000. "It's a perfect vehicle for communities that were not initially identified as high risk," said Esparsen. "It justifies their need and helps them to gain more federal assistance."

Sierra SWCD has also used the CWPP to make other things happen on the ground.

Last year Parker helped to secure two \$50,000 grants. One, obtained through Southwest Sustainable Forest Partnerships, and on behalf of BTR Enterprises, helped purchase a pole peeler for forest restoration work. The device helps strip the bark and even up ends of the small-diameter material, which is used in construction or for the lattices in adobe housing. The second, under the auspices of the NMAC Wildfire Risk Reduction Program for Rural Communities, helped to address private land fire prevention measures. "(The NMAC grant) is allowing us to treat the slash we're creating from encouraging landowners to thin their properties," said Parker. Partnered with another grant, this money is also allowing Sierra SWCD to write prescriptions for private-land thinning projects.

In the community of Poverty Creek, the

district loaned its chipper to the volunteer fire department to help control waste material. That material is being used by area residents as mulch. In the future, Parker hopes the material can be used for mine reclamation work.

All of these projects relate to one another, and by using grants to work off of one another the district has more buying power. "We're cobbling these programs together to get things done on the ground," said Fahl.

Prior to the approval of the CWPP, Sierra SWCD had hosted a National Fire Plan

meeting for three years. The district had also secured nearly \$700,000 from two three-year Collaborative Forest Restoration Project grants. One managed restoration work in the Rio Grande River to remove salt cedar in New Mexico's bosque region. The other is still being used for an 80-acre demonstration block of restoration work on ponderosa pine in the Black Range District in the Gila National Forest.

For more information on Sierra SWCD, contact Merry Jo Fahl at 505/894-2212, or email her at sswcd@riolink.com.

CWPP Resources

Here's a list of resources for communities preparing wildfire protection plans:

Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities

- The handbook offers a detailed description of how to create a community wildfire protection plan as allowed by the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA). For a copy of the handbook and other resources for developing community wildfire protection plans, visit the Society of American Foresters' Web site <http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/cwpp.cfm>.

Forestry Notes story on Trinity Resource Conservation District of California - The district's work is cited as one of the nation's CWPP success stories. A Forestry Notes story on the district's work is at <http://forestry.nacdn.net/forestrynotes/May04/fire.htm>.

Southwest Community Wildfire Protection Plan Guide - The Southwest Strategy Wildland Urban Interface Task Team completed this guide designed to assist communities in Arizona and New Mexico. The guide and other information about CWPPs is on the Southwest Area Forest, Fire and Community Assistance Grants Web page at www.SouthwestAreaGrants.org.

Leaders Guide for Developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan - Developed by the National FireSafe Council, this document serves as an important checklist for leaders working on CWPPs. It can be found at http://www.firesafecouncil.org/education/attachments/CWPP_LG.pdf.

State Foresters Briefing Paper on CWPPs - Found at <http://www.stateforesters.org/pubs/CWPPBriefingPaper.pdf>.

South Biomass Conference Proceedings On-Line

Conference proceedings from NACD's August 2005 southern biomass conference are available on the Web.

"Status, Trends, and Future of the South's Forest and Agricultural Biomass" conference proceedings can be viewed at <http://biomass.sref.info/proceedings.htm>. Included are PowerPoint presentations and detailed reports that served as the basis of presentations throughout the conference.

About 225 people attended the three-day conference Aug. 29-31 in Athens, Georgia.

-- Biomass Briefs --

Wildland Fire Conference is March 8-9 in Phoenix

Wildland Fire 2006, a national conference that draws up to 1,000 participants annually, is slated for March 8-9 at the Phoenix Civic Plaza in Phoenix, Arizona. The conference focuses on best practices for preparedness and response, innovations and procedures in firefighter safety, National Fire Plan Research and tools for engaging community stakeholders as partners. For more conference information and registration, go to www.iafc.org/wildland or call 1-800-934-1957.

Renewable Energy Summit set for March 7-9

U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns, Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell, former CIA director R. James Woolsey and Center for American Progress senior fellow Tom Daschle will all be part of the lineup of speakers for the second National Agriculture and Forestry Renewable Energy Summit, March 7-9, 2006, in Washington, DC. The conference is sponsored by the 25x25 Work Group. For more info, or to register, go to <http://www.agenergy.info/index.aspx?mid=38652>.

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SPECIAL REPORT

Biomass and Forest Health: Finding Local Solutions

It all started with a CWPP

Conservationists from Sierra Soil and Water Conservation District in New Mexico are helping to prevent fire and restore ecosystems by way of a community wildfire protection plan.

Sierra's involvement in CWPP first began in 2003, when the New Mexico Association of Counties connected the district with the Bureau of Land Management. The district organized meetings and began the process of identifying areas to address in the plan. One major concern identified in the plan was salt cedar, an invasive species that crowds out native trees and shrubs and stresses precious water resources throughout the Southwest.

When CWPP implementation began in 2004, Sierra SWCD was one of three New Mexico districts to receive National Fire Plan CWPP funding from BLM. The \$30,000 the district received went toward hiring Aaron Parker, Sierra's wild-land urban interface planner. Among other tasks, he has worked to find other funding

sources to apply toward work on the ground. "Aaron's role is to do a lot of outreach and to secure more funding so that we can address more hazardous areas in the county," said Merry Jo Fahl, Sierra district manager.

Cleaning up the salt cedar

Now that CWPP implementation is under way, the district has worked to address the salt cedar problem, and has continued to search for more grant assistance. Meetings with local partners have also continued.

"Originally, those meetings helped us to put our CWPP together," said Parker. "Now that it is in place, and the fire plans are still going on, the focus is to discuss what we're going to do with our 9,000 acres of salt cedar skeletons (treated with herbicides)."

There is no easy way to burn those skeletons, Fahl and Parker said, but all of the agencies with jurisdiction in that region are currently considering methods of prescribed

"Without a CWPP in place, you're really not in the game."

Aaron Parker

The clock is ticking... but there is still time to register for NACD-sponsored

Bioenergy & Wood Products Conference II
Innovations in Restoring Forests and Strengthening Economies
March 14-16, 2006
Denver, Colorado
(See a story on Page 3)

Check the details at www.nationalbiomassconference.org

burning that would provide a safe solution to the problem.

"It's a fire hazard now, and we need to collaboratively work with all of the land management agencies involved - private, BLM, Bureau of Reclamation, New Mexico State Forestry, Fish and Wildlife Service - and put together a comprehensive plan to burn it all safely. In my view, it's the largest thing we need to get our hands around now," said Parker.

More money available through CWPP

The NMAC received \$395,000 to work with in 2005, and that number will grow by roughly 7 percent this year. The NMAC offers grants of up to \$50,000. Last year, Sierra was a recipient. The seven grants that the NMAC handed out last year applied to projects performed in 28 rural communities.

"Once the community wildfire protection Plan is in place, the district can apply for



Sierra SWCD and its partners work together in New Mexico to remove forest fuel with the help of a community wildfire protection plan (submitted photo).

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Survey Seeks to Find District CWPP Roles

NACD wants to determine how conservation districts and resource conservation and development councils are or might be involved in community wildfire protection plans. A national online survey is under way to answer that. To participate in the survey, go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=579671602004>.

The survey takes only a few minutes to complete, but will help build a better understanding of the current work environ-

ment and will assist conservation districts and RC&Ds in determining their partnership roles and opportunities.

Community wildfire protection plans are called for under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. Communities are being encouraged to develop and implement these plans, which tie together local partners and open the door to partnering opportunities at the state and federal level. State foresters and fire chiefs have leading

roles in developing these plans.

Conservation districts and RC&Ds are encouraged to be at the table during plan development and to help implement priorities identified in the plans.

The survey is being coordinated by Daniel Cassidy, biomass project director at the University of Georgia.

For more information, contact Bill Berry, NACD communications specialist, at billnick@charter.net.



State and Private Head, Stones Keyboardist Sing Same Song

What do Jim Hubbard and Chuck Leavell have in common?

They both recognize that good stewardship and forest management are keys to protecting and preserving America's private forest land resources.

Leavell, the keyboard player for The Rolling Stones, and Hubbard, USDA Forest Service deputy chief for State and Private Forestry, were among speakers at NACD's recent 60th annual meeting in Houston, Texas.

Leavell was keynote speaker at a noon luncheon. He then headed for Detroit, Michigan, where The Rolling Stones provided halftime entertainment at the Super Bowl. He made it clear that his family forest in Dry Branch, Georgia, is where he finds inspiration and hope for the future. "The land is in our charge for a time, and it's up to us to manage it and hopefully to improve it," he said.

Hubbard, one of several speakers at a general session featuring federal partners,

echoed a similar theme but on a landscape scale. "We have 190 million acres of forestland at high risk, partly due to drought and partly to fuels (buildup). Treating 11 million acres a year is not going to get it all." That, he said, leads to a question: "Which acres are most important?"

Community wildfire protection plans can help in the sorting process, he said. CWPPs can help communities identify forest restoration projects across boundaries. America's working forestlands face a number of threats, Hubbard said. He cited fragmentation, invasive species, water quality and quantity, and catastrophic fire risks in the wildland urban interface due to fuels buildup.

Developing an ecosystem services market that puts a value on resources may help to achieve some forest stewardship goals, he said. "That has caught our attention, and we hope it will with you, too. You help set the agenda and certainly are the implementers of conservation," he told the



Chuck Leavell



Jim Hubbard

NACD crowd.

Leavell identified some of the same concerns, citing fragmentation and sprawl and corresponding loss of farmland as concerns to family forest owners. "We need to take the time, make the time to be involved on these issues, and we need to do it together, because then we're stronger," Leavell said. "We can find ways to work together. If we can't, our kids might be the last generation to enjoy the resource." Noting that "There's an art to everything," the accomplished keyboardist added "There's certainly an art to land management."

State Renewable Energy Initiatives Abound

President Bush's 2006 State of the Union address helped to put renewable energy on the table as a viable and necessary component of America's strategy for energy independence. Meanwhile, states across the country have stepped forward with various initiatives. The Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC), funded by the U.S. Department of Energy and managed by the North Carolina Solar Center, maintains the Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy (DSIRE) tracking incentives at the state level. Here is a current summary of incentives as reported by DSIRE:

Tax Incentives

- Currently, 20 states and the territory of Puerto Rico have enacted personal income tax incentives generally aimed at offsetting costs associated with the purchase and installation of renewable energy systems. Typically states offer personal income tax credits up to a certain percentage or predetermined dollar amount for the cost of installation and /or equipment. Eligible technologies may include alternative fuel technologies, solar and photovoltaic energy systems, geothermal energy, wind energy, biomass and hydroelectric. However, programs vary greatly from state to state. California, for example, allows individuals to deduct the interest on loans for energy

efficiency. Massachusetts offers a 100 percent tax deduction on income from the sale of, or royalties from, renewable energy-oriented patents.

- According to DSIRE, 15 states have instituted corporate tax incentives. These incentives also vary widely from state to state and are aimed at reducing financial barriers to renewable energy technologies (RETs) at the corporate level. Corporate incentives allow corporations to receive tax credits or deductions ranging from 10 percent to 35 percent against the cost of RET purchase and/or installation.

- Eighteen states and Puerto Rico have sales tax incentives that typically provide an exemption from the state sales tax for the cost of renewable energy equipment. These incentives are oriented toward various technologies and economic sectors (i.e., commercial, residential, general public/consumer).

- Of the 26 states with property tax provisions for renewable energy, a majority utilize a simple model in determining the added valuation resulting from a RET project. This model basically states that if an approved renewable energy system is installed and the cost exceeds that of a comparable conventional system, the valuation

of the improvements, for assessment purposes, will equal that of the less expensive conventional technology. In other words, if a renewable energy heating system costs \$1,500 to install versus \$1,000 for a conventional heating system, then the renewable energy system is assessed at \$1,000. Additionally, DSIRE reports that six states have provisions enabling local governments to provide property tax incentives for renewable energy improvements. Those states are: Connecticut, Iowa, Maryland, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Virginia.

Rebates, Loans and Grants

- Seventeen states have committed to rebate plans to promote the installation of renewable energy equipment. However, the actual number rises to 25 when rebate programs offered by other entities such as local governments and municipally owned utilities are added in. All told there are some 73 rebate plans among 25 states. Although the majority of these plans are oriented toward residents and businesses, some rebates are available to industry, institutions, and government agencies as well. Rebates typically range from \$150 to \$4,000. Rebate programs are occasionally combined with low- or no-interest loans.

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Bioenergy Conference Draws a Buzz

There's still time to register for what promises to be a stimulating and informative national bioenergy conference March 14-16, 2006, at the Hyatt Convention Center in Denver, Colorado.

NACD is a co-sponsor of "Bioenergy and Wood Products Conference II, Innovations in Restoring Forests and Strengthening Economies."

"The emphasis for this conference will be on 'keeping it local,' " says NACD Forest Resource Committee Chair Charles A. Holmes of Marion, Alabama. Holmes has provided a leadership role in efforts to engage conservation districts and other partners in forest health and biomass utilization. "The nature of woody biomass utilization pushes action to the local levels," says Holmes, who participated in NACD regional biomass conferences in Georgia and Montana last year.

The Denver conference will focus atten-

tion on the importance of developing bioenergy from renewable, domestic sources to stimulate local economies and reduce reliance on nonrenewable energy sources from foreign markets.

The two-and-a-half day event will also explore successes and innovations in woody biomass utilization and stress the value of strong partnerships among public and private individuals in developing local utilization strategies.

Regional sessions are offered

Participants will be encouraged to attend regional breakout sessions that will focus attention on developing regional strategies and provide opportunities to network with leaders in the biomass industry. These breakout sessions will be divided into four areas: the Western and Pacific Regions; Great Lakes Region; Southeastern Region;

and Northeastern Region.

The U.S. Departments of Interior, Agriculture and Energy are teaming up with the Intertribal Timber Council, NACD, National Association of Counties, National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils, Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Forest Service, Western Forestry Leadership Coalition and Western Governors' Association, for this event. The first Bioenergy conference was held in Denver in 2004.

Optional field tours were filling up quickly at press time, but some slots may be open for tours to the Community Power Corporation in Lakewood, the Boulder County Heating Biomass Facility or the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden.

For more information, online registration and hotel reservations, visit <http://www.nationalbiomassconference.org>.

State Renewable Energy Initiatives Abound ... continued from page 2

• State and local governments and municipally owned utilities offer financing in the form of low-interest and no-interest loans for the purchase of a broad range of renewable energy equipment. Repayment schedules vary with some plans offering a 7-10 year loan term.

• Most state grant programs support a wide range of RETs. However some choose to support a particular RET such as photovoltaic or fuel cell technology. Some grant programs are intended to help bring new technologies to the marketplace and still others are dedicated to research and development. Recipients are generally chosen from among the commercial, industrial, utility, education, and government sectors with most awards ranging from \$500 to \$1,000,000.

Production Incentives

Federal, state and local governments as well as the non-profit sector sponsor renewable energy-production incentives. However the lion's share of these programs currently comes from utility companies. By promising to pay producers a set price for the power they generate, production incentives help to finance RET projects and manage the risk of investment. Some incentive programs are instituted to enable utilities to meet the requirements of state renewable portfolio standards.

In addition to federal production incentives, there are seven state-sponsored programs. Utilities sponsor another 14 incentive programs in 11 states. Specifics such as target technologies, applicable economic sectors (i.e., residential, commercial, etc.) and incentive terms vary widely.

Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS)

• Renewable portfolio standards are an example of policies that indirectly provide economic incentives. RPSs require that a specified portion of the energy generating capacity of a utility, measured in megawatt-hours (MWh), be derived from renewable technologies. For example, such a portfolio standard might require that 1.5 percent of electricity sales in the year 2007 come from a renewable source. Portfolio standards contribute security to the financial equation of renewable energy. By requiring a minimum standard for renewable energy, states provide a guaranteed minimum demand. This in turn informs the renewable energy producers that there is a market for their product and a return on investment. By reducing risk, renewable energy portfolio standards encourage investment in RETs. An excellent discussion of renewable energy portfolio standards can be found on the website of the National Conference of State Legislatures

(<http://www.ncsl.org/print/energy/RPS.pdf>).

Jennifer DeCesaro, a policy analyst with the National Conference of State Legislatures, notes that she has recently observed an upturn in the number of state incentives for biofuels. She adds that that success should not be measured by the sheer number of incentive programs but rather by the extent to which the incentives are actually utilized. DeCesaro suggested that as time goes on it is likely that some adjustments will be required. "Sometimes the reality on the ground is different than anticipated. Sometimes just one variable in an incentive plan needs to be tweaked in order to make it effective."

Following are resources for further information:

The Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy (DSIRE), www.dsireusa.org.

The Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC), www.irecusa.org.

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), www.ncsl.org.