

FORESTRY NOTES



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Putting Firewise to work in Washington

Trilogy at Redmond Ridge, an active adult community of more than 1,500 homes, lies next to extensive forested areas in eastern King County, Washington. A group of Trilogy homeowners came together in 2015 with a goal of reducing the risk of wildfire to their homes and lives.

The National Fire Protection Association has recognized Trilogy as a Firewise Community/USA for 2016 and 2017. Firewise is a key component of Fire Adapted Communities – a collaborative approach that connects all those who play a role in wildfire education, planning and action with comprehensive resources to help reduce risk.

Jarret Griesemer, King Conservation District's Firewise Project Coordinator, and Linda Vane of the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks visited the community in January and met with Trilogy Firewise project team leaders to assess relative wildfire risks in several areas. King Conservation District is using grant funds from the Washington State Conservation Commission to work with at least six communities by the end of June 2017 to implement projects that will reduce wildfire fuel loading.

After visiting several sites, Griesemer, Vane and the Trilogy team agreed that a long strip of community-owned border along Trilogy's west edge and adjoining the Redmond Watershed Preserve was the highest priority for action. A regional hiking trail cuts through the strip of land, which was thick with dead western hemlock trees and dead brush that could have become fuel for wildfire.



Trilogy representatives worked with Griesemer to mark boundaries for subsequent removal of dead and dying trees and underbrush. Griesemer secured a portion of the grant funds and arranged for a tree removal contractor to cut and remove the bulk of the combustible material, which was then chipped and dumped in a central location. Some 250 bare-root plants of native, fire-resistant varieties purchased from King Conservation District have since been planted in the border strip that was cleared of dead trees, and a volunteer resident work party has been scheduled to spread the pile of wood chips on an area in need of compost.

"This project is an example of how residents of wildland urban interface (WUI) communities can work together with local government entities to reduce the risk of wildfire to homes and lives," said Griesemer.

John Weber, co-chair of the Trilogy Forest Stewardship Committee, added, "The partnership efforts of King Conservation District and Trilogy have reduced the risk of a blaze sparked by lightning, a blown ember, or a cigarette dropped along the border trail from spreading into either Trilogy at Redmond Ridge to the east or the Redmond Watershed Preserve to the west."

To learn more about Firewise, visit <http://www.firewise.org>.

"This project is an example of how residents of wildland urban interface (WUI) communities can work together with local government entities to reduce the risk of wildfire to homes and lives."

— Jarret Griesemer, King Conservation District's Firewise Project Coordinator



A wildly successful partnership for Iowa's working lands

A partnership between Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is helping to pave the way for the state's soil and water conservation districts to improve wildlife habitat on Iowa's working lands.

Iowa is ranked next to last in the nation for public land acreage. With less than three percent of the state's land in public ownership, voluntary conservation on private lands is vital to protecting and restoring wildlife habitat in the state.

"Relationship building and one-on-one conservation planning with producers is critical to accomplishing this work," Clare Lindahl, CDI's executive director, said. "However in recent years, the number of state and federal

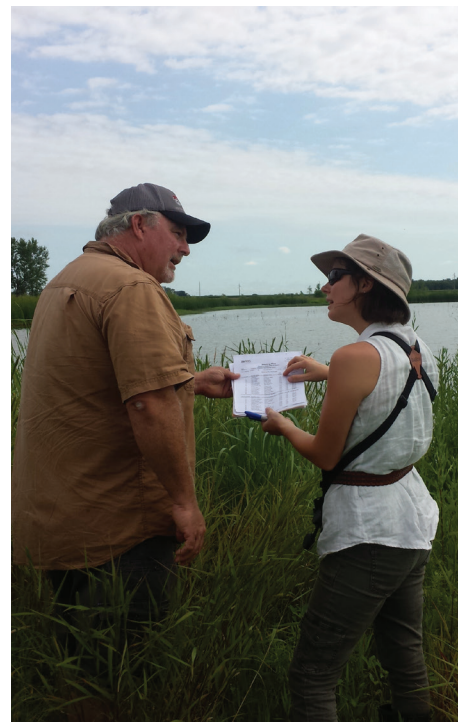
conservation staff charged with helping landowners implement conservation plans and practices has decreased dramatically."

State and federal conservation staff have been reduced more than 25% over the past decade.

Iowa's soil and water conservation districts have stepped up to fill the void. Not long ago, districts employed only a handful of staff, but today, now employ well over 100 Iowans. As a result of their new partnership, CDI, local districts, NRCS, and DNR will hire an additional four private lands wildlife specialists and four private lands wetland easement team technicians.

The partnership can claim more than 1,000 acres of habitat improvement recommendations made on Timber/Savanna existing landcover since 2016.

Wildlife Specialists provide conservation planning and implementation support to



farmers and landowners with an emphasis on wildlife resources in agricultural landscapes. Wildlife Specialists work one-on-one with landowners to develop wildlife plans and facilitate landowner participation in federal, state, and county programs by putting together proposals, creating maps, and developing seeding plans on the landowners' behalf.

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FORESTRY BRIEFS

McHenry County Conservation District among partners assisting the Barrington Greenway Initiative

Citizens for Conservation, working alongside several area environmental groups including the McHenry County Conservation District, is helping to clear invasive brush and spread native plant seeds as part of a massive land restoration project. The Barrington Greenway Initiative is designed to improve the natural ecosystems of area forest preserves and open spaces, totaling more than 16,000 acres in Illinois, as well as bolster natural habitats.

Fifth-graders enjoy classroom in the forest

More than 125 fifth-grade students attended class at the Renfro Family Farm in the hinterlands of Pike County, Alabama. Classroom in the Forest is an annual event sponsored by area groups, including the Pike County Soil and Water Conservation District. "The students learned about pond management, wildlife, prescribed burning and tree identification," Heath Wesley, Pike County Extension coordinator, told the Troy Messenger. "They also visited the Soil Tunnel Trailer and learned about the different soils in our region and the animals that make their homes in the soil."

Conservation District offers help in identifying, removing invasives

Invasive plants are becoming more common in Maine, and experts from the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's Maine Natural Areas Program and Maine's Soil and Water Conservation Districts are helping landowners in Knox, Lincoln and Kennebec counties identify and get rid of them. Funded by a Conservation Innovation Grant, the technical team surveyed 20 farm properties in 2016, the first year of a three-year project, and will survey additional farms and woodlands during the 2017 field season.

"In addition to large infestations of some of the more common invasives, like shrubby honeysuckle and Japanese barberry, we also detected smaller populations of less widespread invasive plants, like Himalayan balsam and garlic mustard on a couple of farms," said Nancy Olmstead, invasive plant biologist. "And it's encouraging to know that these populations can be treated by hand at this point in time."

Forestry Notes Q&A

Paul Ries and Gerry Gray

Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUFC) Co-Chairs



Sustainable Urban
Forests Coalition

Gerry Gray and Paul Ries serve as co-chairs of the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUFC), whose mission is to “increase tangible support for urban forests on a national and local level; educate diverse audiences (from policy makers to the public) about the value and need for healthy urban forests; and network and leverage resources and knowledge among member organizations.” The Coalition’s 35 members represent state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, private industry and other urban forestry interests.

Ries is entering his third year as SUFC co-chair. Prior to that he served as an Associate Deputy Chief for the U.S. Forest Service. Before that he served as the national Director of Cooperative Forestry. Gray is a forest conservation consultant. Earlier this year he replaced Don Winsett as SUFC co-chair. Ries and Gray took some time this spring to visit with NACD Forestry Notes...

SUFC has been active for more than a decade now. What did the urban forestry movement look like pre-2004?

GRAY: I think of the urban forestry movement prior to 2004 as more segmented and disjointed than it is today. It was a complex array of local, state and national organizations working on projects, programs and policies related to urban forestry. All were trying to advance understanding of the field, and most were working under the broad umbrella of the U.S. Forest Service’s Urban and Community Forestry Program, but coordination and cooperation were limited.

RIES: I would say many of the same organizations that were involved in urban and community forestry pre-2004 are still involved today. The main difference I see today is that they are now doing more to work together and have become a community, as compared to disparate organizations each doing their own thing. They have also been joined by a broad

and diverse set of organizations not necessarily focused on urban and community forestry but with urban and community forestry as a part of their mission (such as NACD).

Finish this sentence: I decided to serve as co-chair of SUFC because _____

GRAY: I had served on the policy working group and the steering committee for many years. I found working with SUFC to be meaningful and rewarding. I enjoyed serving with the people who came to the table to do the Coalition’s work, and I respected the member organizations. I also believed in SUFC’s mission and thought the Coalition was uniquely positioned to help people understand that urban trees and forests are critical to the health and well-being of our nation’s growing urban populations.

RIES: I also believe in the mission – I believe it is important – and respect and value the people and organizations involved with the Coalition. I worked with many of them when I was with the U.S. Forest Service, and am honored to be able to serve them in a volunteer capacity in retirement.

U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell has made a point to mention in recent speeches that 83% of Americans now live in urban/metro areas. How has this statistic helped SUFC and your individual organizations promote the importance of strong, vibrant urban forestry programs?

GRAY: This statistic helps to open people’s eyes and get them thinking about why urban forests are important. The SUFC and its diverse member organizations partner with the Forest Service to build awareness and understanding of urban forests and the many environmental, social and economic benefits



Paul Ries



Gerry Gray

these forests provide to people in urban areas. It makes sense to reach out to people where they live and to communicate with them about the trees and forests they know best and care about most—those in their backyards, neighborhoods and communities.

RIES: Nearly all of us in this country live in a forest – whether in rural Idaho where I live, or in the urban forest of New York or Los Angeles. Those forests where we live provide clean air, clean water, energy conservation (winter and summer), green jobs, carbon sequestration, stormwater management, improved property values, reduced crime, human health benefits, wildlife habitat, human habitat (for us and our children), and many more benefits. To continue to enjoy these benefits, it is important we care for our forests – all of our forests – but especially the forests providing those benefits directly to 83% of Americans every day, right where they live, work and play.



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Iowa partnership from page 2

Wetland easement team technicians provide on-site biological technical support to wetland restoration teams. The wetland easement team technicians serve a key role on Iowa NRCS wetland easement teams by providing direct assistance to the NRCS area easement specialist. This role includes coordinating appropriate Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - Wetland Reserve Easements application information for full wetland easement team planning sessions, compiling complete application packages (i.e. six-part folders), and evaluating management plans and activities, as well as compatible use authorizations. As needed, wetland easement team technicians compile legal documents, investigate drainage histories, compile historic imagery, and meet with landowners and local NRCS field office staff to make sure all restoration goals are considered.

"As I spoke with partners about our year of work it was very clear to me that we have hired eight people who are doing what they love and Iowa's landscape and wildlife are reaping the benefits," Lindahl said. "Alone we

can do so little; together we can do so much."

The partnership, which just celebrated its one-year anniversary with a two-day staff development retreat in February 2017, has been "wildly" successful by leveraging everyone's unique strengths to accomplish individual and shared goals. The partnership allows for the targeting of NRCS programs to implement the DNR Iowa Wildlife Action Plan.

CDI serves as the nucleus of the partnership, coordinating all the partners input on goal setting, action planning, and employee training needs. The state and federal partners provide staff with technical training and day-to-day guidance, the commissioners provide local knowledge and connections, and CDI focuses on professional development and providing staff with the newest tools and technologies.

In a recent survey conducted by CDI, the state and federal field office staff working regularly with CDI employees said the staff and partnership is "finding new and alternative means to accomplish the goal" and "has made relating and building relationships with producers easier."

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CALENDAR

June 20-22 – NACD Forestry RPG summer meeting, Deadwood, South Dakota. Contact Mike Beacom at mike-beacom@nacdn.net

June 27-29 – 2017 North American Agroforestry Conference, Blacksburg, West Virginia. Visit <https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1865066>

July 15-18 – NACD Summer Meeting, Des Moines, Iowa. Visit <http://www.nacdnet.org/event/nacd-summer-meeting/>

September 18-21 – NASF Annual Meeting, Charleston, West Virginia. Visit <http://www.stateforesters.org/news-events/nasf-2017-annual-meeting>

November 15-19 – SAF Annual Convention, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Visit <http://www.eforester.org/safconvention>