Communities and Forests

The newsletter of the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress

Volume 4, Number 1 Focus on Indian Forestry *Spring 2000*

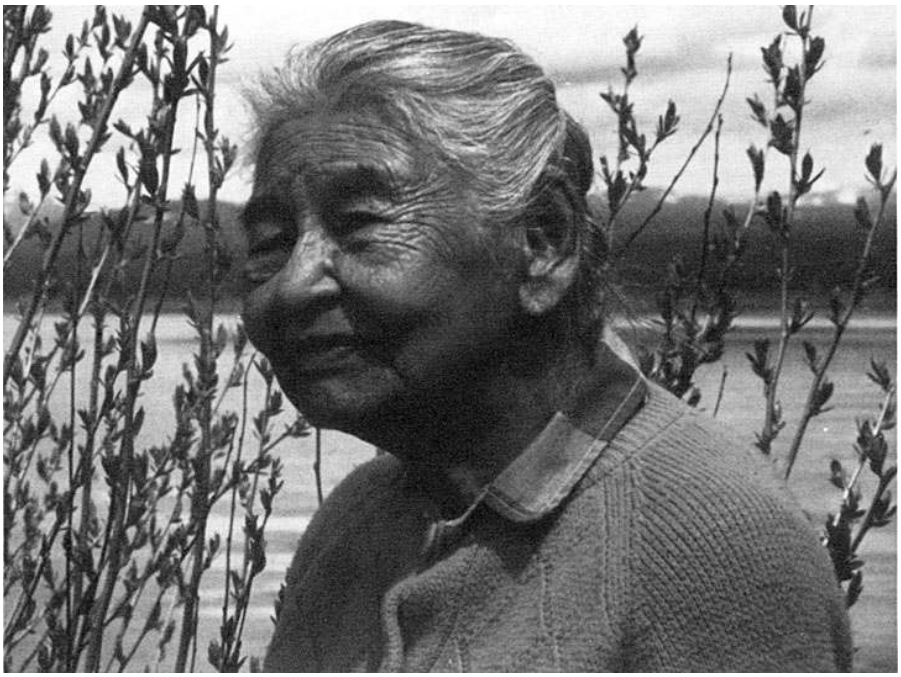
Maidu pilot project advances Indian forest stewardship

Jane Braxton Little

When Lorena Gorbet walks along the creeks that flow through the forest at the base of Yakum Yamani, now known as Dyer Mountain, she shares the landscape with trout and beavers, pines, firs, and cedars. She seldom encounters oak groves, big-leaf maples, and beargrass, or cougars and bears, all culturally important to Maidu Indians. Nobody has seen a salmon or an eel for nearly a century.

Gorbet and other Maidus are working to change what their grandchildren's grandchildren encounter in their traditional territory in the Feather River country of what is now northeastern California. In the process, they hope to advance knowledge about American Indian forest stewardship principles and deepen the understanding of Maidu culture among tribal members and the general public, says Gorbet, a representative of the Maidu Nation and member of the Maidu Cultural and Development Group board.

The Maidu stewardship project is a key first step. It is one of 28 pilot projects on U.S. Forest Service land authorized by Congress in 1998. *continued on page 8*



Lilly Baker, a Maidu woman, surveys traditional Maidu lands in northern California. Photo by Jane Braxton Little.

Tribes and federal agencies cooperate in federal forest land management

Alex Conley

When we think of Indian forestry, we typically think of on-reservation forests. Yet reservations make up only a small fraction of American Indians' ancestral lands—places to which they still have a strong tie, even after various treaties ceded their title to the land. Today, American Indian communities are seeking new ways to maintain involvement in the management of their ancestral lands, many of which are now publicly owned.

In the Midwest, a number of Chippewa tribes have negotiated a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with national forests in Michigan and Wisconsin that confirms tribal members' rights to gather spruce boughs, floral greens, ginseng, maple sap, firewood, medicinals, and other plants. The MOU also provides a mechanism for limited harvest of timber for non-commercial purposes, such as on-reservation home construction, and sets up a system of tribal regulations to monitor and manage gathering rights to ensure their long-term sustainability. The individual tribes and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) will implement the regulations.

A catalyst for initiating the MOU was the consistency it offers by allowing tribal members to gather forest products "without having to jump through all those hoops of following different regulations on each [national] forest and even district," says Karen Danielsen of the GLIFWC. *continued on page 6*

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Mission Statement

The purpose of the Communities Committee is to focus attention on the interdependence between America's forests and the vitality of rural and urban communities, and to promote:

- improvements in political and economic structures to ensure local community well-being and the long-term sustainability of forested ecosystems;
- an increasing stewardship role of local communities in the maintenance and restoration of ecosystem integrity and biodiversity;
- participation by ethnically and socially diverse members of urban and rural communities in decision-making and sharing benefits of forests;
- the innovation and use of collaborative processes, tools, and technologies; and recognition of rights and responsibilities of diverse forest landowners.

Letter to the Members

What is community forestry? Who is this Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress? We and our work are awfully hard to characterize, as this issue of the newsletter addressing American Indian perspectives on community forestry illustrates.

Community forestry is a relatively new concept for many of us and a long-standing way of life for others. Some of us advocate for it, some of us analyze it, some of us simply do it. And what we do can look pretty divergent: planting street trees, studying social trends, organizing meetings, diversifying economies.

Somehow, though, this motley collection of impassioned, creative people weaves together into a coherent effort to build a better future, one that respects people and the natural environment and strives to integrate them within the concept of community.

Ann Moote chairs the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress' communications task group.

The Communities Committee serves both as a link connecting community foresters around the country and a vehicle and translator between community forestry proponents and the rest of American society.

The Committee's policy task group has taken on the task of demystifying the world inside the beltway through regular policy updates on the Communities Committee listserv, "quick guides" that walk us through the federal budgeting and appropriations processes, and training sessions in Washington, D.C. The policy task group also educates those inside the beltway on community forestry by organizing listening sessions and field tours for Congressional representatives and their staff, national interest groups, and federal agencies.

Where do you fit in the community forestry web? What do you have to teach the rest of us? By becoming active in the Communities Committee, you can share your knowledge and help promote the things you feel passionate about.

The communications task group works closely with the policy task group to improve information exchange among Communities Committee members and between community forestry proponents and the rest of society. Other Communities Committee task groups are working to build urban-rural linkages, to improve our understanding and application of monitoring and indicators, and to provide rigorous research on community forestry.

Where do you fit in the community forestry web? What do you have to teach the rest of us? By becoming active in the Communities Committee, you can share your knowledge and help promote the things you feel passionate about.

Communities Committee members can join any of the Committee's task groups and can nominate themselves or others to serve on the steering committee. Anyone can contribute to the Committee's listservs or newsletter. See page 5 to find out how to write for the newsletter or subscribe to the listservs.

Ann Moote

Cooperative agreements, *continued from page 1*

Danielson adds that the MOU offers many benefits, including a system by which the national forests notify the tribes of upcoming birch-tree logging (so that tribal members can harvest the bark before trees are cut) and the development of management plans for designated tribal sugar bushes. But the MOU's principle benefits, she says, are that it strengthens the government-to-government relationship between Indian nations and the United States, ensures tribal sovereignty, and allows for tribal self-regulation.

The GLIFWC actively monitors tribal members' gathering activities, both by tracking the number and type of permits issued and by conducting post-season gatherer surveys. In contrast, Danielsen notes, the Forest Service has little information on the activities and impacts of non-Indian gatherers.

Non-Indian reaction

Still, when it was first made public in December 1998 after five years of negotiations, the Chippewa-Forest Service MOU created an uproar in the non-Indian community and reignited passions that had fueled earlier controversies over the exercise of off-reservation hunting and fishing rights.

Many non-Indians feared that the MOU was the result of a behind-doors renegotiation or reinterpretation of treaty rights rather than the development of a system to manage existing treaty rights. The public outcry made the Forest Service realize that broader public involvement was still needed. The agency instituted a public comment period, held meetings, and in August of 1999 issued a revised MOU.

Perhaps the most controversial provision of the agreement, allowing limited timber harvesting, has yet to be implemented. Still, both the Forest Service and the tribes are satisfied with the initial outcomes of the Chippewa-U.S. Forest Service MOU.

Bringing back the huckleberries

The huckleberry feast celebrating the ripening of the huckleberries and the official opening of the gathering season is a major annual event for the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon. Yet huckleberries are declining in abundance in many areas where the forest canopy has closed. In some cases, people no longer return to pick once-productive areas where their families had harvested for generations.

In response, the Confederated Tribes and the Mount Hood National Forest are working together to bring back the berries. The Warm Springs sustainability project is one outcome of this collaboration. Dr. Judith Vergun, one of the project's leaders, says the goal of this project is to combine oral histories, develop geographic information systems, and study vegetation to better understand the pre-European-contact landscape and its management by native people and then apply, reinstate, or adapt that management to restore ecosystem health. The Warm Springs project is currently experimenting with selective, low-impact logging methods designed to open the canopy without damaging huckleberries.

Vergun hopes such pilot projects undertaken on tribal land, where the bureaucratic review process is less onerous, can later be applied on national forest lands.

Meanwhile, John Davis, silviculturist on the Mount Hood National Forest, is writing a huckleberry management plan for that forest. Davis has been meeting with tribal members to learn about existing and historical berry patches and to identify management issues. In the process he's found that road closures have reduced access to berry patches, especially for the elderly women who do the ceremonial picking for the huckleberry festival. Davis is also working to better incorporate huckleberry management into timber sales and other management activities.

One goal, Davis says, is "to get the berries to move around the landscape again." Huckleberry patches are part of a dynamic landscape of diverse and shifting successional patches that cannot be managed in isolation, Davis and Vergun note.

Tribal-agency ecosystem planning

Also in Oregon, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde are focusing on ecosystem management planning. In an experiment attracting attention throughout Indian Country, the tribe and the Forest Service have developed a three-phase stewardship agreement that authorizes the tribe to: 1) conduct inventories, 2) develop a management plan, and 3) implement approved activities on 6,600 acres of the Siuslaw National Forest upstream of the Grande Ronde Reservation.

An agreement signed in June of 1999 implemented the first two phases of the agreement. As part of phase one, the tribe's Natural Resources Division will inventory spotted owls and murrelets, inventory and monitor streams, and assess forest health. Phase two, writing the plan, will be coordinated with the writing of a 10-year management plan for the tribe's lands in the basin.

The plan, which is intended to accomplish the goals of the Northwest Forest Plan and the North Coast Range Adaptive Management Area, will focus on restoring forest and watershed health. Don Gonzalez, a Siuslaw National Forest district ranger, notes that the tribe "hasn't been blinded by so many years of doing the same work the same way. We're hoping they can come up with something new." Once the initial plan is completed, it will go through Forest Service and National Environmental Policy Act review. If approved, the tribe will be authorized to carry out planned activities.

Benefits for the agency and the tribe

For the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the agreement offers a voice in the management of their ceded lands and the opportunity to coordinate the management of lands adjacent to their reservation. Mike Wilson, tribal lands coordinator for the Grand Ronde, comments that "By going up to the headwaters we can get a bigger picture of our on-reservation streams."

The tribe is currently contracting out some of the inventory work and hopes that implementation of the plan will create additional jobs in forest restoration. Wilson notes that the agreement is set up so that both sides will benefit even if the plan is not approved. The tribe will be paid for the inventory work, and the Forest Service will gain valuable data to help it with its planning efforts.

The tribe is negotiating a similar agreement covering 4,200 acres of Bureau of Land Management land in the South Yamhill basin.

Member Profile

Marshall Pecore

I have deep roots in the Menominee Forest. I was born and raised here on the Menominee Reservation, and my folks worked in logging, so I've always been part of the community. I got into forestry because I thought it was a good profession, given what I knew.

Learning from history

When I first started studying forestry I was naïve—I just thought everyone tried to manage their resources as best they could. It was only later, after college, that I realized how unique Menominee forest management is. Before I left the reservation, I really took for granted how we've managed the forest as part of the community. After I came back, as I learned more about past policies of our community, I really began to appreciate the choices our people had made. I realized that sooner or later it's your turn, and you've got to do what is best for the forest and the community.

I think some tribal members, especially those under 20, may have forgotten the struggles previous members underwent to ensure the existence of our forest and our right to manage it. They really strove to blend profit and community concerns. A lot of the questions we ask today were answered years ago, and we've just forgotten those lessons. To help people remember, we've recently finished writing a forest history, and are trying to get it out to tribal members in book form.

Making decisions with the community in mind

As forest managers, we're always making choices. We don't always meet our goals, but if they're good policies, sincere and from the heart, the rest of the community will support them. I think that's what you get in community forestry. We try to make decisions on what's best for the community for the long run, and we'll struggle through today if we have to. I don't think corporate America does that.

I interact daily with the Menominee board of directors—elected tribal officials who represent the community—and we are always asking, "How will this benefit the tribe, the forest, and the community?" It's a small community here, and our meetings are open. People find out about policy changes, and we get feedback, both pro and con, pretty quickly. People stop me at the gas station or the restaurant, and they hold me accountable because I live right here. I need to be able to articulate the idea behind a policy on the spot and tie it back to a larger vision of where we're all going.

The Menominee constitution sets goals and broad direction for the forest and related tribal enterprises. It also sets out democratic processes for reassessing and changing these goals, processes that involve open community meetings and our court system, but it doesn't make it so easy that goals and directions are changed with every change in political office. When you have members running for office, there is always the risk that they will compromise long-term goals for short-term gain. In a small community, though, people find out faster what they're doing, and hold them true to the community's intentions.

We're now putting our summer sales out to bid, and we're wondering if there's enough timber to support the local loggers. A larger corporation wouldn't worry about that, but we're thinking about the effects of a policy on guys' lives because we may see them the next day. We always have to recognize that there are people behind every tree we cut and every decision we make about when to cut and how to cut.

Managing for diversity

When it comes to non-timber resources, we don't get sidetracked too often into managing this acre for sharptail grouse and that acre for whitetail deer. We focus more on maintaining species and age diversity in the forest. We believe that if we manage for diversity, the majority of things that have endured here for thousands of years will still be present in the future.

Marshall Pecore, forest manager of Menominee Tribal Enterprises, is responsible for overseeing management of the tribe's 220,000 acres of forest land in northern Wisconsin. The Menominee forestry program is often cited as one of the best examples of sustainable forestry in the United States, and won the 1996 President's Honor Award for Sustainable Development.

Community offers a way to evaluate decisions

I think the American public has a growing sense of ownership in federal and state lands, but the decisionmaking process for those lands is much larger and the feedback time is much longer. Depending on the bureaucracy, sometimes agencies do nothing in response to public feedback, and sometimes they overreact. In a smaller community where you're interacting every day, it's harder to underreact or overreact because there's always someone ready to hit you with a balancing view.

There's always that question of, "Where are we going? Is it right?" I think community forestry provides a quicker route to answer that question than larger corporate or governmental processes. Say some community members are not sure about cutting trees. In a corporate or governmental structure, it takes a long time to figure that out, and by the time there's a decision it may be too late. In community forestry, it's always front and center, because you're asking every day what the community is thinking.

Community forestry offers a lot. It offers a way to evaluate decisions to ensure that you don't get too far from your purpose. It can serve as an example for other industries. Community is what it's all about. In the end, we cut trees and make a profit, all to support a community.

News & Views

Candidates spar over community forestry

Community forestry issues are making it onto the radar screens of at least two presidential candidates. In a democratic primary debate on January 6, 2000, Bill Bradley and Al Gore discussed the President's roadless initiative as it applies to the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire.

Gore defended the proposal, calling it "a preliminary statement of intention to protect this land and then have a process of consultation with the communities and the individuals who live near the areas to be protected." Bradley disagreed, saying "I don't think a president should preempt in the White Mountains the local planning process" and "local decisionmaking is important."

New York City gardens get last-minute rescue

About a year ago, we reported on New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's call to auction off city-owned vacant lots that are home to community gardens. Many were aghast at the thought of these gardens, often focal points for neighborhood revitalization efforts, being sold for real estate development.

In May, garden proponents' lobbying efforts, protests, and lawsuits paid off. A day before the auction, the New York Restoration Project and the Trust for Public Land signed a $4.2 million agreement to buy 112 parcels and assure that they will remain green oases in a busy city.

However, other gardens continue to fall, including the 22-year-old Esperanza Garden on Manhattan's lower east side that was bulldozed on January 19 despite protesters' efforts to save it. Garden advocates are working through the courts in an effort to assert the gardens' status as common-law parks.

Regular updates on this issue are available in the New York City-focused electronic newsletter, *Urban Outdoors*. To subscribe, send your name and email address to <nosc@treebranch.com>.

New legislation would regulate Forest Service's NTFP management

The Pilot Program of Charges and Fees for Harvest of Forest Botanical Products is buried deep within the Year 2000 Department of Interior and Related Agencies Appropriation Act, but lately it's been attracting a lot of interest and concern among those wondering what impact its implementation will have on non-timber forest products (NTFPs) gathering in national forests.

The legislation directs the U.S. Forest Service to charge at least fair-market value for NTFPs collected on national forests, and to use these receipts to pay for the fee program and to undertake inventories and management activities that will ensure the sustainability of NTFPs. Waivers would be established for personal use, and the program is set to run through 2004.

The Forest Service, which is currently developing implementing regulations for this program, is faced with the challenging task of determining how to set up, staff, and enforce such a system.

Pinchot Institute leading examination of NTFPs

This April, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation will convene a National Assessment Workshop on non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Funded by the Turner and Ford Foundations, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, the workshop will bring together people from around the country to discuss research and policy pertaining to the cultivation, management, commerce, and use of NTFPs.

Proceedings from the workshop—including recommendations for implementing the Pilot Program of Charges and Fees for Harvest of Forest Botanical Products, possible legislative changes, and approaches to NTFP management and research—should be available in May 2000.

At the same time, the Pinchot Institute and the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Research Station are studying the socioeconomic and ecological context of NTFP gathering. Last fall they interviewed a diverse array of people involved in NTFP harvesting and marketing in Oregon and Washington, and then convened work sessions in the region to further discuss NTFP issues and research priorities. They are using the information they gathered to identify future research needs.

For more information about both of these projects, contact Will Price at <willprice@pinchot.org> or at 202-797-6580 ext. 6578.

National Resource Center for people in forest communities

Recently funded by the USDA's Fund for Rural America, the new National Research Center promises to promote a more participatory approach to forest management. The center will develop the research capacity of rural, forest-dependent communities; train local community researchers across the country; and create new institutional mechanisms to help local communities access information and participate effectively in natural resource decisionmaking.

The National Resource Center is a collaborative effort of the National Network of Forest Practitioners, Forest Trust, Yellow Wood Associates, Forest Community Research, and Mountain Association for Community Economic Development. For more information, contact Thomas Brendler at 617-338-7821 or at <tbrendler@igc.org>.

Share *your* news & views

Letters and articles submitted to this newsletter are always welcome; send your ideas to Communities & Forests, PO Box 356, Hayfork, CA, 96041, or to wsc@tcoe.trinity.k12.ca.us.

Members are also encouraged to subscribe and contribute to the Communities Committee's two email listservs. CFNews is intended for posting announcements and news updates. CFForum is a place to exchange ideas and information related to community forestry. To subscribe to either listserv, send the following message to <listserv@listserv.arizona.edu>:

"subscribe CFNEWS your name"
or "subscribe CFFORUM your name."

Indian perspectives on ecosystem restoration

Ecological restoration is a popular term these days but one that often leaves American Indians feeling left out. The concept of a "presettlement" landscape that is used as a baseline by many advocating ecosystem restoration obscures the important role pre-European people played in creating and maintaining that landscape.

Dr. Judith Vergun, an ecologist at Oregon State University, says, "The concept of wilderness is one that came with Europeans." She points out that many native peoples actively managed the landscape to create a diverse array of niches that favored the many plants and animals on which they depended. While most attention has been paid to the human role in setting landscape-scale burns, Vergun says these were but one of the many ways people managed their environments. They also used microburns, built with twigs around individual plants, and various methods of thinning, weeding, clearing, and planting.

"The concept of wilderness is one that came with Europeans." - Judith Vergun

Some researchers hypothesize that plant gathering and the associated disturbance and seed dispersal may have played an important part in maintaining some plant populations now in decline. Vergun says that while in many cases the only way to learn of such techniques is through oral histories, once you are made aware of them you can see their footprint throughout the landscape.

Similarly, Dennis Martinez of the Indigenous People's Restoration Network refers to the "myth of the virgin continent" and points out that "humans are keystone players essential to functioning systems." He describes how traditional management systems regulated resource use by setting gathering and hunting seasons and controlling access to specific resources, typically enforced by social taboos and spiritual concerns. While some of these management systems survive, many have been abandoned and even forgotten over the last century of change.

Today, ecological restoration and cultural renewal are intimately linked in the eyes of many native people. While many of their restoration approaches—like thinning overstocked stands, prescribing fire, and seeding native species—are right out of the restoration textbook, others chart new territory. Martinez notes the importance of bringing back the salmon ceremony to the Tacoma Intertribal Project's efforts to restore the oak/pine savanna and associated watersheds. Similarly, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation's interest in huckleberry restoration is built on the cultural and religious significance of the berries.

Creating jobs in restoration is certainly an important concern for American Indian restorationists, but religious values may be just as important. A survey conducted during the development of a woodland management plan for the Hopi Reservation found that the spiritual and physical realms were inseparable for most tribal members.

Alex Conley

Changing approaches to tribal forest management

For most of the last century, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has managed forests on Indian reservations. Increasingly, however, tribes are taking over management responsibility for their forests, and more emphasis is being placed on community-oriented management of diverse tribal resources.

Long-standing frustrations with BIA's management were aptly summarized by the Indian Forest Management Assessment Team (IFMAT) in 1993. The team, convened by Congressional mandate, made three main criticisms of traditional BIA management: 1) where tribal members emphasized the need for integrated, holistic management of diverse resources, the BIA typically focused on commercial timber production; 2) the BIA forestry program was substantially underfunded compared to the U.S. Forest Service's per-acre funding; and 3) coordinated resource management and planning were not occurring on BIA-managed lands.

A 1997 reassessment of BIA forest management found that little had been done to address these criticisms. That may be starting to change, however. Today, the BIA is making a new effort to promote integrated resource management planning.

At the same time, tribal governments are proactively seeking a greater role in the management of their forests. Self-governance has been taking root in Indian Country since the late 1970s, and now well over half of the major timber-holding tribes operate their own forestry programs. Many have taken over all of the BIA's former forestry responsibilities.

The IFMAT team called for Indian forestry programs to serve as models of sustainability that all forest managers could learn from, and several tribal forestry programs have met this challenge. Examples include the Menominee Tribe's exemplary forestry program in Wisconsin, which won the Presidential Award for Sustainable Development in 1996; the White Mountain Apache's diversified management for timber, trophy elk, recreation, and cultural values in Arizona; the Yakama and Flathead Reservations' long-running experiments with selective harvesting in Montana and Washington; and the Hoopa Valley Tribe's certified forestry operation in California.

Where tribal members emphasized integrated, holistic resource management, the BIA typically focused on timber.

Not all Native American forest management is exemplary, of course, and self-governance in itself does not guarantee sustainable management of multiple forest resources. Perhaps the most egregious example was the unprecedented clearcutting of lands held by the Alaskan Native American corporations that resulted from a late-1980s tax loophole allowing the corporations to sell their operating losses to outside companies searching for a tax break. Today, some of these corporations, chastened by tribal members' and environmentalists' condemnation of the clearcutting, have brokered a buy-back of still uncut stumpage.

Alex Conley

Resources

Publications

An Assessment of Indian Forests and Forest Management. This 1993 report by the Indian Forest Management Assessment Team gives an excellent overview of American Indian forestry. The Intertribal Timber Council plans to issue a second assessment within the next year. The 1993 edition is available for free on the World Wide Web at <conbio.rice.edu/nae/docs/assessment.html> or for $8.00 from the Intertribal Timber Council at 4370 NE Halsey Street, Portland, OR 97213, 503-282-4296.

Journal of Forestry - special issue on Native American forestry. The November 1997 issue of the *Journal of Forestry* (Vol. 95, No. 11) includes articles on a range of Indian forestry issues and a selection of case studies from around the country. Available from the Society of American Foresters, 5400 Grosvenor Lane, Bethesda, Maryland 20814, 301-897-8720, <safweb@safnet.org>.

World Wide Web sites

Menominee Tribal Enterprises. Learn more about this award-winning integrated sustainable forest management and wood products manufacturing enterprise, the forest products and management information systems products they market, and the Menominee concept of sustainable forestry at <http://www.menominee.com/mte/MTEHOME.HTML>.

Bureau of Indian Affairs Division of Forestry. This site provides detailed descriptions of BIA forestry programs and policies and links to related Indian forestry sites. Check it out at <http://snake1.cr.usgs.gov/forestry.html>.

Native Americans and the environment—on-line publications. The American Indian Heritage Foundation's library provides the full text of several articles related to Indian forestry and other environmental issues facing American Indians as well as links to related Web sites. Available at <http://www.indians.org/library>.

Funding opportunities

Native American cooperative education positions. American Indian and Alaska Native college students majoring in forestry or other natural resource management programs are eligible for paid work and tuition assistance from the Bureau of Indian Affair's National Center for Cooperative Education. For more information, contact the NCCE-NR Coordinator at Haskell Indian Nations University, 155 Indian Ave., Lawrence KS 66049, 785-749-8414 or <gsloan@ross1.cc.haskell.edu>.

Microenterprise grant program. The Microenterprise Fund for Innovation, Effectiveness, Learning, and Dissemination (FIELD), a new research and development fund program of the Aspen Institute, will award grants for identifying and developing best practices for microenterprise development among low-income entrepreneurs and in poor communities. For more information or to request a grant application, contact Damon Bethea, at FIELD, The Aspen Institute, 1333 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Suite 1070, Washington, DC 20036, or at 202-467-0790 or at <fieldus@aspeninst.org>.

Sustainable communities and forests initiative. This program of the Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation supports nonprofit organizations working on forest conservation and environmentally sustainable economic development in rural communities. Grants are for one to three years and range from $5,000 to $30,000. Initial application forms are due May 1, 2000. For more information, contact Judith Healey at the Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation, 332 Minnesota Street, Suite 2100, St. Paul, MN 55101-1394 or at 651-228-0935.

Upcoming events

Forest Stewards Guild annual meeting. May 3-6, 2000, Blairsden, California. Forest stewardship issues on both private and public lands will be addressed at this event, which includes an array of field trips, presentations, and technical workshops. Topics to be covered include fire, restoration forestry, the Forest Service's capacity to meet demands for change, the role of timber investment groups in sustainable forestry, the effectiveness of regulatory programs and forester licensing, and the intricacies of selection silvaculture. For more information, contact Steve Harrington at 505-983-8992 or at <info@foreststewardsguild.org>.

Alternative Dispute Resolution and Natural Resources: Building Consensus and Resolving Conflicts in the Twenty-first Century. May 16-19, 2000, Tucson, Arizona. This conference will offer opportunities for federal, state, and local government agency staff and nongovernmental parties to share successes, challenges, and future directions in the practice of alternative dispute resolution in natural resource management. Several professional trainings will be offered. For more information, visit the conference Web site at <www.ecr.gov/s_conferences.htm> or contact the conference organizers at <adrconferenceinfo@amigomtg.com> or at 520-885-0300.

The Ecology of Urban Soils: Designing and Managing Soils for the Living Landscape. June 11-13, 2000, St. Paul, Minnesota. This conference promises to offer the latest information on working with disturbed and designed soils in an urban setting. Presentations will address the biology and hydrology of urban soils, the role of soils in urban planning, case studies, advice on "how to grow trees in concrete," valuating contaminated soils, and use of compost and inorganic amendments. For more information, visit the conference Web site at <www.scisoc.org/opae/shortcourse> or contact Cindy Ash at 651-454-7250 or at <cash@scisoc.org>.

Maidu pilot project, *continued from page 1*

The plan is designed to increase the vegetative diversity and improve overall forest health on the Plumas National Forest, and is the only one of the 28 pilot projects to apply traditional American Indian stewardship principles to national forest management.

The techniques will include reintroducing fire, which Maidus traditionally used in combination with pruning, and farming willows, berry bushes, bulbs, and other culturally important plants. The project will also use timber sales to rehabilitate the forest understory, meadows, and riparian vegetation. The goal is to combine traditional techniques with scientific perspectives on forest management.

One significant by-product of the Maidu stewardship project could be a model of the pre-European forest landscape. Everyone talks about returning the forests of the West to the health they enjoyed before Europeans arrived, but nobody knows what that was, says Farrell Cunningham, stewardship coordinator for the Maidu group.

This project, on 2,100 acres of Plumas Forest, will show how Maidus maintained tree spacing and diversity in the understory vegetation. "It wasn't just a natural forest where human beings never did anything. It was a real forest, not just some vision of an ideal place," Cunningham says. The project will also demonstrate how traditional management techniques can optimize forest health and provide local jobs.

Working together and respecting very different approaches to land management is an ongoing challenge for both the Maidu people and the Forest Service, says Gorbet. To help establish a process that everyone understands, the pilot project calls for developing a set of culturally appropriate protocols about how to share knowledge of Maidu vegetation management with the Forest Service and other agencies.

That may set a precedent for other tribes or groups in establishing who controls traditional knowledge and how it is shared. The idea that indigenous people have ownership rights to their traditional knowledge is a new one, and it could stimulate an intellectual property rights debate, says Cunningham, who is developing the protocols for review by the Maidu Cultural and Development Group and Forest Service officials.

The Maidu stewardship project is an exciting opportunity to demonstrate ecosystem management in the forest understory as well as the overstory, says Terri Simon-Jackson, a Plumas Forest district ranger and the agency's project coordinator. "To do that we need to know where the ecosystem is out of balance and how important that is," she says.

The Maidu project is planned for 99 years in 10-year renewable increments. For further information, contact:

- Maidu Cultural and Development Group, P.O. Box 426, Greenville, CA 95947, 530-284-6866; or
- Mt. Hough Ranger District, Plumas National Forest, 39696 Highway 70, Quincy, CA 95971, 530-283-0555.

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