Communities and Forests

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

Volume 4, Number 2 *Summer 2000*

Linking New York City to its rural watersheds

by Gerry Gray and Alex Conley

New York City is one of the world's great cities, full of skyscrapers and swarming streets where dozens of languages can be heard in the space of a few blocks. To keep it all going, the city uses 1.4 billion gallons of water a day, 90% of which comes from its reservoir system in the Catskill and Delaware watersheds.

Around those reservoirs is a world that seems far removed from the bustle of the city, where idyllic views of steep wooded valleys, dairy farms, and creekside cabin resorts coexist with the realities of life in an economically depressed rural area.

Today, beachgoers at Coney Island can stop and read a sign that describes how the boardwalk they are walking on is built of wood carefully harvested in the city's Catskill watershed. In the towns where the wood was cut, loggers are voluntarily attending classes to become "watershed certified." Both the boardwalk and the logger classes owe their existence to an innovative new agreement that is reshaping the relationship between the city and the rural communities in its watersheds.

continued on page 3

Elroy Christopher points to African American History and local pride displays in his central Baltimore neighborhood. *Photo by Cecilia Banks.*

Faces of urban forestry in Baltimore

by Ann Moote

In their central Baltimore neighborhood, community leaders Clayton Guyton and Elroy Christopher are struggling to build a sense of pride and safety amid blocks of mostly-abandoned rowhouses. Pointing to a photo exhibit of neighborhood scenes at the Rose Street Community Center, Clayton explains that while some people may dismiss this area as a worthless "concrete jungle," it is also home to many people.

These men have spent tireless hours working to reclaim the streets, backyards, and alleys in their neighborhood. To get rid of drug dealers, Christopher and Guyton slept on the corner for over 200 nights straight, with bullets raining over their heads. They plastered photos of local youth and an African American history exhibit on boarded up windows of vacant buildings, to get people thinking about their community and what they were doing to either hurt or help it.

They've also organized street tree plantings and invested hundreds of volunteer hours to clear an abandoned block piled high with trash and rubble. Today, that block is a community park with trees, grass, a gazebo, and a barbeque. The park is fenced and locked, to keep children and families safe, and criminal elements out. Rose Street Community Center keeps the key.

"You need to accept the urban forest for what it is. It's not just trees," says Bryant Smith, a community forester with the nonprofit Parks & People Foundation in Baltimore. "Community forestry needs to address junkies, housing, and hunger. Here, we need to focus on people first."

continued on page 6

Communities and Forests is published by The University of Arizona's Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy for the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress. Subscriptions are free upon request.

Comments, subscription requests, and submissions may be sent to:
Communities and Forests
Communities Committee of the
Seventh American Forest Congress
Box 356, Hayfork, CA 96041
530-628-4206 (phone)
530-628-5100 (fax)
wsc@tcoe.trinity.k12.ca.us

Editorial board:
Maia Enzer, American Forests
Wendy Hinrichs Sanders, Great Lakes Forest Alliance
Bryant Smith, Parks & People Foundation
Kevin Smith, Governor's Office of Oregon
Ann Moote, Editor
Kathleen Veslany, Copy Editor

Contributors:
Jim Beil, Steve Blackmer, Jane Braxton Little, Thomas Brendler, Sam Burns, John Clancy, Alex Conley, Maia Enzer, Brian Fisher, Gerry Gray, Bill Imbergamo, Ian Leahy, Charlie Niebling, Gregory Owens, Erika Svendson

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 the rights and responsibilities of diverse forest landowners.

Letter to the members

I've had the privilege of facilitating the urban-rural task group since its inception, and we've been on an exciting path. I think back to the November 1997 Communities Committee meeting in Quincy, California when nearly all of the steering committee members engaged in a brainstorming session on urban-rural linkages. Wonderful, expansive ideas flowed, identifying a wide range of possible linkages to explore among watersheds, technology, habitat protection, demographic changes, poverty, brownfields, political power, equity and justice issues, gateway communities, forest product certification, and marketing. The emerging urban-rural task group took on the challenge of trying to make sense out of this exciting, yet unwieldy, topic.

Gerry Gray chairs the Cornmunities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress' urban-rural linkages task group.
Photo by Jane Braxton Little

The task group first developed a mission and goals for an urban-rural initiative. The mission focuses on learning and action: ***Build awareness of environmental, social, and economic linkages between urban and rural communities and promote collaborative action to meet shared ecological objectives***. The five goals are broad and suggest key strategies and actions:

- Promote dialogue between urban and rural community groups to build mutual understanding and identify common environmental, social, and economic issues/objectives.
- Identify and apply assessment, planning, and monitoring tools to explore environmental, social, and economic linkages between urban and rural communities.
- Encourage educational initiatives to share information and perspectives, and to build common understanding of evolving urban and rural contexts.
- Develop partnerships between urban and rural community groups to share information, expertise, and skills regarding means to participate in natural resource planning and decision-making.
- Identify mechanisms and implement pilot projects through which urban and rural community groups can work together–and with federal, state, and local agencies–to demonstrate innovative approaches to ecosystem restoration and maintenance.

To help move this initiative forward, the Communities Committee partnered with American Forests to develop regional pilot projects, adopting the practical community-based approach of learning by doing. We identified the Puget Sound and Chesapeake Bay as regions with high national profiles concerning natural resource issues linking urban and rural areas–salmon habitat restoration and clean water, respectively.

Beyond these two pilot projects, the task group and Communities Committee are seeking to learn more from efforts in California to build a constituency among rural communities in the northern Sierras and urban groups in Los Angeles, focusing on water issues that connect them (*see related article, page 8*). and from the research task group's case studies of the Chicago Wilderness, Baltimore (*see article, page 1*), and New York City's watersheds (*see article, page 1*).

Gerry Gray

***New York City**, continued from page 1*

Historically, relationships between New York City and upstream communities have been poor at best. A 1906 agreement with the state gives the city authority to oversee and regulate watersheds far beyond its municipal boundaries. When the city built its reservoir system between 1920 and 1960, it acquired land through eminent domain, flooding farms and forcing villages to move. The city often paid below-market prices for the land, and delays in payments forced many landowners into debt. Promises to maintain bridges and roads around the reservoirs were frequently broken as city budgets tightened in the 1970s and 80s, and many rural communities assert that the city has not paid its fair share of property taxes.

Unprecedented agreement

In 1990, when the city proposed a new set of land-use regulations to reduce non-point pollution in the watersheds, many rural residents saw it as yet another act of aggression that would undermine their cultures and economies. Yet by 1996, the city and communities in the watersheds had signed a groundbreaking agreement aimed at protecting both the city's drinking water and the economic vitality of the communities.

What led to this unexpected coming together? The city knew something needed to be done to comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 1989 surface water-treatment rule, which requires cities to filter drinking water unless it meets stringent water-quality criteria. With the costs for a filtration system at $5-$ billion to build and $200-500 million per year to maintain, any other option seemed appealing. Yet rural communities made a compelling argument that the proposed regulations would limit landowner's options, inducing many to sell to developers, with the resulting growth further reducing rather water quality. Both sides were united by the fear of "Crotonization," a reference to the Croton watershed that supplies 10% of the city's water. Residential development there dramatically changed local communities and led the EPA to require the city to set up a costly filtration system.

"Hopefully, people here in the watersheds are beginning to recognize New York City as part of our community, and city officials and residents are beginning to recognize farmers, forest landowners, and loggers are part of their community."- Alan White, WAC

The agreement

The resulting agreement, signed by the city and 35 rural communities after years of negotiation, covers everything from sewage treatment to agricultural preservation. Perhaps of most interest here is the forestry program it created, which is run by the Watershed Agriculture Council (WAC) and funded mainly by the city. However, the agreement also requires the city to only purchase land and conservation easements from willing sellers and to pay full taxes on all acquired land, sets up a community review process to get local input on proposed purchases, and provides funding for community economic development efforts, including $60 million to be distributed as grants and loans by the Catskills Fund for the Future.

On the forestry side, WAC subsidizes the cost of hiring a consulting forester for landowners interested in developing a comprehensive forest-management plan and offers cost-shares for activities meant to improve water quality. To date, over 81 landowners have signed up over 25,000 acres in the program. WAC also conducts trainings for loggers to encourage the use of best management practices and provides cost shares to help interested loggers attend these trainings. So far 110 loggers have been certified as "watershed qualified." Four model forests have been established, and the WAC is working with local environmental education centers to promote them. A riparian restoration program is planting and restoring several miles of riparian forest buffers along streams and floodplains to better protect water quality and enhance wildlife habitat.

Challenges

While the forestry program is off to a good start, many challenges remain. One set of challenges comes from the increasing numbers of what Brian Fisher, the WAC's forestry program manager, jokingly refers to as UFOs, or unidentified forest owners. He notes that as farms and woodlots continue to be broken up and sold to people from outside the area, "it's hard to get a handle on who they are," so involving them in the forestry program is difficult. Already, the bulk of the land is held in small parcels of under 100 acres.

While protocols developed in the agreement have reduced conflicts over the acquisition and taxation of city-owned lands, how those lands will be managed is still a source of some tension. To date, the city has emphasized custodial management, and has been hesitant to cut timber on watershed lands, while many in the region believe that properly conducted logging can provide benefits to local communities without affecting water quality. When the city purchases conservation easements on lands that stay in private hands, it also establishes guidelines for the management of those lands; Brian Fisher notes that, "Most private non industrial forest landowners would like to see more flexibility in those conditions."

The entire agreement between the city and the watershed communities is precedent setting, complex, and fragile. It is held together by money–SI .4 billion of mostly city dollars–and requires changes in the working habits of state, city and federal regulatory agencies. Its success depends on strong, consistent leadership, which worries some. But even the doubters have not opposed the agreement. As Eric Goldstien of the Natural Resources Defense Council noted, "It's one of the most important and complicated issues facing the region. We are fooling ourselves if we think this current round will solve it. This is a stopgap initiative that buys us a little time, and that's useful." (*New York Times*, June 24, 1996)

It is still too early to assess many of the agreement's outcomes, such as changes in water quality or local economic activity. But one outcome is already clear: The relationship between the city and rural watersheds residents has changed. Historic antagonism has been greatly reduced, and communication among all involved has significantly improved.

Member Profile

Erika Svenson

Currently, I am the director of Greenthumb, New York City's community gardening program, but I started out on quite a different track. I was studying strategic defense and international development and got interested in the environment by studying military regimes in Brazil and learning about the impact of roads and resettlement schemes in the Amazon. Then I went to work in the global environment program at the Rockefeller Foundation and learned about human resources in the environment and issues of environmental equity. That led me to Yale University's School of Forestry & Environmental Studies.

At Yale, I was completely inspired by Dr. Bill Burch and his interest in reconnecting people to resources, culture, and history. came to look at natural resources as an incredible medium for restoring people's sense of self and community.

Erika Svendsen directs Greenthumb, New York City 's community gardening program. She joined the steering committee of the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress in 1999.

We use words like "garden" or "forest" to mean many things. My working definition of community forestry, or community gardening, is using the natural resource base as a tool to strengthen community-based development. Sometimes the resource we're using is a tree; sometimes it's just a vacant lot. The common link is a strong commitment to community stewardship. People begin by restoring the land but end up restoring a deep sense of humanity and environmental awareness.

Burch's mentoring led me to work in community-based environmental restoration internationally, in community forestry in Baltimore, and ultimately, to my work with Greenthumb.

Sustaining the people who steward the land

For over 20 years, Greenthumb has helped individuals, neighbors, and larger groups come together to restore some part of their neighborhood. The restoration can take almost any form—sculpture gardens, tree nurseries, market gardens, murals. playgrounds, senior citizen gardens—the range is as broad as the human imagination.

There are about 750 community gardens in New York City, and at best a Greenthumb staff of about 10, so everything we do is based on partnerships and volunteers. Greenthumb provides supplies and technical support, but the community volunteers are the land stewards. Greenthumb gives away over 2,000 trees each watered, and even revered. We work not just to support and sustain physical spaces but also to sustain the groups that build and maintain them, because without the people you can't sustain the space.

Active Greenthumb gardens can apply to our garden enrichment fund for help with the physical garden, the group that maintains it, and programming support. The physical enhancement aid might take the form of plant grants or help with garden layout and design. We help the groups build membership through events, mailings, and newsletters. We focus on site visits rather than site inspections and work toward learning from each garden. We also do a lot of listening to people and offering emotional support. Sometimes we refer groups to conflict mediation services. The programming support helps groups get the word out that these spaces exist. We help them design concert series, youth educational programs, and public art classes in the gardens.

People are the urban-rural link

Here in the city the rural forest can seem very far away. But New Yorkers come from all over the country and the world, and from all walks of life, and they bring with them an intrinsic sense of connection to the land. We've got community gardeners who come from a farming background in the Carribean, the southern United States, Southeast Asia, or Europe. When these people come to the city, they bring with them their natural abilities to convert, restore, and nurture the land. They can turn what seem to be impossible landscapes into really lush community gardens.

"People begin by restoring the land but end up restoring a deep sense of humanity and environmental awareness."

There's been a shift in the last 30 years with the growth of environmental awareness. it used to be that people saw their patch of green as an isolated garden, but now they're starting to see their land as part of a larger ecosystem, linking to parks and greenways and watersheds.

There is a sense of uniting that happens naturally when you bring community land stewards together. Whether urban or rural, they share a common language. Another commonality is politics. The politicized nature of land in the city is the same as the larger land wars you see in rural parts of the country. You get the same fights between people wanting to use land as open green space versus those who see open space as a lost opportunity for economic development.

Connecting nationally

I joined the Communities Committee's steering committee last year, and I've really enjoyed being part of a nationwide group working with communities. It's good to know that there are so many people out there working in the same direction. It gives all of our work more validity and support to know that we're part of a larger movement.

News & Views

Communities in the Northeast grapple with changing forest systems

Modeling the forest economy
Even the most remote rural areas are tied into the worldwide network of trade, information, and migration, a fact that is not lost on residents of the Northern Forest that stretches across New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

In an innovative new endeavor, the Northern Forest Center and the Sustainability Institute are exploring how local trends are influenced by these external factors. They're using systems dynamics techniques originally developed by engineers to model the forest products economy of the Northern Forest and the economic, ecological, and social factors that influence it.

An advisory council of stakeholders, with members ranging from foresters to industry representatives to environmental advocates, has developed a shared understanding of this forest system and created a computer model. The model allows users to test assumptions about such factors as forest growth rates, loss of forest to development, landowner cash-flow needs, and mills' responsiveness to price. Model users can also ask "what if" questions about policy actions.

The Center and the Institute are initiating a year-long series of workshops with stakeholders around the region to expand understanding of the complex interactions affecting the forest and the economy. *Steve Blackmer*

A new town forest?
New England's long tradition of managing town forests for community benefit has its origins in the village commons of colonial times. Throughout the 19th century, income from town forests supported many schools and poorhouses. The town of Randolph, New Hampshire, is turning to this centuries-old model of town forestry to address a current forest fragmentation challenge.

Between two units of the White Mountain National Forest, in the town of Randolph, New Hampshire, lies a 12,000-acre strip of private land that has long been tagged as an important biological corridor and recreation area. When the industry-owned tract was put up for sale, many agreed it should be preserved as open space. Yet several area residents were apprehensive at the thought of the federal government purchasing more property in the area and expanding the national forest boundary.

Instead, residents of Randolph and representatives of the Forest Service, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire's Forests, and the Trust for Public Land have worked out a joint ownership and management agreement for the parcel. Under the agreement, the Trust would purchase the land, then resell approximately 2,000 acres that fall within the existing Congressionally-designated boundary of the national forest to the Forest Service. Federal Forest Legacy funds would be used to purchase a conservation easement on the remaining 10,000 acres, and that land would be sold to the town of Randolph.

The town plans to manage the land–almost one-third of its land area–as a community forest, providing open space and recreational opportunities as well as sustainable timber harvests that will preserve traditional jobs and tax revenue. Community members are working to raise funds to complete the purchase. One option they're exploring is a municipal bond, to be repaid with revenues from timber harvesting on the property.

Charlie Neibling and Alex Conley

Devastating storm rekindles community forestry spirit It was a disaster–a derecho (straight-line winds) with speeds exceeding 100 miles an hour over about 10 square miles–that provided the impetus to rekindle the Syracuse, New York community forestry program and in some aspects, community spirit itself.

Ten years' worth of budget cuts and limited community involvement had taken their toll on the municipal forestry program in Syracuse. Then the 1998 Labor Day storm hit, devastating the urban forest. In the aftermath, the mayor convened the ReLeaf Syracuse Committee to look at reforestation options and the community raised $355,000 for tree planting.

ReLeaf Syracuse, now a nonprofit organization, has since conducted extensive tree plantings, tree-care workshops, and an inventory of all public Street and park trees. The city is working with citizens, neighborhood organizations, and businesses to identify what the community forest of tomorrow should look like, and to develop a master plan to implement that vision. While no one hopes for another bout of 115 mph winds, the community is proud of the way it turned a disaster into an opportunity to reinvigorate the city's community forestry program.

John Clancy

Forestry in a residential landscape
Central New York is a region dotted with state forests, wildlife management areas, and other public forest lands managed by the state's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). These lands were acquired and reforested following large-scale agricultural abandonment during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Today, as the region's agricultural economy continues to decline, farmland around the Syracuse, Ithaca, and Binghamton metropolitan areas is undergoing rapid parcelization and conversion into residential subdivisions. The loss of open space combined with an influx of new residents has changed public perception of state lands, leading to a greater interest in long-term management for outdoor recreation, habitat conservation, and preservation of cultural resources.

The DEC has taken this opportunity to initiate a state land planning process to foster dialogue among the various stakeholders. The objective is to develop a shared vision and management plan for each state land management unit within the region. *Gregory Owens*

(Editor's note: Forest fragmentation in the United States was addressed at length in the March 2000 issue of the Journal of Forestry*)*

***Baltimore**, continued from page 1*

Officially, Baltimore has 12,000 vacant houses and 14,000 vacant lots where houses have been demolished. Community organizers estimate the actual numbers are much higher–around 40,000 vacant lots, with another 20,000 houses scheduled for demolition.

The vacant lots reflect a drastic drop in the city's population, from about 1.2 million in the late 1970s to about 600,000 today. Initially, people left because the industrial base that provided jobs left. They kept leaving as urban infrastructure crumbled and crime rates rose.

"There's all this no man's land in the city–buildings and lots that have been abandoned by their owners" says Frank Rogers, another Parks & People community forester. "We'd like to see community groups get control over the open space in their neighborhoods."

Another face of community forestry in Baltimore

There's another face of Baltimore, however, and another perspective on community forestry here. This other Baltimore is found in stately historic homes, 300,000 street trees, and lush streamvalley parks. Urban forestry in these areas focuses on ecological restoration and stewardship.

The ecological side of urban forestry in Baltimore is embodied in Dr. Michael Beer, a retired professor of biophysics, who is one of many community leaders working to restore native species and free-flowing waterways.

Restoring an urban forest

Michael Beer has a story he likes to tell about how he got involved in community forestry. It starts in 1960, when he and his family bought a house abutting one of Baltimore's streamvalley parks, the 12acre, half-mile long Stony Run Greenway in the Jones Falls watershed. The Beers noticed that all the trees on the greenway were old, so they planted some new ones near their property. They soon realized why there were no young trees on the greenway–the city's maintenance crews were mowing them down.

Over the next two decades, Beer played tug-of-war with the city, writing letters, calling, and watching young trees get mowed down. Finally, he went directly to the maintenance workers responsible for the mowing. Spying one mowing the greenway, Beer walked up to him, pointed out a young tree, and asked, "See this tree?" The man said that yes, he saw it. "Don't mow it down," Beer said. The man agreed. Beer moved on to the next tree, "See this tree?" "Yes," the man said, and mowed down the first one. At that point. Beer prevailed on a wealthy neighbor to buy him a mower and told the city he'd do the mowing himself

In 1984, Beer organized his neighbors to help with plantings and greenway upkeep, and the Friends of Stony Run was born. The Friends decided to try to restore the native ecosystem, restricting plantings to native species. They organized students from local colleges and schools to clean up the trash. They pulled out invasive vines and planted trees and wildflowers.

A national experiment

Since 1994, Baltimore has been home to a national experiment in watershed-scale urban forestry with an explicit goal of addressing social and environmental needs in tandem. The program, Revitalizing Baltimore, is funded by the U.S. Forest Service and managed by Parks & People Foundation in partnership with state, county, and city agencies, several nongovernmental organizations, and academic institutions.

Revitalizing Baltimore funds projects ranging from urban tree plantings to developing watershed-scale geographic information systems.

Much of the program's early work focused on the Gwynns Falls watershed on Baltimore's west side, where project partners have developed a "watershed atlas" depicting social and environmental conditions. They also helped organize the Gwynns Falls Watershed Association, modeled after the Herring Run Watershed Association in eastern Baltimore, to clean up waterways, plant trees, and teach residents about watershed connections.

In 1997, Revitalizing Baltimore partners took notice of Michael Beer's work in Stony Run and asked him to help organize a third watershed group in Baltimore's central watershed, the Jones Falls.

Volunteers came in droves

"We started by spending about a year getting to know the river," Beer says. "Although in many ways it had been criminally violated, turned into little more than a concrete sewer, we also found unknown, beautiful sections. For me, it was a delightful discovery of a hidden treasure." Hikes and canoe trips down the Jones Falls revealed herons, kingfishers, ducks, geese, fish, and other wildlife living in and around abandoned textile mills and crumbling sewer pipes.

Beer started looking for volunteers to help with stream cleanups and riparian plantings, and somewhat to his surprise they came in droves.

Today, Beer proudly surveys the Stony Run woodland that was once a lawn, the school nursery with over 3,000 plants, the restored mills used as commercial and artist space, and the experimental planting that includes every species of tree native to Maryland. Large groups of "stream stewards" regularly clean up garbage along the entire length of the Falls, and Beer has organized volunteers who adopt individual trees or patches of land and keep them cleared of trash and invasive exotic plants.

Watersheds link communities

Jones Falls, like the Herring Run and Gwynns Falls, flows from rural and suburban Baltimore County into the city. The three watershed associations have brought together people from different reaches of the river and different walks of life for stream cleanups, tree plantings, and annual festivals. Yet Baltimore's community foresters continue to struggle with the challenge of addressing both social and environmental needs.

Looking at the Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park in Baltimore City, David Hollander, a founder of the Gwynns Falls Watershed Association, says, "The neighborhoods on the west side are mostly white and middle class, and they're concerned with aesthetics and the environment. On the east side the neighborhoods are mostly black and poorer, and those people are concerned with social stuff, especially recreational and educational opportunities for their kids. I see the watershed association as providing some sort of synthesis of the two perspectives."

Perspective: Community forestry in Baltimore

by Sam Burns

On May 4, 2000 I boarded a plane in Durango, Colorado, heading for my first meeting as a steering committee member of the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress. Eager to see some friends and colleagues, I looked forward to the discussion, yet wondered: Why are we meeting in Baltimore? There aren't any forests in Baltimore! What sort of field trip can we take there?

Having played a facilitating role on a forest restoration project in Southwest Colorado, the Ponderosa Pine Partnership, I sort of mentally rehearsed conversations I would have with the steering committee about sustaining small family-owned logging companies; reintroducing fire; stewardship contracting; and my favorite topic, building federal land management agencies' capacity to work in partnership with local communities. I reflected on the need to educate urban folks about public land stewardship needs in order to gain political support for us out here in the rural West.

My views changed when Bryant Smith toured us around Baltimore and told us the story of its urban forestry. We toured several sites—a community garden along an abandoned railroad right-of-way, a sizeable natural forest in the midst of the urban core that the neighborhood was attempting to save from residential and commercial development. I was most touched, however, by the work being accomplished by neighborhood residents through the Rose Street Community Center. Here we met two leaders, Elroy Christopher and Clayton Guyton, who explained how the neighborhood was working on redevelopment, pushing out drug dealers and raising people's awareness of their cultural strengths *(see story, page 1).*

Local residents, Communities Committee members, and Parks & People staff build an urban garden in central Baltimore's Upton neighborhood

Photo by Ann Moote

As we walked back from viewing a community garden built by Rose Street Community Center members, I turned to Mr. Christopher and asked him how the Rose Street Community Center was organized and sustained. He paused a moment, looked at me firmly. and said, "Faith."

Later that afternoon we went to a vacant lot in central Baltimore to build a pocket park. As we dug the holes for trees and shrubs and set three benches in concrete, the neighborhood children drifted in. At one point, there were four shovels digging a hole for a tree. One was mine, and the other three were held by the children. They grunted and pushed and lifted with great satisfaction. A partnership began to form between us visitors and the young folks sharing the dirt and shovels.

As the evening wore on and we gathered to eat chicken, crab, and potato salad in a city park, the picture became clearer. Community people from around the United States–from Baltimore, the intermountain West, Montana, California, New York, and Arizona–were gathered to work and celebrate communities as good stewards of natural things–water, trees, and dirt–and thereby becoming healthier themselves.

I left Baltimore realizing that it does not matter where you live or what the specific economic and ecological problems are, because the challenges and opportunities are similar in the community forestry and collaborative stewardship movement. We need to have "faith," as Mr. Christopher said. We all need to put our hands on the shovels and touch the earth and, as Wendell Berry reminds us, "keep our work within the reaches of love."

American Forests looks to abate Chesapeake Bay's forest loss

by Ian Leahy

The 41-million-acre Chesapeake Bay drainage system was once almost entirely forested. Today, however, forests cover less than 60 percent of the watershed. Historically, forests were cleared for farms and timber harvest, but the major threat to the Chesapeake's forests today is development: houses, roads, malls, and parking lots.

To assess this loss, American Forests analyzed satellite images of Chesapeake Bay forests from 1973, 1985, and 1997. Around the Baltimore-Washington, D.C. corridor, it found that forests declined from 821,000 acres to 555,000 acres between 1973 and 1997, while developed land rose from 462,000 acres to 732,000 during the same time period. In 1985, development replaced trees as the dominant feature of the landscape.

More rural parts of the watershed showed similar rates of forest loss. An 11.5-million-acre section of the basin lost nearly 2million acres of forest due to sprawling development and agricultural clearing, American Forests says.

The cost of this forest loss can be seen in increased pollution in the Bay, as well as increased air pollution, decreased biodiversity, and storm water runoff that taxes municipal infrastructures. American Forests is making an effort to reverse the trend by planting one million trees in the Bay watershed this year.

Californians take a watershed perspective

by Jane Braxton Little

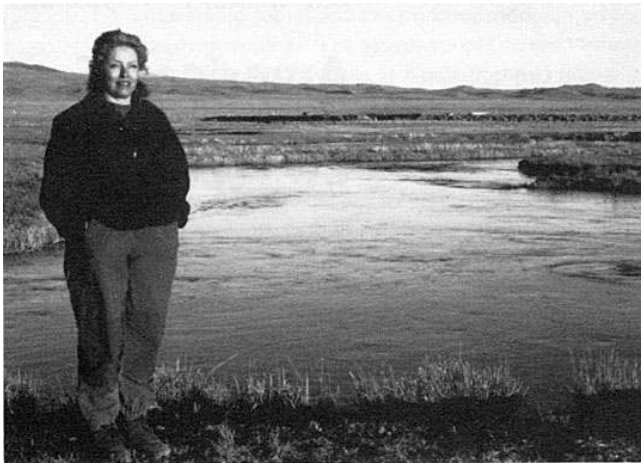
In the crowded neighborhoods of Los Angeles, the Mothers of East Los Angeles are distributing low-flow toilets to help raise the level of Mono Lake 330 miles away. In the rural foothills above Chico, Roger Cole is training homeowners to prune thousands of trees as a hedge against erosion and flooding more than 100 miles downstream. Properly pruned trees will be healthier, with bigger root systems to absorb and hold more water, he says.

Up and down the state of California, urban foresters and community groups are tackling problems in their own backyards to benefit the watersheds they share with distant regions. It's a holistic approach to resource management based on the belief that what happens at one end of the system affects the other end–and everything in between. "if you pull one string in the ecosystem, you unravel the whole thing," says Cole, president of Streaminders in Butte County.

And if you begin repairing the damaged threads, these activists believe, it may be possible to knit entire watersheds back together. They are emphasizing planting and cultivating trees in urban neighborhoods for the long-term benefits upstream and down, as well as for the more immediate effects on community aesthetics and quality of life. It's a process that is bringing together rural and urban communities and north- and south-state groups often polarized by competing needs.

The people treating watersheds as integral, whole systems are also challenging the traditional notion that only expensive projects designed by high-tech engineers can quench California's perennial thirst for water.

"Once you start connecting people to trees and stream systems and each other, they recognize common problems north and south. The links are creating more natural and efficient ways to manage water," says Martha Davis, director of Californians and the Land.



Communities Committee member Leah Wills is working to connect southern Californians to the Feather River watershed in rural northern Sierra Nevada. Photo by Jane Braxton Little

Downstream users support upstream projects

This emerging statewide watershed consciousness is evolving from the efforts of individuals and groups scattered around California. One of the oldest groups is in the rural northern Sierra Nevada, where a coalition of ranchers and anglers, environmentalists, and agency officials have been working for 15 years to restore the Feather River watershed. What began in 1985 as an experiment to raise the water table in a single degraded alpine meadow has grown into scores of projects on more than 40 creeks. All aim to reduce erosion and extend the season of stream flow throughout the Feather River watershed. an area as large as Rhode Island.

Recently, these rural partners have also recognized potential allies in the millions of Californians living downstream who fill their teakettles and their tubs with water from the Sierras. In addition to assuring a constant supply of high quality water, restoration work in the upper watershed can reduce the threat of flooding hundreds of miles below by slowing the peak flows and increasing the upstream storage capacity.

To the surprise of the Feather River partners, they have found support for their efforts among the urban California consumers downstream. In surveys, water users have said they would be willing to pay a fee for upstream watershed maintenance. "It's startling, but they actually said they would accept a $1 per month fee to support upper watershed work," says Leah Wills of the Feather River Coordinated Resource Management group.

Going to the source makes the connection real

That does not surprise Elsa Lopez, executive director of the Mothers of East Los Angeles–Santa Isabel. Her group has been working for six years to connect its Los Angeles neighborhoods with Mono Lake in the eastern Sierra Nevada mountains. The distant and dissimilar areas are linked by a 300-mile pipeline that draws water from rural Mono County to urban Los Angeles.

Court orders and a 1994 California State Water Resources Board decision have limited the diversions to protect Mono Lake's unique ecosystem. That has forced Los Angeles officials to consider new ways to slake the city's thirst. Water conservation is one of them.

The Mothers of East Los Angeles and other inner-city groups began helping in 1992 by distributing ultra-low-flow toilets in their communities. Each low-flow toilet saves up to 5,000 gallons of water a year. That's water that can stay in the Mono Basin to benefit the environment, the neighborhood workers told residents.

It was going to the source that made the connection real. In 1994, the Mothers of East Lost Angeles took a group of local youth to Mono Lake for five days of camping, hiking, and swimming. Some of them had never seen a lake; some had never seen snow or stars, says Lopez. In the two months after they returned, the distribution of low-flow toilets was triple the number distributed over the previous seven months. "Those people came back from Mono and decided they wanted to make a difference. They did," says Lopez. *continued on page 12*

Policy Updates

New and improved federal funding for community forestry

There are several new options for community forestry funding working their way through Congress this summer. The biggest news is that CARA–the Conservation and Reinvestment Act–passed the House with broad bipartisan support. A number of other bills also call for increased funding for community forestry and related activities.

Conservation & Reinvestment Act

CARA (H.R. 701) passed the House on May 1 11th and is now being considered by the Senate. This landmark bill calls for using a portion of the federal government's revenue from offshore oil and gas leasing to fund everything from endangered species preservation to basketball courts. One billion dollars per year would be used to help state and local governments mitigate the impacts of offshore drilling, and $900 million would be used to fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which supplies monies for land and water acquisitions by state and federal government agencies.

CARA also would provide $350 million to nearly double federal funds for wildlife conservation, $125 million to help local governments build and rehabilitate recreation facilities, S 100 million to fund the Historic Preservation Act, $200 million for a coordinated restoration program for federal and Indian lands, $100 million to carry out farmland protection and fund the Forest Legacy and Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Programs, and $50 million to purchase conservation easements and fund landowner incentives that aid in the protection of threatened and endangered species. Taken together, the CARA provisions would provide unprecedented, permanent funding for conservation programs. Prospects for Senate passage are good.

Community Forest Restoration Act

The Community Forest Restoration Act (S. 1288), passed by the Senate in November 1999, is now being considered by the House Committee on Resources. Introduced by Senator Bingaman (D-New Mexico). the bill calls for $5 million a year to fund restoration forestry projects in New Mexico. It would set up a collaborative forest restoration program to fund individual grants of up to $360,000 for experimental forest restoration projects. Qualifying projects would be required to focus on restoring ecosystem functions and biodiversity, reduce fire risks, preserve old and large trees, and be designed through collaborative processes involving a diverse and balanced group of stakeholders.

Project SEARCH Act

Senator Crapo (R-Idaho) recently introduced a bill (S. 2296) intended to help community groups find funding for environmental projects. The "Project SEARCH Act of 2000" calls for the EPA to transfer $1 million to each state governor for use by independent citizen councils that would review and award grants to community projects. The program would be designed to be easily accessible to small communities, with a simple application process and no matching fund requirement.

Economic Action Program

However, not all the news from Congress is good news. Funding for the Forest Service's Economic Action Program (EAP), which includes the Rural Community Assistance Program, is being whittled down as the appropriations process continues. Last year EAP was funded at over $20 million; the President's proposed budget for 2001 gave it $17 million, and the current House appropriations markup shows EAP funded at nearly $14.3 million, down $5.9 million from last year.

Less than $8 million will be widely available, as $6.4 million is earmarked for specific projects, such as New York City watersheds and Lake Tahoe erosion control. The bill next goes to the Senate, where policy analysts expect additional "special projects" will be added.

Senate stewardship contracting hearing

On May 4, the U.S. Forest Service's stewardship pilot program and the 28 stewardship contracting projects it authorized were reviewed in a Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Forests and Public Land Management oversight hearing. The program was developed to encourage efforts to experiment with innovative approaches to U.S. Forest Service contracting.

Many panelists–including several Communities Committees members–called for increased funding for the program and emphasized the continued need to reform contracting mechanisms to better achieve forest restoration goals and encourage the development of locally-based, high wage, high skill ecosystem workforces.

Several people testified that the Forest Service should clarify what is possible under existing contracting authorities, and some expressed concerns over procedures that have slowed down many of the pilot projects. A representative of the National Audubon Society expressed the concern that goods-for-services contracting encourages otherwise unwarranted logging.

Appropriations training

The third annual federal rural appropriations workshop brought 25 community forestry practitioners together in Washington, D.C., last April to help them better understand sometimes Byzantine budget and legislation processes, and to give them a chance to network with policymakers in the capital. This year, the workshop focused on challenges to implementing effective ecological restoration and community development projects. The week-long, intensive appropriations workshops are a collaborative effort of the National Network of Forest Practitioners, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, American Forests, and the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress.

by Alex Conley, with input from Thomas Brendler, Mala Enzer, Bill Imbergamo, and Michael Goergen

Resources

Publications

The* New *Watershed Sourcebook. This expanded version of the 1996 Watershed Sourcebook is a must-read for anyone involved with watershed and forestry groups in the West. It includes a directory of 346 watersheds with short case studies of 117 of them, the results of a survey that documents the experiences and impressions of 276 watershed initiative participants in Oregon. an overview of the legal framework within which community-based groups operate, and more. The 475-page report (RR24) can be downloaded from the internet at <http://www.colorado.edu/law/NRLC/recentpubs.html>, or purchased for Si 7 from the University of Colorado's Natural Resources Law Center, Campus Box 401, Boulder, CO 80309-0401, phone 303-492-1272, <nrlc@colorado.edu>.

Research on community-based collaborative groups. Two new publications summarizing research on community-based collaboratives are available from the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy. *Assessing Research Needs: Summary of a Workshop on Community-based Collaboratives* is the result of a workshop that brought together community forestry practitioners, researchers, agency representatives, and others to identify significant research questions pertaining to collaborative approaches to public land management. *An Overview of the Literature on Collaborative Conservation in the United States* is an annotated bibliography of publications that focus on collaborative conservation. Both publications ($6 each) are available from the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy, c/o Kathleen Veslany, The University of Arizona, 803 E. First Street, Tucson, AZ 85719, phone 520-884-4393, <veslany@u.arizona.edu>.

Chronicle of Community. The Spring 2000 issue of this excellent periodical contains a number of articles on community forestry–several of them by or about Communities Committee members. The *Chronicle of Community* regularly includes detailed case studies of community-based conservation groups and commentary and philosophical discussions on the meaning of community-based conservation. Subscriptions ($24-S33) and individual copies ($8) are available from the Northern Lights Research and Education Institute, 210 N. Higgins, Suite 326, Missoula, MT 58902, phone 406-721-7415.

Community forestry in *High Country News.* The May 8, 2000 issue of this biweekly newspaper contains an interesting set of articles on community forestry and locally based value-added forest industry in the Northern Rockies. Focused on natural resource issues in the American West, this newspaper frequently features community forestry items. You can find High Country News online at <www.hcn.org>. Subscriptions are available from High Country Foundation, Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428, phone 800-905-1155.

Internet resources

Communities Committee Listservs. In addition to this newsletter, the Communities Committee sponsors two email listservs. Community Forestry News is used for announcements, policy updates, job postings, and the like. Community Forestry Forum is a space for more in-depth discussions of community forestry issues. To learn how to subscribe to either listserv, visit <http://udallcenter.arizona.edu/listservs/listservs.html>.

Community Forestry Connections. This Internet newsletter seeks to inform and encourage the long-term health and prosperity of small, privately owned wood lots, their owners, and their communities. It also highlights events, activities, and resources for individuals and groups interested in independent third-party certification of family forests and wood products. The newsletter can be read online at <www.forestrycenter.org>. To receive a summary of each new issue by email, send a message to <listserv@iatp.org> and write "subscribe cfc-news" in the body of the message.

Upcoming events

Forest Owner Cooperation: Balancing Ecology and Economics. October 13-14, Madison, Wisconsin. Those interested in learning more about forestry cooperatives in North America may be interested in this conference, sponsored by Cooperative Development Services, the Community Forestry Resource Center, and the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives. To learn more, contact Jody Padgham at 608-262-0705 or <padgham@aae.wisc.edu>.

Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress' steering committee meeting. October 20-21, Hayfork, California. The next steering committee meeting will be held in the Pacific Northwest. It will include a field trip to view local community forestry projects and a business meeting. Committee members are encouraged to attend. For more information, contact Lynn Jungwirth at The Watershed Research and Training Center, Box 356, Hayfork, CA 96041, phone 530-628-4206, <wrtc@hayfork.net>.

National Network of Forest Practitioners annual meeting. October 25-29, Fairlee, Vermont. For more information, contact Wendy Gerlitz at 505-995-0000 or at <wgerlitz@nnfp.org>.

National Rural Community Assistance Conference. October 28-November 3, Vermont. The theme of this Forest Service-sponsored conference is "grassroots to global–exploring the Northern Forest, rural America, and the world." For more information, contact Susan Odell at <sodell01@fs.fed.us> or at 202-205-1385.

Money in the Mountains: Options For Creating Sustainable Wealth. November 2-4, Weston, West Virginia. This conference will bring business owners, community groups, and forestry experts together to discuss businesses that use West Virginia's forest resources in a sustainable, ecologically sound way. For more information, call the Center for Economic Options at 800-780-5652 or visit <www.centerforeconoptions.org>.

Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress
Call for Steering Committee Nominations

The steering committee of the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress is looking for enthusiastic individuals who are committed to working collaboratively with a diverse group of people to promote constructive dialogue about the interdependence between healthy forests and healthy communities. We are seeking nominees from ethnically diverse backgrounds, urban and rural areas, local and national groups, businesses, environmental organizations, commodity interests, and all regions of the United States. If you know someone (including yourself) who fits this description, please complete the attached form and send it to: Nominations Task Group, Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress, P.O. Box 356. Hayfork, CA 96041.

The steering committee of the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress is responsible for setting the committee's direction, developing and implementing project ideas, and working to promote understanding of the interdependence between healthy forests and healthy communities. Steering committee members are responsible for attending two meetings per year and for participating on one of seven task groups (task groups are also open to all other members of the communities Committee). Current task groups include: policy, communications, urban/rural linkages, indicators and monitoring, research, nominations, and fundraising. The steering committee is responsible for electing the six-person executive committee. Steering committee members serve for two-year, renewable terms The nominations task group accepts nominations on a rolling basis, and new steering committee members are selected by the steering committee two times a year.

Name of nominee:
Address:
Phone:
Fax:
Email:

Name of nominator:
Address:
Phone:
Fax:
Email:

Please provide a one-paragraph biographical sketch of the nominee, addressing how this individual promotes the nterdependence of healthy forests and healthy communities; what you think this individual would bring to the steering committee in terms of skills, interests, and experience; and what you think the nominee would gain from joining the steering committee.

Current steering committee members:

Greg Aplet
The Wilderness Society, Denver CO

Jim Beil*
New York Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Albany NY

Thomas Brendler
National Network of Forest Practitioners, Boston MA

Sam Burns
Fort Collins College, Cortez CO

Hanna Cortner†
University of Arizona, Tucson AZ
Nominations Task Group Chair

Carol Daly*
Flathead Economic Policy Center
Columbia Falls MT
Communities Committee Vice Chair

Maia Enzer
American Forests, Washington DC
Policy Task Group Co-chair

Michael Goergen†
Society of American Foresters, Washington DC
Policy Task Group Co-chair

Gerald Gray*†
American Forests, Washington DC
Urban/Rural Task Group Chair

Lynn Jungwirth
Watershed Research and Training Center, Hayfork CA
Communities Committee Chair

Jonathon Kusel†
Forest Community Research
Taylorsville CA
Research Task Group Chair

Jerilynn Levi
USDA Forest Service, Washington DC

Juan Mendoza
Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters, Mollala OR

Mary Mitsos*
Pinchot Institute for Conservation
Washington DC

Ann Moote*†
Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy, Tucson AZ
Communications Task Group Chair

Kathryn Mutz
Natural Resources Law Center
Boulder CO

Wendy Hinrichs Sanders†
Great Lakes Forest Alliance
Hayward MI
Indicators Task Group Chair

Bryant Smith*
Parks & People Foundation
Baltimore MD

Erika Svenson
Greenthumb, New York NY

Rodney Stone
USDA Forest Service,
Baton Rouge, LA

Rock Termini
Audubon Society, Buffalo NY

Eleanor Torres
Integrated Infrastructures
Los Angeles CA

* executive committee member

† task group chair

***Californians**, continued from page*

Backyard forestry projects benefit water resources

Most of the everyday activities of urban foresters contribute to efficient water use. Members of North East Trees in Los Angeles, for example, mulch every tree they plant, says the group's founder and president, Scott Wilson. The mulch helps hold storm water coming from higher ground, making it available to the tree, which stores the water in its roots and slows its flow to lower ground. It's an inexpensive, low-tech action that contributes to the watershed above and below the well-mulched tree. "There's no question that people are making the connection between upper and lower watersheds," Wilson says.

In northern California, Roger Cole's tree-pruning classes for homeowners have benefitted 2,500 trees. While topping a tree may produce a burst of luxuriant growth, it tends to create structural weakness, sometimes killing the tree. Properly pruned trees are healthier. The water they can hold not only slows down flood runoff, it also reduces the heat island effect, thus reducing the demand for air conditioning. Cole also works with homeowners planting willows and expanding flood plains between their homes and the creeks that run through their property to reduce runoff

By applying backyard solutions at a larger scale, TreePeople, a 25-year old urban forestry program in Los Angeles, has a plan for retrofitting Los Angeles so it can be managed as a living watershed. It's called T.R.E.E.S. (Trans-Agency Resources for Economic and Environmental Sustainability). By using permeable pavement, collecting rain and graywater for use during dry periods, and planting vegetation to reduce energy consumption and capture runoff, it is technologically feasible to retrofit the entire city as an infrastructure, says Andy Lipkis, TreePeople founder and president. Efficient use of natural rainfall can meet half the city's annual needs and create 50,000 jobs in water harvesting, he says.

Bringing a watershed perspective into state policy

The Regional Council of Rural Counties and the Sierra Nevada Alliance have helped draft proposed legislation to provide a comprehensive statewide watershed plan to coordinate improvements to surface and groundwater basins through erosion control, wildfire reduction, and other ecosystem work. It would also provide $270 million per year for watershed restoration by collecting fees from water users, hydroelectric generators, and existing watershed improvement programs.

Watershed activists have also formed a group to bring upper watershed concerns to the attention of CalFed, a team of state and federal government agencies wrestling with how to restore rivers, shore up levees in California's Central Valley Delta, curb water pollution, and conserve water. The Watershed Work Group aims to expand the scope of the solutions, says Martha Davis of Californians and the Land, who cochairs the group. If we invest in erosion control, natural storage systems, and other watershed health measures, we can use water more efficiently and move it around more effectively, Davis says.

Activists working at the state level as well as those pioneering local projects and partnerships face an uphill battle to convince policymakers of the benefits of viewing watersheds as complete ecosystems. Linking upstream causes with downstream results runs counter to the traditional pattern of treating natural resource problems as isolated, case-by-case predicaments. If they can overcome the tendency to point the finger at other areas, they may be able to achieve substantial changes, says Roger Cole, the Butte County Streaminder president. "We're all just a bunch of people trying to solve problems," he says. "We're all in the same watershed, the same boat."

A longer version of this article originally appeared in California Trees. Reprinted with permission.

Communities and Forests
Communities Committee of the
Seventh American Forest Congress
PO Box 356
Hayfork, CA 96041