Communities and Forests

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

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Creating jobs, greening cities

by Alice Ewen Walker

Air pollution, dirty water, flooding, and hot summers are characteristic of many cities. Yet rather than escaping to the countryside, urbanites are beginning to recognize the multiple benefits of bringing greener pastures to the city. City managers and policy makers are realizing that "green infrastructure," an interconnected network of parks, trees, and green spaces, is a vital component of even densely developed cities.

Green infrastructure provides more than pretty views. It performs valuable ecological services for the urban population – services that can be measured and given a dollar value. In addition, the need to manage urban green infrastructure is creating an unprecendented demand for urban resource managers.

Valuing green resources in cities

According to recent studies by the national conservation organization American Forests, "existing tree cover in the United States provides over $400 billion dollars in stormwater services to urban areas." Cities spend billions of dollars to control flooding, prevent erosion, and filter and treat water runoff. By maximizing existing environmental resources, cities can reduce maintenance and building costs and develop more sustainably.

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George Ramirez of the Manzano Land Trust in New Mexico stands by Las Humanas' new log peeler. The peeler will allow the collective to produce vigas and latillas from small-diameter wood.

Community, culture, and forest restoration

by Ann Moote

Leading a youth group into the Manzano Mountains in central New Mexico, George Ramirez points to a tree with mushrooms growing on it. "Don't cut this tree, because it's hollow inside," he tells them. "Woodpeckers, and later bees, will live in this hollow tree. Woodpeckers are important to our forest because they help control insect infestations." A private forester and executive director of Las Humanas, a partnership of the four land grants in the Manzano Mountains, Ramirez is working with local youth "to teach them the importance of stewardship, and the importance of the mountain" to their communities and their way of life.

New Mexican land grants are an anomaly in the United States. Settled by descendents of Spanish explorers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the land grants were given to Hispanic families and communities by the King of Spain and were managed as a commons for over 300 years. When New Mexico joined the United States, the U.S. government took ownership of the uplands surrounding the land grants, leaving only the settled communities in local ownership.

Today, the Manzano Mountain forests are managed by the U.S. Forest Service. Heavy timber harvesting in the 1930s have removed most of the old-growth trees, leaving the forests dominated by dense, small-diameter trees that pose a severe fire hazard. Wildlife populations are greatly reduced and streams that flowed year-round a generation ago now run only during extreme rain storms.

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The Communities Committee's listserv, communityforestry@lists.nau.edu, is a bulletin-board type list where committee members post weekly federal policy updates, announcements of upcoming workshops and conferences, job announcements, and related notices.

Subscribers may also post questions or comment for general discussion. However, use of the listserv for extended debates is discouraged and personal attacks are not tolerated.

To subscribe to the listserv, send the following message to listerv@lists.nau.edu:

subscribe communityforestry Your Name

(Type your first and last name in place of "Your Name.")

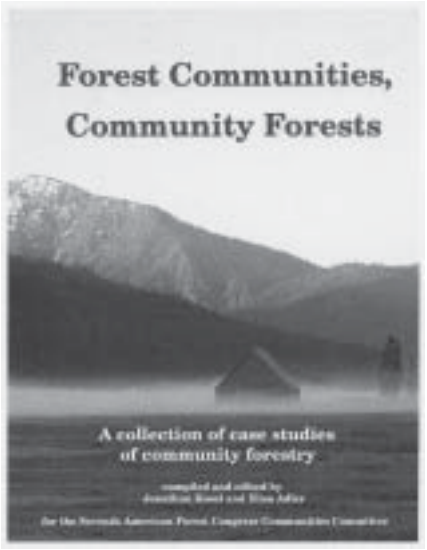
The Inside Scoop

Lessons from community forestry

by Hanna Cortner

Citizens in Baltimore are reviving some of the most run-down, inner city neighborhoods in the nation, while in the western U.S. citizens are seeking to find common ground amid gut-wretching battles involving the federal government, environmentalists, and extractive industries in public lands management. In both urban and rural communities, some of the most innovative governance experiments in the United States involve citizens linking community well-being with stewardship of their forests.

To assess the state of community forestry across the nation, the research task group of the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress decided to profile a number of communities that are attempting to define and implement community forestry. An important criterion of the project was to profile both urban and rural communities. The result is *Forest Communities, Community Forests: A Collection of Case Studies of Community Forestry*, edited by Jonathan Kusel and Elisa Adler.



Jonathan Kusel, on behalf of the research task group, assembled a distinguished group of researchers. Their first task was to decide which communities to select as potential case studies. The criteria they selected for choosing the community forestry efforts they would study included: place-based communities (forest-related activities located in a geographically defined space adjacent to or near a community); long-term operation (a track record of 3-5 years); inclusive involvement (open to diverse perspectives and with a relatively diverse membership); geographic distribution (representing major regions), and urban-rural distribution.

The final report examines thirteen cases reflecting these criteria. These communities and partnerships include: the New York Watershed Agreement (G. Gray); the Clifton Choctaw Longleaf Pine Restoration project (A. Moote); the Aitkin County SmartWood Certification program (P. Lavigne); the Catron County Citizens' Group (S. Burns); the Applegate Partnership (V. Sturtevant and J. Lange); the Lake Umbagog Wildlife Refuge (T. Brendler); the Swan Citizens' Ad Hoc Committee (B. Cestero and J. Belsky); Revitalizing Baltimore (A. Moote); the Ponderosa Pine Forest Partnership (E. Stein and T. Richard); the Western Upper Peninsula Forest Improvement District (M. Mitsos); the Columbia-Pacific Resource Conservation and Development Council (K. McDonald and R. McLain); the Sonoma County Releaf project (E. Adler); and the Beaver Brook Association (P. Lavigne).

The Communities Committee believes that these studies show that community-based forestry has great successes. But they also show that forest communities, as well as the external observers who examine them, can find areas where, "if we had to do it again," things might be done differently. This is the best sense of adaptive management — learning as you go, and using the lessons learned to modify existing practices or to inform new innovations.

Copies of the report can be downloaded at http://fcresearch.org/cfbooktoc.html or purchased for $6.00 from Forest Community Research, P.O. Box 11, Taylorsville, CA 95983.

Hanna Cortner chairs the Communities Committee's research task group.

Urban jobs, continued from page 1

In a city like Houston, Texas, where severe air pollution exceeds Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards by 50 percent or more, green resources can help support the State Implementation Plan (SIP) to improve air quality. A recent analysis of tree canopy in metro Houston revealed that forest-canopy losses over the past 20 years equated to $38 million per year in lost air-cleaning services.

In Sacramento, California, where the U.S. Forest Service has performed some of its most extensive urban forest-benefits research, the urban forest delivers more than $50 million annually in energy savings and air pollution mitigation services. Planting an additional three to five million trees in the region would lower ambient temperatures two to three degrees in the summer and reduce peak ozone by seven percent. Planting a half million trees, located to maximize energy savings, would result in $30 million in reduced energy costs per year.

Reducing costs, providing jobs

Several major cities are beginning to explore how urban green infrastructure can be managed as an ecological resource that returns money to the city and provides jobs for urban residents.

In Los Angeles, the T.R.E.E.S. (Trans-Agency Resources for Environmental and Economic Sustainability) project is creating cross-jurisdictional connections among the many agencies and institutions responsible for component parts of the urban ecology. Agencies responsible for energy, water, waste removal, forestry, and air quality are working together to design and implement best management practices (BMPs) that can enable Los Angeles to function as an urban forest watershed. "Through the use of these BMPs," project managers say, "we believe that such problems as flooding, drought, air and water pollution, excessive and expensive energy usage, and urban blight can be effectively and simultaneously addressed – while also creating approximately 50,000 new jobs for inner-city youth as mini-watershed managers."

In Baltimore, Maryland, the Communities Committee, American Forests, and local nonprofit Civic Works are teaming to create a job training pilot program funded by EPA. Civic Works will train 60 people from inner-city Baltimore's underserved communities in brownfields cleanup and environmental restoration work. *(See the fall, 2001 issue of Communities and Forests for more information on this project.)*

Soaring demand for workers

Already, there are more jobs than qualified applicants for urban tree care and arborist positions. Rick Tagtow, Board Member of the International Society of Arboriculture and program designer for Northeast Iowa Community College Arboriculture program, notes that competition for arborists is fierce. Graduates of Tagtow's two-year certification program average 35 interviews per student and all receive multiple job offers. Private tree care companies report keen competition for employees and rapid employee advancement to supervisory positions. Universities across the country are creating new urban forestry programs to help address the unprecedented demand for skilled management-track positions.

In many cities, there is a further demand for ethnically diverse urban foresters. Many urban forestry jobs require considerable public interaction, and the need for multilingual urban foresters and for people of color is increasing. As public contracts are awarded to perform work in underserved communities, there is an increasing demand that some of these jobs go to local residents.

The potential for an urban-based "green collar" workforce is great. According to the T.R.E.E.S. project, urban ecosystem management would create over 50,000 new jobs in a city like Los Angeles. By comparison, a 1992 study conducted by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection estimated that urban forest-related products and services resulted in 64,024 jobs statewide, including all sectors of the economy.

Addressing social needs

Several nonprofit organizations currently offer job-training programs focused on urban tree care by underserved and/or underemployed groups. In New York City, the forestry organization Trees New York has trained 90 adults through a 10-week, 218-hour certification program. Participants, primarily African-American and Hispanic men and women from inner-city neighborhoods, learn how to climb trees, operate some heavy equipment and perform most kinds of tree pruning and care.

Trees New York reports that all its graduates are fully employed and earn an average starting wage of $15 to $20 per hour plus benefits. Their first employed graduate is earning over $50,000 three years after starting work. Graduates have been hired by private tree-care companies, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation Department, and the New York State Department of Agriculture – and the demand for graduates outstrips supply.

In a similar program, Tree Trust of Minneapolis-St. Paul has trained over 8,000 adults in urban forestry and green industry skills. This program focuses on people with special needs, including adults from underserved communities, people with learning disabilities, individuals with substance-abuse problems, and those with criminal histories. Students receive on-the-job training in tree care, rail/trail maintenance, snow removal, landscaping, and other outdoor job skills. Tree Trust, a non-profit organization, receives state and local workforce funding as well as private support for the program.

Need for national leadership

Despite these successes, the new urban green-collar industry has gone largely unnoticed. Neither trade groups nor government agencies have quantified job potential and market impact for a "green collar" work force in urban centers. As the U.S. Forest Service and conservation interests promote the use of green infrastructure in city management, questions about workforce size, skill sets, and cost will need to be answered. There is a need for market research on the projected size, composition, and economic impact of an urban "green-collar" workforce responsible for managing green infrastructure. Nascent municipal and nongovernmental programs attempting to manage urban green infrastructure need federal and state support for pilot job-training programs in urban ecosystem restoration. Increased funding for policy analyses of the costs and benefits of urban forestry and scientific research on urban ecosystem functions and values is also sorely needed.

Still, the future is bright for urban ecosystem management. As Barbara Eber-Schmid of Trees New York notes, "We're having a positive impact on New York's trees and other living components of the city's infrastructure, and we're helping people find terrific futures at the same time."

Alice Ewan Walker is executive director of the National Alliance for Community Trees.

Member Profile

Alice Ewen Walker

I am the Executive Director of the National Alliance for Community Trees (ACT). ACT was founded in 1992 as a problem-solving center for leaders of locally based urban forestry groups. Our founders share a vision of healthy, functioning urban ecosystems nurtured by a diverse group of community stewards. Our members are involved in grassroots community greening, public education, policy making, job training and other activities that support improved urban forest stewardship.

Most urban forestry groups are fairly isolated in their cities, and ACT provides them a means to network with others involved in the same line of work. Members also receive professional and technical assistance and the opportunity to influence national policy.

Enthusiasm for urban forestry innovations

I got involved in urban forestry because of the volunteers, who are so enthusiastic about improving their local environment. I continue to be inspired by the innovations of the urban forestry groups I work with that are partnering with electrical companies to plant trees on residential properties and taking the lead in job training for urban ecological restoration.

TreePeople in Los Angeles, for example, has evolved from a tree-preservation and tree-planting organization to become a leader in environmentally sensitive large-scale land planning. TreePeople is currently working on a "green infrastructure retrofit" of a 50-square-mile suburb in Sun Valley, integrating a green infrastructure that will reduce energy consumption, reduce flooding and water waste, and increase urban forest canopy. A variety of best management practices will be used — cisterns for storing rainwater, vegetated swales for managing on-site stormwater and filtering pollutants, removal of impervious surfaces, and other techniques.

Putting urban forestry on the political agenda

Urban forestry receives little national recognition from either policymakers or foundations, who tend to view it as a niche issue with a narrow focus on street trees and gardens. But most urban forestry groups I work with are addressing watershed issues, environmental education, urban sprawl, brownfields, and other wide-ranging environmental concerns. Addressing these concerns is in the public interest, and that is something that should be communicated to policymakers. Research and creating a stronger collective voice are two ways to do that.

Research needs

In the late 1990s I worked at American Forests, marketing their CityGreen software and doing technical writing and training. CityGreen was the first tool of its kind for mapping urban forests and quantifying related benefits like household energy savings, air pollution reduction, and stormwater mitigation.

Credible scientific data on urban forests are vital to making convincing arguments for public investment in green spaces and trees. If I were an elected official contemplating a major policy or program change, I would want data that shows a public investment in green space will provide a documented return back to the city coffers. Likewise, national policymakers need to be shown data to convince them that a federal investment in green space will increase energy efficiency and reduce energy demands. To make a stronger case for public investment in green space and policies that support green infrastructure, we desperately need more funding for scientific research on urban forests.

Build a voice for urban forestry

Urban forestry also needs a stronger collective voice. We need to raise awareness among planners, policymakers, and the public that trees in cities are part of a functioning ecosystem that benefits from open space and green infrastructure.

We have found some creative ways to educate people about community forestry. This year, the environmental theme of the winter Olympics in Salt Lake City is urban forestry. Through the Coalition of United Green Partners, we hope to carry on the urban forestry message beyond the games. ACT is also helping to organize the third annual Grassroots Summit, which will be held September 21-24, 2002 in Salt Lake City. That event will draw together a wide variety of stakeholders and will be focused on affecting change in local, state, and federal policies.

Alice Ewen Walker: "Urban forestry needs a stronger collective voice."

I joined the Communities Committee to learn more about rural community forestry issues and how urban and rural issues parallel and complement each other. For instance, both urban and rural communities have an interest in ensuring that urban land development become much more efficient in its use of space. Unfortunately, markets and zoning regulations in most parts of the country favor the consumption of rural landscapes. We need to change that; we must provide developers with incentives to consider green spaces and green resources in their designs before they begin building — by showing them there is a profit to be made by doing so.

The Communities Committee has been successful at educating Congressional staff and foundations about public lands issues, and as a result rural Western community forestry has developed a strong national voice. I would like to see the Communities Committee expand the things we do best to other regions and other issues. I'm particularly interested in the potential linkages between urban forestry and private forestland fragmentation, and how urban and rural conservation interests can work together.

Policy Update

Community Forest Restoration Act

by Maia Enzer and Ann Moote

Community forestry is getting a big boost in New Mexico, thanks to the Community Forest Restoration Act of 2000 (Title VI, Public Law 106-393) which established the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program for that state. The law authorizes $5 million annually to be appropriated to the U.S. Forest Service to carry out this program and provide cost-share grants for collaborative forest restoration projects. It also models an innovative approach to designing legislation that embraces the concepts of collaboration and community.

The Community Forest Restoration Act was sponsored by Senator Bingaman (D-NM), who wanted to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire in the West and reduce the level of conflict around natural resource management issues while creating training and employment opportunities for rural, forest-dependent communities.

Constituents collaborate

For ideas on how to best address these concerns, Bingaman turned to his constituents. He invited environmental organizations, forest and wood workers, representatives of New Mexico's Hispano land trusts, Native American tribes, ranchers, state and federal land management agencies, and anyone else interested in forestry issues to attend workshops to discuss these issues. Three workshops and field trips were held at different locations around the state in 1998.

Walter Dunn, then a legislative fellow for Senator Bingaman, says "people came in to those workshops loaded for bear, but they left very pleased with the level of conversation." Workshop participants reached a general agreement that the current state of forests in New Mexico is not good, and that there is a need for some kind of forest restoration.

Participants also all desired a lowered risk of catastrophic wildfire, more and improved wildlife habitat, greater public involvement in designing and implementing forest restoration treatments, and better watershed conditions in the national forests. A number of other themes emerged in the New Mexico workshops:

- Local communities, particularly Hispano land grant communities and tribes that have lived and worked in New Mexican forests for hundreds to thousands of years, felt that the U.S. Forest Service didn't respect their understanding of the forest and didn't take their suggestions seriously.
- Tribes were concerned about protecting culturally important sites on the national forests.
- Environmental groups felt that the Forest Service was failing to incorporate the most current scientific knowledge in their treatments and that treatments were not sufficiently monitored. They also wanted monitoring to involve a variety of groups with an interest in ecosystem restoration.

Designed through a collaborative process that involved constituents directly, the Community Forest Restoration Act was written to incorporate all of these concerns. It also addresses Senator Bingaman's interest in mitigating conflict by encouraging collaboration among all those concerned about forest management.

Projects must be inclusive

To be eligible for funding under the act, projects must: 1) include a diverse and balanced group of stakeholders in design, implementation, and monitoring; 2) include a multiparty monitoring assessment of ecological and economic conditions; and 3) create local employment or training opportunities. In addition, all projects must comply with existing environmental laws and contracting authorities.

Perhaps the most unique feature of the Act is its requirement that project proposals be evaluated and recommended for funding by a technical advisory panel made up of a diverse and balanced range of views and interests. Panel members include federal land management agency and state forestry division staff, tribal representatives, independent researchers, conservation groups, local communities, and commodity interests.

In the first round of grant approval, the technical advisory panel met for a week in August, 2001 to discuss and debate each proposal. Remarkably, by the end of the week they had reached consensus on which projects should be recommended to the Forest Service Regional Forester for funding and how much assistance each should receive. Forty-six community forest restoration projects were proposed by tribes, research institutions, small businesses, conservation districts, land trusts, and others. Nineteen were funded for a period of one to four years, at a rate of $118,800 per year. Implementation will begin in 2002. *(For a description of one of the funded projects, see Community, page 1.)*

Watching with interest

National-level policymakers and communities across the country are watching this program with great interest. According to Gerry Gray, vice president for forest policy at American Forests, "Senator Bingaman's Community Forest Restoration Act provides great opportunity for experimentation and learning in New Mexico. The need to restore watersheds, improve the functioning of forest ecosystems, and find economic uses for small-diameter trees is common in many parts of the country. The collaborative forest restoration projects implemented through this legislation should provide many useful lessons for applications in other states and regions. We will be watching the program with great hopes for success and a strong interest in helping to share lessons with policymakers and interest groups in the national policy arena."

A copy of the Collaborative Forest Restoration Act, details of the technical advisory panel review process, and information on funded projects are all available on the Web at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/spf/cfrp/.

Community, continued from page 1

The land grant communities are in a fragile situation as well. The land grants lost much of their population in the 1940s, and those who stayed have faced chronic unemployment. Relationships with the state government and the U.S. Forest Service are often hostile, in part because many land grant heirs still consider the national forest areas they lost to be their rightful lands and are fighting for their return. Relationships with the Forest Service worsened about 30 years ago when the Forest Service started issuing permits and people saw their access to the forest lands increasingly restricted.

Las Humanas: economic development and forest health

The final straw for the land grants came in the early 1990s, when a federal court decision shut down all uses of the national forests in Arizona and New Mexico to protect the Mexican spotted owl, a federally listed endangered species. The land grant communities lost virtually all access to food, cooking fuel, medicinals, and grazing sites. Local residents blamed both environmentalists and the Forest Service for undermining their livelihoods.

In 1995, the local Forest Service district brought in Western Network, an organization devoted to conflict resolution, to work with the land grants. Western Network helped the communities identify culturally important resource areas, and the Forest Service used this information in its forest plan revision.

Through the Western Network-facilitated process, the land grants united to form the East Manzano Development Community, to address the lack of economic options in the region. The committee looked at available resources in the area and saw that the primary resource was wood. Land grant families had used the forests for generations for small-scale sales of vigas and latillas (poles used to support roofs on houses), Christmas trees, and fuel wood.

In 1990, the committee incorporated and changed its name to Las Humanas, from Xumanas, a traditional word that means "village" or "community." Las Humanas focuses on economic development and forest health in its communities and the surrounding national forest.

Learning by doing

Las Humanas' first forest restoration effort, begun in 1998, was a 16-acre stewardship contracting pilot project. About 50 people from the four land grants and two other mountain communities participated in thinning the overly dense ponderosa pine forest. The Forest Service marked the trees to be left, and the communities were allowed to use the cut timber for fuelwood.

This project was a learning experience for Las Humanas, Ramirez says: "We quickly realized that you can't just hand people chainsaws – they don't understand the prescription and can get very destructive." So Las Humanas board members asked the Forest Service for training on proper thinning technique and then restricted cutting to those who had completed the training; other community members were invited to come and collect the wood.

Building on the experience they gained on the stewardship pilot, in 1999 Las Humanas entered into an agreement with the Forest Service for a 120-acre thinning project to reduce fire risk around local communities. In this case, the agency gave Las Humanas criteria for selecting trees to cut and let the group do the selecting. Once again, this agreement did not provide payment for the cutters but allowed the local communities to use the wood. Unlike the first restoration effort, however, Las Humanas judged this project too big to be handled by volunteer workers alone.

To pay the restoration workers, Las Humanas applied for and secured some funding from the New Mexico Community Foundation, but the money didn't provide for a crew large enough to thin the entire 120-acre area. Work was also stymied by Las Humanas' social goals for this project. In addition to thinning and removing wood for their own use, crews cut and hauled wood to provide heating and cooking fuel for the elderly and handicapped in their communities.

In 2001, Las Humanas applied for and was granted $360,000 from the Forest Service's collaborative forest restoration cost-share grant program. *(For more information on this program, see Policy Update, page 5).* The bulk of the grant money is dedicated to paying forest restoration workers' salaries.

The Forest Service viewed these first two projects as community training projects. The goal, says Mountainair District Ranger Vicky Estrada, was "to get Las Humanas to the point where they could bid for contracts on their own and meet the contracting specifications required of other contractors."

Youth will do the monitoring

In addition to the forest thinning work, Las Humanas has been monitoring forest conditions for about five years and plans to expand these efforts. Starting in 2002, most monitoring will be done by local youth. During the school year, high school science classes will do the monitoring, while a Youth Conservation Corps crew will do the summer monitoring.

The youth will measure both the reduction in fire hazard (through reduced ladder fuels, ground fuels, and increased spatial diversity of the forests) and any improvement in forest health (through overstory and understory response to thinning, riparian recovery, erosion rates, and wildlife habitat changes). In addition, they will survey local residents to assess social, cultural, and economic impacts of the restoration work. The Forest Service, Forest Trust, and two consulting ecologists have all been helping Las Humanas develop monitoring protocols.

Tori Derr, coordinator of the Southwest Community Forestry Research Center at Forest Trust comments, "Monitoring is a great way to provide youth with science training and applications to real-life problems in their community, and helps to build connections to the land that will encourage them to stay in their communities."

Thunderbird Project

In 2001, the local Forest Service District developed a plan for a 10,000-acre restoration project in the Manzano Mountains — the Thunderbird project. The goals of this project are: to improve the watershed by reducing the threat of high-intensity wildfire, insect infestation, and disease; to promote biodiversity; to reintroduce historic fire regimes; to create wildlife forage and biodiversity; and to remove fuels around communities.

Las Humanas bid on and won the contract for the first year's work, a 91-acre defensive fire break around traditional

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Resources

Publications and Web sites

Forest Communities, Community Forests: A Collection of Case Studies of Community Forestry, compiled and edited by Jonathan Kusel and Elisa Adler, 2002. This collection of 13 community forestry case studies examines the link between community well-being and forest-ecosystem health in both urban and rural communities and in different regions of the United States. Copies of the report can be downloaded at fcresearch.org/cfbooktoc.html or purchased for $6.00 from Forest Community Research, P.O. Box 11, Taylorsville, CA 95983.

Stewardship Contracting Website. The Pinchot Institute for Conservation recently launched a website containing information on current Forest Service Stewardship Pilots and the multi-party monitoring and evaluation process. The site discusses benefits and opportunities for community-based restoration and resource managment projects, and provides numerous links and contact information. Visit www.pinchot.org/pic/cbf/pilots.html.

Electronic news bulletins

Electronic news bulletins deliver periodic news updates and analysis directly to subscribers' email inboxes. Communities Committee members will be familiar with the *D.C. Policy Updates* provided by the Society of American Foresters and regularly posted to: communityforestry@lists.nau.edu. A selection of other electronic bulletins that deal with community forestry issues are listed below.

The Community Stewardship Communicator, a new electronic bulletin by the Community Stewardship Collaborative, provides information about the national-level effort to find solutions to the national fire plan and issues related to large-scale watershed projects on the national forests. The newsletter provides the latest information about the Community Stewardship Collaborative — a network of groups working to provide communities with better acccess to information, opportunities, capacity building, and partnerships — and highlights opportunities for individual involvement. To receive the newsletter, which is prepared by the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, contact nrana@pinchot.org.

Fire Chronicle, edited by the Forest Trust, disseminates information about how national fire plan implementation is proceeding on the ground and highlights policy issues that affect implementation. To subscribe or to read past issues go to: http://www.topica.com/lists/firechronicles/ or send an email message to: laura@theforesttrust.org.

Forest Community News delivers information on national-level policy developments of consequence to people of rural forested communities and describes new publications and upcoming events related to ruraral community forestry. To subscribe — it's free — visit www.topica.com/lists/nnfp-fcn@igc.topica.com. Recent issues are available at www.topica.com/lists/nnfp-fcn@igc.topica.com/read.

Events

Small Diameter Timber: Resource Management, Manufacturing, and Markets. February 25-27, 2002, Spokane, Washington. Speakers from 13 states and Canada will present the results of their work related to management and utilization of small diameter trees. For more information, visit ext.nrs.wsu.edu/small-diameter or contact Dr. David Baumgartner at 509-335-2964 or at baumgartner@wsu.edu.

SmallWood 2002: Community and Economic Development Opportunities in Small Tree Utilization. April 11-13, 2002, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Conference topics include harvesting systems, processing, markets, and supply and availability of smallwood material. The conference will include tours to local millwork, roundwood, perservation treatment, post and pole, small woodworking, and pellet processors and live demonstrations of harvesting and processing equipment for small trees. For more information, contact the Forest Products Society at 608-231-1361 or at info@forprod.org, or visit www.forestprod.org.

Fire, Fuel Treatments and Ecological Restoration. April 16-18, 2002, Fort Collins, CO. Workshop will focus on issues unique to the fire ecology, management, and ecological restoration of central Rocky Mountain ecosystems. Land managers, scientists, educators, students, and interested members of the public are encouraged to attend. For more information contact Dr. Philip Omi at: west@lamar.colostate.edu or visit: www.cnr.colostate.edu/~fuel/.

Forest Leadership Forum. April 25-27, 2002, Atlanta, Georgia. This annual convention of certified wood producers, sponsored by the Certified Forest Products Council, is designed as a forum where environmentalists, retailers, and the forest products industry can explore issues related to responsible forest products trade. For more information contact Jason Grant 503-590-6600 x 19 or at: jas-@certifiedwood.org or visit the convention Web site at: www.forestleadershipforum.org.

Global Perspectives on Indigenous People's Forestry. June 4-6, 2002, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. This conference will cover a number of issues related to the status and future of indigenous people's forestry including: indigenous visions of forests, developing businesses and marketing products, tenure, and policy and legal reform. The conference will be hosted by Forest Trends, the University of British Columbia Faculty of Forestry and First Nations House of Learning, Iisaak Forest Resources, Ecotrust Canada, and the National Aboriginal Forestry Association. For more information, contact Jessica Rice at Forest Trends, 202-298-3003 or visit: www.foresttrends.org/whoweare/meetings.htm#vancouver2002.

Appalachian Herb Gathering. June 23-24, Meigs County, Ohio. This conference on growing, marketing, and conserving native plants will address herbs, agriculture, business development, and land stewardship. The conference will be held at the United Plant Savers botanical sanctuary and the National Center for the Preservation of Medicinal Herbs research and education center near Rutland and will include workshops and hands-on demonstrations. For more information contact Rural Action Forestry at 740-767-2090 or at forestry@ruralaction.org, or visit the Rural Action Web site at www.ncpmh.org/conference.html.

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historic communities. Las Humanas' goals for this first contract are to prove that they can do the work, produce vigas and latillas for sale, and continue to provide free fuel to local communities.

Although the Thunderbird project's specifications limit cutting to trees less than ten inches in diameter, this is acceptable to Las Humanas because the wood will be used primarily for fuel and to make vigas. Funding from the Community Forestry Restoration Program is slated to train locals in proper restoration thinning techniques and pay a 10-person crew $10 to $15 per hour. Las Humanas plans to use the $40,000 it will receive from the timber contract to hire a full-time administrator.

A crushing setback

One day before the Thunderbird project was to be formally approved, it was appealed by the Forest Conservation Council, an environmental organization based in Boca Raton, Florida, on the basis of species viability. The Forest Service regional office told the district to withdraw its contract with Las Humanas until the appeal had been decided, which could take several months.

The appeal and contract cancellation devastated community members who had been counting on the restoration jobs and who believe they have already bent over backwards to please the environmentalists. "We've heard, listened, and learned to restore the forest to benefit the wildlife, the watershed, and the human communities," Ramirez says, "But it's a game they (the environmentalists) are playing. They never talked to us about this concern, gave us no forewarning, and waited until the last possible day to shut us down," leaving no opportunity to revise the plan before the appeals period was over.

The appellants "don't realize what this means to the community," Ramirez says. "Local people live woodpile to woodpile. They're so poor that being caught with one illegal load can break them. The result is alcoholism, domestic abuse, and other social ills. We just want something for our kids to come back to, and we want to sustain our culture, our roots."

Hope for the future

While the appeal is being reviewed, the Forest Service is looking for areas outside of the Thunderbird area that need thinning so they can put out contracts and Las Humanas can bid on them. The agency is committed to continuing to work with Las Humanas, Vicky Estrada says, because "we need each other. The Forest Service has a serious problem with small diameter fuels in the forest, and right next to it are these communities that really need fuelwood. Neither of us can solve our problem without each other, so we have to work together."

Las Humanas will continue to focus its efforts on forest restoration, Ramirez says. "We are tied to the mountain and the forest more than we want to admit. It is very clear that as the mountain changes our way of life is impacted. As the forest has become overgrown, we lose water in our springs. Our fuel, food, medicinal herbs, and water all come from the mountain, but for a long time we took it for granted." Now, Las Humanas is trying to "train workers to love the land, to leave the seed trees and take out the fire hazard material, to start to look at the health of the forest."

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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 the rights and responsibilities of diverse forest landowners.

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