Communities and Forests

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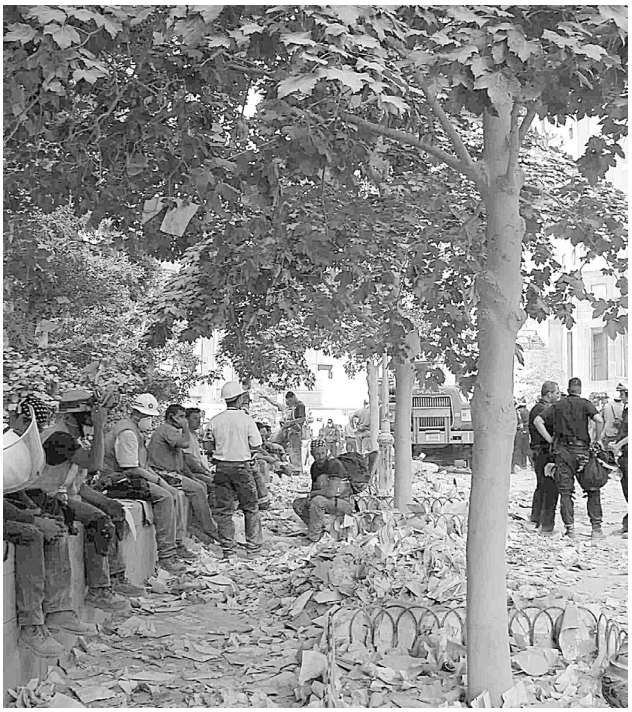

Rescue workers rest in the shade of Norway maples near the World Trade Center site. See story, page 5. *Photo by Matt Arnn*

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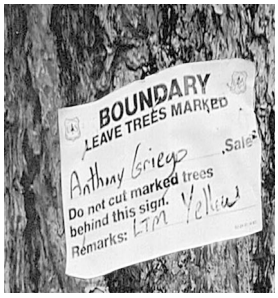

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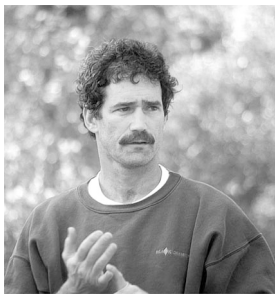

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Innovative tool brings National Fire Plan benefits to community

by Martha Schumann and Tori Derr

The National Fire Plan and the 2001 Interior Appropriation Act that funded it, are laced with references to the idea that communities, and the forest workers who live there, should benefit from hazardous fuel reduction activities. Across the country, district rangers are struggling to figure out how to provide "close collaboration between citizens and government" and to "give local workers preference." The Camino Real District of the Carson National Forest in New Mexico has created an innovative tool called "stewardship blocks" that brings fire plan benefits into communities while accomplishing fuel reduction objectives.

The district's first experiment with stewardship blocks was on a site called La Cruz Ecosystem Improvement Project in a 200-acre area of ponderosa pine forest north of Truchas, NM. Residents of this rural community, like many others in the West, depend on wood from the national forest to heat their homes. District forester Henry Lopez came up with the idea of stewardship blocks as a way to implement a fuel reduction prescription by giving local woodcutters a block of forest to harvest firewood.

Stewardship blocks work as follows: woodcutters leave the trees the district has marked and remove firewood-sized logs with a fuelwood permit costing $25 for five cords and five dollars for each additional cord. The woodcutters sign a written agreement with the Forest Service to cut in their assigned block. Signing the agreement, and not a pre-commercial thinning contract, is appealing to many local workers who are not interested in forming a business or taking on a large scale project. These agreements differ from fuelwood permits that give access to a communal firewood harvest area because the written agreement requires that the work be performed on a certain plot of land to specific standards.

Stewardship blocks range from one to four acres in size, depending on the worker's experience and ability, and are labeled with the workers names. The woodcutters begin thinning at one edge of their block and move toward the other side, a policy that insures against the selective removal of larger trees in the block and allows the Forest Service to monitor the quality of the thinning as it progresses. The woodcutters are accountable to the community and have an incentive to do "good work." If they don't, the district will not assign them additional blocks in the future and they will lose their easy access to a concentrated supply of firewood. Lopez says that most cutters take pride in their plots—some are even pruning the leave trees just for kicks.

Martha Schumann is a research associate at the Forest Trust in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Tori Derr coordinates the Southwest Community Forestry Research Center in Santa Fe. Reprinted with permission from Fire Chronicle. *Photo of stewardship block sign courtesy of Forest Trust.*

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Listserv:
The 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 comments for general discussion. However, use of the listserv for extended debate is discouraged and personal attacks are not tolerated.

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

subscribe communityforestry NAME

(Type your first and last name in place of "NAME")

Economic Action Programs at risk

by Maia Enzer and Christina Cromley

The Bush administration's commitment to rural forest-based communities is being questioned since release of the President's proposed Fiscal Year 2003 budget. The budget proposes to eliminate the Economic Action Programs (EAP) and the Pacific Northwest Assistance fund administered through the State and Private Forestry branch of the Forest Service.

Commenting on the proposed cuts at a recent Senate Energy Committee budget hearing, Senator Bingaman (D-NM) said, "I am troubled…that at almost every possible opportunity the Administration proposes to deeply cut programs that assist rural communities in creating a sustainable future for themselves." Speaking from rural northeastern Oregon, Diane Snyder of Wallowa Resources echoes the senator's concern. "The administration says that it wants benefits to go to communities, but they are taking away the best mechanisms we have to do just that," she says.

Community capacity-building

EAP has three components: Rural Community Assistance (RCA), Forest Products Conservation and Recycling, and Market Development and Expansion. The EAP program most familiar to rural communities is RCA, which provides capacity-building and planning grants to communities located adjacent to public lands. The other two programs help fund the development of innovative ways to utilize and market forest products. The Pacific Northwest Assistance fund helps finance new businesses and new jobs in timber communities that have been hit hard by the downturn in logging.

In 1999, community forestry advocates testified before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in support of the EAP programs which they said help communities and small businesses to help themselves. This sentiment is echoed in many rural communities today. Diane Snyder says, "EAP provides pivotal start-up and capacity-building support to rural communities. The additional [EAP] funds provided through the National Fire Plan are allowing communities to access the 'bricks and mortar' funds needed to create jobs and products appropriate for the new restoration economy." In Snyder's community, EAP funds helped establish programs designed to improve forest health, eliminate noxious weeds, and develop value-added manufacturing opportunities.

"It doesn't make sense"

Given the popularity of EAP, communities, small businesses, and community forestry advocates were shocked to learn that the Administration was proposing to eliminate a program that they say leverages $10 to every single dollar the federal government provides in grants. "We had great hopes that the budget for EAP would expand, because it has been uncommonly effective at helping rural communities make the transition from timber dependence to a new economy," says Lynn Jungwirth of the Watershed Research and Training Center in Hayfork, California.

Peter Nelson, policy director for Biodiversity Northwest, says, "The EAP and PNW Assistance Fund have been in place for about eight years, and communities are just beginning to have the capacity to really change their future. It doesn't make sense to end the program at this point." Nelson is one of a growing number of environmentalists who promote environmentally sustainable economic development. "The EAP helps rural communities build the infrastructure they will need to transition from a commodity-based economy to one based on stewardship," Nelson adds.

Agricultural communities are affected as well. Ellen Stein, Executive Director of Community Agriculture Alliance in Colorado says, "the loss of these funds is a great loss to our organization, our rural communities, and our region. If EAP funds are not restored, other worthy projects will also be losing an important funding source that builds community capacity, strengthens community resilience, and supports community economic diversification."

Rural Development does not replace EAP

The Bush Administration has said that the USDA Rural Development program will fill any gap left by EAP, but others dispute this. Jonathan Kusel of Forest Community Research in northern California, who recently completed an assessment of the Northwest Economic Adjustment Initiative, says "compared to USDA-Rural Development, FS-EAP dollars reach more projects and are regularly used to catalyze projects and leverage additional project funding." Nancy Farr from the Partnership for a Sustainable Methow in northern Washington says that her community raised $442,797 in matching funds from an EAP grant totaling $193,249. This leveraging, Farr says, "carries the value of the initial EAP dollars far into the future."

EAP provides small grants (averaging about $35,000 each) that help communities build capacity, while Rural Development grants and loans, which average $1,000,000 apiece, are used improve infrastructure. Many forest-dependent communities have no city councils or planning commissions that can seek out dollars to build infrastructure, and these communities need the initial capacity-building grants before they can begin to access Rural Development dollars. EAP advocates further note that Rural Development staffers, unlike RCA coordinators, do not work directly with local communities and therefore are not as familiar with community needs.

National Fire Plan offers other opportunities

In recent years, federal appropriations for EAP have been included in the National Fire Plan appropriations. EAP, because of its history in helping communities, is a logical delivery mechanism to get National Fire Plan funds for economic development opportunities to the ground.

In addition to EAP funds, the National Fire Plan provides special authorities that make it easier for agencies to hire locals for thinning and other fire-risk-abatement work. These are creative mechanisms that allow the Forest Service to collaborate with communities, enhance local and small-business opportunities for rural communities, and provide training opportunities to develop a skilled workforce to do restoration work.

Dr. Cassandra Moseley of the Ecosystem Workforce Program at the University of Oregon says it is too early to tell whether the special authorities in the National Fire Plan are benefiting many communities. But in Lakeview, Oregon, one Forest Service contracting officer says they are making a difference. "What we found was that the local contractors were not bidding on the larger contracts, so we pulled out some smaller projects, between 50 and 250 acres, and were able to make awards to at least three local contractors for restoration projects," reports Bob Gibbs, contracting officer for the Fremont National Forest. "We also used the authority to award some smaller procurements locally for facilities improvements. In a community this size, that is considerable," Gibbs adds.

"EAP helps rural communities build the infrastructure they will need to transition from a commodity-based economy to one based on stewardship."

Moseley says the National Fire Plan programs are important to creating a viable ecosystem workforce. "Are these special authorities enough?" she asks, "No. But the ability of the Forest Service to work with non-profits and think in new ways about how they design projects, in terms of scale and scope, is the only way people are going to get the training and experience that is needed to make this type of work viable."

Even if the innovative contracting mechanisms are retained, however, without EAP's flexibility the agency will find it more difficult to involve the private sector in restoration of fire-prone ecosystems, and communities will find it more difficult to access National Fire Plan funds.

Community forestry advocates are hopeful that despite the Administration's recommendation Congress will maintain and perhaps increase funding for EAP. Several Congressional leaders from both sides of the aisle are concerned with these proposed cuts and changes. Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), Senator Frank Murkowski (R-AK), and Senator Larry Craig (R-ID) have submitted a joint letter to Mitch Daniels, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, expressing their concern. The Senators urged Daniels to "restore funding for EAP and the Pacific Northwest Assistance programs and to retain [contracting] authorities. Otherwise, you will jeopardize already fragile rural economies and put fire prone ecosystems at additional risk."

Maia Enzer is director of the Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities program at Sustainable Northwest in Portland, Oregon. Christina Cromley directs the forest policy center at American Forests in Washington, D.C.

Jonathan Kusel

Member Profile

I direct Forest Community Research, a non-profit organization based in northern California that advances community well-being, sound resource stewardship, and community-based approaches to ecosystem management through research, education, and dialogue. My position is somewhat unique in that I am both a scientist and a practitioner of community forestry.

Researching forest communities

My first in-depth research on rural communities and resource use came when I was as Berkeley doctoral student working in northern California forest communities. Contrary to the expectations of some scientists, I found that we didn't understand much about the relationship between healthy communities and sustainable resource management. For one thing, at that time no one was talking about community capacity, which is the ability of communities to respond to diverse challenges and to take care of themselves. This is a vital dimension of community health.

My forest community studies took place at a time of great changes in Western forest communities: the wood products industry was undergoing a dramatic restructuring and downsizing, the industry was becoming increasingly globalized, and habitat concerns were increasing. Endangered species listings were rising and federal agencies were dramatically reducing timber harvests.

These changes led to layoffs that were profoundly affecting forest communities. As people were laid off, they withdrew from community involvement in order to focus on family or individual basic needs. Volunteerism and other forms of community involvement waned, and communities struggled with the double whammy of economic and the loss of people contributing to community at a time when they needed it most.

Lead Partnership Group

With the Clinton Administration's Northwest Forest Plan came the introduction of adaptive management and adaptive management areas: great ideas that the agencies were incapable of implementing by themselves. Having worked on the Plan that, for the most part, excluded public involvement, I felt obligated to figure out how to bring people back in.

I invited 10 community-based groups working on resource management in the region to come together to share issues and concerns and discuss how agencies might put adaptive management on the ground. That led to the formation of the Lead Partnership Group (LPG), whose initial members included the Quincy Library Group, the Applegate Partnership, and the Watershed Research and Training Center, among others.

The LPG came of age as the federal government was struggling with how to consult with communities on the Northwest Forest Plan. A year after the LPG formed, we found ourselves in a meeting with cabinet-level offices, including the Departments of Justice, Labor, Interior, and Agriculture, along with the White House and a variety of agency representatives. They came to the LPG because it was one of the only forums that existed in which the agencies could talk about resource management issues with local people from communities.

The LPG spent the next year collectively working on a set of papers that they believed defined community-based approaches to resource management. The papers involved the now familiar themes of process, monitoring, stewardship, reinvestment, and socioeconomic assessment—themes that continue to resonate today. LPG also initiated the concept of all-party monitoring. The LPG is now in its ninth year, with some 15 groups involved. It remains one of the most vibrant dialogues anywhere on collaborative and community-based resource management.

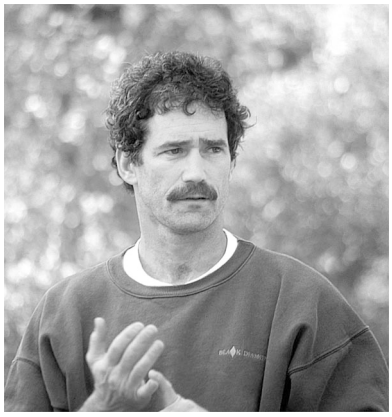

Photo by Jane Braxton Little

Community Forestry Center

I'm also the director of the Pacific West Community Forestry Research Center, one of four field centers in the National Network of Forest Practitioners' community forestry research program. The Pacific West Center serves western Washington and Oregon and rural forested California.

We have a 12-member citizens' advisory committee that has identified four thematic focus areas for our work: mobile forest workers and associated justice issues, traditional ecological knowledge, socioeconomic monitoring and assessment, and linking upstream and downstream communities and urban and rural communities around environmental justice issues. Hispanic forest workers and Southeast Asian mushroom harvesters are examples of two of the underserved groups with which we're involved.

Looking to the future

We've made some great strides in community forestry in the past decade, but there's still much work that needs to be done. For example, a disconnect remains between many national policies, agency practices, and community forestry work. While many community forestry practitioners talk about balancing economic and the environmental concerns, which are indeed important, they must also recognize that the movement must more effectively address equity concerns. We need do a better job, not of balancing, but of *integrating* economy, environment, and equity. I believe that our ability to do this integration, itself no small task, will ultimately determine the success of the movement.

Urban forest helps lower Manhattan heal

by Matt Arnn

I returned to my Forest Service office at 26 Federal Plaza, five blocks from Ground Zero, on the morning of September 13, 2001. In reality I just needed to get out of my apartment, where I had been holed up like everyone else in America, glued to CNN and NPR, eating Fig Newtons and pulling my hair out. There were volunteers from all over the country showing up to help. Most were better trained to assist than myself. Forest Service firefighters, smokejumpers, EMTs and equipment operators would soon join the mix, providing critical on-site services for months to come.

I didn't know what to expect when I joined a volunteer crew that was unloading trucks filled with gloves and surgical masks, and dispensing Red Bull energy drinks to rescue and recovery workers who had been laboring on the "pile" nonstop for 48 hours. Lower Manhattan was still operating at a fever pitch, and the confusion, fear, anger, and desperation were only building. I know it didn't feel right to be thinking about trees. We were two days removed from the September 11 tragedy and the prospect of navigating lower Manhattan's neighborhoods sampling soils and collecting debris seemed so trivial. But soon after I handed out my last PowerBar, that's what I did.

Performing a basic landscape assessment 48 hours after the WTC destruction was not meant to trivialize or impede on the heroic efforts of these emergency workers whose selfless response instilled in Americans a sense of pride and hope. Rather, it was meant to help us better understand the role of the landscape in assisting affected communities to recover and heal. My preliminary findings highlight the strong connection between lower Manhattan communities and their green spaces, demonstrate the value of the urban forest in difficult times, and call attention to the role of our public spaces in bringing people together to recover and heal.

Before September, lower Manhattan was making an effort to green up. During the recent economic boom, more and more people were moving south to TriBeCa, the Financial District, and the Lower East Side. 292,000 people now live below 14th street with over two million pouring in to work every day. With the influx came many new restaurants and nightclubs, shops, and public amenities. Residents were calling for improvements to the green infrastructure to demarcate the changing climate. Over six hundred young trees had been planted between 1999 and 2000 and there were 61 "Green Streets" (planted traffic triangles, medians, etc.) below 14th St.

While most trees were still standing on September 13, the environmental impacts of September 11 were severe. The financial district was contaminated with 100,000 gallons of oil (and large quantities of PCBs) following the collapse of the World Trade Center. I found heavy deposits (2-4 inches) of cement dust (containing calcium oxide, lead, fiberglass, glass, and asbestos) and large accumulations of paper in a two-block radius from Ground Zero. (Some of this ash was vacuumed from sites, but most was washed into soil and sewers with high-pressure hoses and heavy rains on September 15.) There were elevated pH levels in park and street pit soil samples.

Groups in lower Manhattan are carrying on with site mitigation, working to identify harmful levels of chemicals in proximate sites and beginning to determine benefits that the lower Manhattan canopy provided by filtering water, reducing particulate transfer, lessening runoff, and generally buffering neighborhoods from the impacts of the attack. Individual and stands of trees also provided important but less measurable benefits by acting as emotional symbols of strength and revival for surrounding communities.

The Forest Service has pledged to work with city, state and non-governmental partners to site new trees, provide care for existing trees, and help facilitate dialogue on urban canopy's role in the region's healing process, livability, and future identity. The Forest Service's "Living Memorials Project" is one effort to invoke the resonating power of trees to bring people together and create lasting, living memorials to the victims of terrorism, their families, communities, and the nation. Cost-share grants will support the design and development of community projects in the New York City area, Southwest Pennsylvania, and in Washington, D.C. (see Resources, page 7).

I came away from lower Manhattan on September 13 feeling even more passionate about our urban canopy as a resource that must be managed and sustained over time for its long-lasting positive effects on our urban natural resources, emotional and physical health, and our overall quality of life. It continues to play an increasingly valuable role in the wake of September 11 as New Yorkers come together and create special places to remember, reflect, and heal.

Matt Arnn is a landscape architect with the USDA Forest Service. He directs the New York City Metropolitan Initiative.

Forest Certification: On shaky ground?

Feature

by Steve Buckley

Modern forest certification, a voluntary and essentially market-driven tool for encouraging forest land owners and woodworkers to pursue more sustainable forestry practices, began in the United States in 1993.

By the end of 2001, there were over 100 million acres of certified forests in the United States. Most are privately owned, although some counties have certified their forests, and Washington, Oregon, and Massachusetts are considering ways to certify their state lands. Within the last month the state of Maine has had its lands certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

"Certification helps people realize there is a balance between the ecological, social, and economic."

Confusing array of systems

Certification applies to every element of the manufacturing process, from harvesting, to sawing, to the production of other products. Not only landowners get certified, but resource managers, sawmills, and manufacturers all need certification. This approach of certifying the entire chain-of-custody makes the systems problematic, and by some accounts only 3% of the certified wood cut even makes it to the market as certified. Adding to the confusion are some 59 different certification systems in the United States, making people unsure which programs are credible and which are not (see Who certifies?, page 7).

Industry embraces certification

Large industrial foresters, led by the American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA), seem to have embraced certification as a way to set standards and provide assurances for the sustainability of its practices. The AF&PA has made its certification program, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, a requirement for membership.

Fred Souba of Stora Ensa North America, a certified pulp and paper company in the Midwest, says certification's role is to balance the "three legs of a stool: the ecological, social, and economic. Certification can help people realize that there is a balance," Souba concludes.

Worth it for small landowners?

For those with smaller forest holdings, however, the cost of getting and staying certified is a challenge, particularly when certification does not increase revenues.

In February 2002, a formerly vocal supporter of certification, Jim Birkemier of Timbergreen in Wisconsin, announced his withdrawal from Forest Sustainability Council certification, citing the high costs of auditing necessary to maintain certification.

While small landowners may find tremendous financial support at the outset through granting opportunities from foundations, such support is temporary. Once certified, it often falls to the company or landowner to keep paying the costs associated with auditing and verification. For Birkemier, this cost was no longer a justifiable expense.

"Markets haven't demonstrated the ability to make up the costs of certification. The money doesn't trickle down."

In Grants Pass, Oregon, Dennis Weaver of Maverick Industries came to a similar conclusion. A manufacturer of flooring and other specialty wood products, Weaver was removing beams from old sawmills in the Pacific Northwest and remaking them into value-added products when he was approached by certifiers. Since Weaver was trying to find a market niche for his business, he signed up for certification.

"Certification never did a thing for my business," Weaver says, and for a small business with limited means and only three employees, certification "wasn't a viable venture." Today, having allowed his certification to lapse, Weaver is still going about his business using underutilized sources of wood and reports that simply being told where the wood comes from means as much or more than certification to his customers.

On the other side of the country, Jim Hayes of the New England Forestry Foundation says "markets haven't demonstrated the ability to make up the costs of certification. The money doesn't trickle down."

Prices and markets

It is generally assumed that once certified, foresters have more access to markets and can get a much higher price for the wood they sell. But to date, the markets are relatively small and the higher prices haven't materialized. Some question whether they ever will.

Karen Steer of the non-profit Sustainable Northwest says "people aren't going to pay more" for certified wood. Large chains like Home Depot and Lowe's are looking to sell certified wood but are demanding wholesale costs remain the same. Keeping wood prices the same is a concern for some foresters, because it translates into someone along the line—most likely the landowner—absorbing the costs of certification.

A need for education

To date, the interests of foresters and wood product providers, not consumer demand, has been driving certification. But many in the industry think the day will come when the market demands certified wood. Some say expanding consumer demand for certification will require a significant educational effort—education of both the public and foresters.

While large industry is banking on increasing market demand making certification requisite for all wood products, that day is not yet on the horizon. "We're still on shaky ground," reminds Karen Steer of Sustainable Northwest, "it could still go either way."

Steve Buckley is a research assistant at the Ecological Restoration Institute in Flagstaff, Arizona.

Publications and Web sites

Living Memorials Project. The USDA Forest Service's program supporting memorial tree planting in the New York City metropolitan area is described at www.livingmemorialsproject.net.

Stewardship blocks project. The Carson National Forest's web page describes this project and other stewardship efforts. www.fs.fed.us/r3/carson/html_main/colaberate.html

Certified Wood Products Council web site provides much information on certification in North American and compares different U.S. forest and wood products certification systems. www.certifiedwood.org

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) maintains its United States site at www.fscus.org.

American Forest & Paper Association web site details its Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) program and includes a report from the Meridian Institute comparing the SFI and FSC standards. www.afandpa.org/forestry/forestry.html

Funding opportunities

2003 Community Tree Planting grants. The National Tree Trust is accepting applications for the CTP grant program, which provides seedlings for volunteer plantings, until May 31, 2002. Applications are available at 800-846-8733 or at www.nationaltreetrust.org.

Living Memorials Project grants. The USDA Forest Service is offering cost-share grants of $25,000 - $125,000 for community projects in New York City, the Pentagon area, and southwestern Pennsylvania. Grant proposals are due May 21, 2002. More information is available on the web at www.fs.fed.us/na/durham/living_memorials/funding/index.htm or by calling Phillip Rodbell at 610-557-4133.

The Conservation Fund grants. The *Kodak American Greenways Awards* provide up to $2500 seed money for greenway planning and design. The *American Land Conservation Award* presents $50,000 to an exemplary citizen conservationist. The *CF Industries National Watershed Award* provides grants to watershed partnerships working to improve water quality. Applications for all three programs are due June 1, 2002. For more information visit the Fund's website at http://www.conservationfund.org/?article=1006 or contact Leigh Anne McDonald at 703-525-6300.

Who certifies?

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) began its effort to certify forestry practices as "sustainable" around 1989, in an attempt to slow the destruction of the rainforests in South America. FSC brought certification to the United States in 1993, although some point to the American Tree Farm system that began in 1941 as the progenitor of United States forest certification.

59 different systems

There are 59 different certification systems in practice in the United States today. The most prominent certifiers are the non-profit Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the industry group American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA), and the American Forests Foundation's American Tree Farm System (ATF). Each system has a different set of standards, and each also has different means for verification.

AF&PA's Sustainable Forestry Initiative, which allows its members the choice of self-verification or independent third-party verification of their practices, has brought 94 million acres under certification.

FSC requires third-party verification of compliance with its standards, and has certified 7.5 million acres in the United States.

The ATF is the only major system that offers third-party verification to its members free of cost. Twenty-six million acres of forest are certified under the ATF system.

Mutual recognition

Since 2000, ATF and AF&PA have accepted each others' certification standards. Such mutual recognition helps to alleviate competition between systems by identifying common criteria and increases the overall credibility of certification.

With so many competing standards, mutual recognition is a positive force, says Fred Souba. He acknowledges "People are protective of the systems they believe in," but adds that the overall system can build trust by recognizing other systems. Mutual recognition works because it promotes discussion about what is successful, and works to resolve the conflict between systems.

- Steve Buckley

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Upcoming Events

Global Perspectives on Indigenous People's Forestry. June 4-6, 2002, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The theme of this international conference is "linking communities, commerce, and conservation." For more information, visit www.foresttrends.org or call Jessica Rice at 202-298-3003.

Income Opportunities for Small Farm and Woodland Owners. June 8-9, 2002, Camp Oty'Okwa, Southeastern Ohio. This is Rural Action Forestry Program's fourth annual landowner's conference. For more information visit www.ruralaction.org/conference.html or call Cynthia Brunty at 740-767-2090.

Third Grassroots Summit. September 21-24, Salt Lake City, Utah. The theme this year is "Building a United Constituency for Urban and Community Forestry." This event is sponsored by the National Tree Trust and the US Forest Service. For more information, visit www.treelink.org/woodnotes/article5.html or call Alice Ewen Walker at 301-699-2203.

Community Forestry at Its Best. September 26-28, 2002 Nebraska City, Nebraska; **Building with Trees National Conference**, October 7-8, 2002, Nebraska City, Nebraska; **The Practice of Restoring Native Ecosystems**, October 21-22, 2002, Nebraska City, Nebraska. These three conferences are all sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation. For more information, visit www.arborday.org/programs/conferencelist.html or call 402-474-5655.

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
- the recognition of the rights and responsibilities of diverse forest landowners.