

FORESTRY

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The time is now for agroforestry



Agroforestry leaders gather in Washington D.C. to discuss ways to engage landowners

When U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack introduced his 'all-lands approach' last August, the word "agroforestry" wasn't mentioned. Yet in the eyes of the agroforestry community, the idea was peeped throughout the Secretary's speech.

It was the opportunity agroforesters had been waiting for.

Says Andy Mason, interim director USDA National Agroforestry Center, "The Secretary's vision certainly helped. We all saw agroforestry really playing a big part moving forward."

In late May, the Interagency Agroforestry Team met in Washington D.C. to gather input from the 90 stakeholders in attendance. The Team is made up of representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Agricultural Research Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, National Association of State Foresters and NACD.

Says Mason, there were two purposes for the workshop – to increase awareness for agroforestry and how it can be used to address the Secretary's priorities, and to get input from that diverse group of stakeholders so as to begin to build a national strategic framework for agroforestry.

USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan discussed the role of agroforestry in landscape-scale conservation and sustainable agriculture, followed by Gene Garrett of the University of Missouri's Center for Agroforestry who delivered the keynote address, "Trees and Farms Working Together – Agroforestry Comes of Age."

NACD Western Issues Specialist Yenie Tran helped to moderate a panel of speakers, including two landowners, who all presented

case studies on the current practice of agroforestry, the needs to advance the use of agroforestry and emerging opportunities in biomass energy. NASF President Steve Koehn discussed how agroforestry supports green infrastructure and an all-lands approach to sustainable forest management. NRCS Chief Dave White, NACD CEO Jeff Eisenberg and FS Deputy Chief Jim Hubbard provided closing comments.

"There were some compelling presentations made that afternoon arguing for why now is the time for agroforestry," says Mason.

Adds Bruce Wight, the national forester for NRCS, "We also had quite a discussion on some of the ecosystem services that can be provided (through agroforestry) – whether it's carbon, wildlife habitat or water quality – some of the emerging opportunities that may not quite be there yet, but are on the horizon as the private sector looks for ways to provide benefits and draw a return from those benefits.

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The agroforestry stakeholders panel (left to right): Dean Current, Gene Garrett, Yenie Tran, George Owens, Nicola Macpherson, Victor Harris and Steve Koehn

Next Month

Exploring the
many advantages of
American Tree Farm System





District finds new partners in tree planting project

A few years ago, Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District staff assistant Brenda Davis was brainstorming potential projects with NRCS employee Elwood Holzworth. "Something new, something different," she thought.

What the two came up with has proven to be a small success in their east central Florida region – an annual Arbor Day tree sale tied to a free tree planting event, whereby the District sells bald cypress at cost (47 cents per seedling) and selects a handful of planting projects to assist with.

The initial goal, says Davis, was to plant 500 trees each year around local stormwater retention ponds in five different subdivisions in Indian River County. The Districts annually calls on local homeowner associations for applications and treats it on a first come, first serve basis. This year the District reduced that number to 100, but planted larger, more mature trees.

The cypress trees are native to Florida and thrive in wet soil. They can also withstand draught after they've been established. "If we have a couple of dry years and the ponds recede a little bit, the trees are still going to survive and be ok," says Davis, who points

out that the roots of the trees also clean nutrients, like nitrogen and phosphorus, out of the stormwater before it travels into drainage canals.

As for the tree sale, the District sold more than 70 seedlings in 2009, its first year; this year it sold more than 700.

It's been a huge success, says Davis, whose Board of Supervisors recently approved extending the program through the 2013 planting season.

"It opened my eyes to the fact that there are a lot of people in the community that are conservation-minded, and once they're given an opportunity to help with a project like this, they're willing to put in the hard work that's necessary," she says.

Some of the partners included members from the local Master Gardeners, a local chapter of the Boys and Girls Club, and the Indian River County's Extension Service.

Another was the local Best Buy store, which emailed Davis after a reading a news clipping about the 2009 event. As part of its community outreach program, Best Buy sent a number of employees in May to assist the District and NRCS office with the plantings. "They had such a great time," says Davis,

"that they want to do it again next year."

For more information on this event, contact Brenda Davis, staff assistant at the Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District, at 772/770-5005, or email her at brendadavis@ircgov.com.



Each year, the Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District selects five sites where a team of volunteers plants trees around stormwater retention ponds.



JFT requests survey participation

In 2007 the Joint Forestry Team (JFT) surveyed State Foresters, Conservation District staff and leaders, and State Conservationists to assess the level of integration among forestry-related programs and to identify barriers to implementing forestry and agroforestry

practices on the ground. In response to the survey, the JFT and member organizations have taken actions to

improve the integration of resources. Some JFT actions that were specifically derived from the survey responses include (1) the creation of guiding principles for delivery of coordinated planning assistance to private forest landowners; (2) the implementation of a State-wide Memorandum of Understanding among participating agencies and with other cooperators; and (3) the development of recommendations for NRCS concerning its future role to keep delivering technical assistance through the Farm Bill programs.

The JFT would like to continue to provide support and improve forestry-related program delivery on the ground by assessing the team's success. Please take time to answer the questions in this survey.

Your response is critical to ensure the JFT provides assistance that is beneficial to your organization. The deadline is July 16. Here is the link to the survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ZGFPRFY>



Holmes represents NACD at long-leaf pine meetings

In late May, NACD Forest Resource Policy Group chairman Charles Holmes attended the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPAS) meeting in his native state of Alabama. Also represented at the meeting were the U.S. Departments of Defense and Agriculture and a host of environmental groups. In June, Holmes attended America's Great Outdoors listening session in Charleston, South Carolina where USDA Secretary Vilsack and other notable individuals were present.

At one time, long-leaf pine forests covered 90 million acres and were a source timber, ecological and socio-economic values. Today, only approximately 3.4 million acres remain. NACD members own significant portions of some of the largest remaining intact blocks of long-leaf pine in the country. Local conservation districts have joined the effort to restore the long-leaf pine, and NACD is working in partnership

with the Department of Defense, American Forest Foundation and Freedom to Roam to support districts' role.

For more information on this topic, view the April 2010 issue of Forestry Notes at <http://nacdn.org/news/publications/forestrynotes>.



Montana biomass report released

A 123-page report examining the feasibility of using sustainable wood biomass-fueled Combined Heat and Power sources for sawmills in western Montana was released in June. It was co-sponsored by the Montana Community Development Corporation (MCDC) and Northwestern Energy. Titled "Sustainable Biomass Power Generation: A Regional Model for Western Montana," the report looks at a number of issues, including fuel supply, regulatory requirements and project financing. And though it was written with the western Montana region in mind, it can be a valuable resource for any group exploring wood biomass projects.

The full report can be found on the MCDC Web site at <http://mtcdc.org>. From the home page, click on the "News" tab, and then "Reports & Publications" where a link to the report can be found.



Agroforestry ... continued from page 1

Those who attended the workshop discussed a number of topics, all relating to four key issues that cut across the country:

- Landowner awareness, acceptance and adoption of agroforestry
- Understanding and quantifying ecosystem services from agroforestry practices
- Planning, designing and applying agroforestry practices and systems
- Education and training of natural resource professionals to deliver agroforestry assistance

According to U.S. Forest Service Lead Agroforester Richard Straight, one question that needs to be answered is not just how to improve the science, “but also the science delivery – how do we get that information out to the natural resource professionals that work directly with farmers, ranchers, forest owners and communities?” Conservation districts, suggests Straight, will be a valuable ally in getting this accomplished.

Mason agrees: “A lot of landowners, for various reasons, have not adopted agroforestry. Markets for products from agroforestry

practices, including ecosystem services, are certainly part of the answer. Clearly there’s also some work to do to connect with landowners with the information and technology they need to apply agroforestry on their land.”

Conservation districts are the largest requesters and users of National Agroforestry Center publications. One of the Center’s recent publications, the “Conservation Buffer Guide” is a good example for how agroforestry has come of age. “It’s a tool that has gotten great reviews and is being used all over by districts,” says Straight. The guide, which covers the many benefits of buffers, can also be downloaded as a PDF by visiting the Center’s Web site.

The next step for the Interagency Agroforestry Team will be to review all of the input received at the May workshop and send a draft back to stakeholders for further comment. The Team’s final strategic framework, which is expected to be completed by October, will identify the most important USDA emphasis areas for agroforestry research, development, and technology transfer, both nationally and in priority watersheds.

Wisconsin Extension agent organizes agroforestry workshop

For Mark Kopecky, all it took was one agroforestry conference and he was hooked. The University of Wisconsin-Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent for Price County attended a North American Agroforestry Conference (sponsored by the Association for Temperate Agroforestry) five years ago in Rochester, Minnesota. That got the gears going, he says. He later attended the same biennial conference when it was held in Quebec City and Columbia, Missouri.

Thought Kopecky: Wouldn’t it be great to host an agroforestry workshop in Wisconsin?

Last month, 18 representatives from a number of different state agencies and conservation groups made the trek to southwestern Wisconsin for the two-day workshop. On the first day, attendees listened to local agroforester Mark Shepard and University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry Technology Transfer Specialist Dusty Walter present on a number of agroforestry-related topics; on the second day, the group toured a number of area farms to get a close look at agroforestry practices such as windbreaks and alley cropping. The highlight of the tour was Shepard’s 140-acre perennial agricultural forest in the city of Viola.

“(He) is one of the real pioneers in agroforestry in Wisconsin,” says Kopecky of Shepard, whose family converted a conven-

tional farm into an agro-based farm several years ago. “He’s really done some neat things with the local hydrology, as well as all of the different types of trees he’s employing.” Shepard’s forestland consists of Korean stone pine, various fruit trees, black walnut, Chinese chestnut, and oak among others.

Shepard is also the vice president of the Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development Council and a member of the Organic Valley cooperative, the world’s largest organic farmer’s marketing co-op.

Says Kopecky, “He incorporates a lot of different complementary ideas into what he’s doing ... he’s a big organic agriculture advocate, he’s a local food advocate, very energy conscious ... so he melds all of these different facets into the operation he’s got going on his farm.”

Kopecky hopes to generate more interest among landowners in agroforestry in Wisconsin, and may explore future workshops. “I think there are facets of agroforestry that anyone can apply on their land,” he says.

For more information on this workshop, contact Mark Kopecky, UW-Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent for Price County, at 715/339-2555, or email him at mark.kopecky@co.price.wi.us. To learn more about Mark Shepard’s operation, visit <http://www.forestag.com>.

“There’s a convergence of issues and opportunities,” says Mason, “... A time to look at agroforestry and how to expand it across America. One reason is that agroforestry as a technology has come of age. The science is out there to support agroforestry practices and we’re looking at ways to get it expanded.”

To learn more about agroforestry and Working Trees, visit the National Agroforestry Center’s Web site at <http://www.unl.edu/nac>.

Missouri offers first-of-its-kind online program

The University of Missouri’s Center for Agroforestry will welcome the first of its online graduate degree program students this fall. A growing interest and acceptance for the science helped to make the program possible. “There is a realization that agroforestry offers solutions to many of the environmental and economic problems we face today,” says Shibu Jose, the Center’s director.

The Center received funding from the University of Missouri System to build an eight-credit curriculum. Within two years a ninth course will be added. Students can get a graduate certificate (15 credits) and a master’s degree (30 credits). A total of nine faculty members will teach online courses.

The mission is simple: to get working professionals in this program. Jose also suggests the program could help Peace Corps volunteers to gain an understanding of agroforestry. “This program could provide them with an opportunity to pursue a degree or certificate in agroforestry while working abroad.” Additionally, the program is open to anyone interested in gaining advanced agroforestry knowledge.

It’s similar to the ecological restoration online program that Jose helped to build last August at the University of Florida. In its first year that program had 10 students enrolled; this year staff is planning for 25.

The University of Missouri has one of the nation’s strongest agroforestry programs, and Jose believes this online component could be the only one of its kind in the world. Because of this, the Center plans to accommodate students from all over the globe in the near future.

To learn more about this new online graduate degree program, visit <http://www.centerforagroforestry.org>.



Congressional leaders target bark beetles

According to recent data, bark beetles have infected more than 17.5 million acres of Western forests.

A June bill introduced by Wyoming Congresswoman Cynthia Lummis aims to slow down bark beetle infestation through a series of USDA demonstration projects. Bill H.R. 5192 would also authorize the U.S. Forest Service to conduct 'emergency removal' of dying trees with streamlined reviews under environmental laws.

It was yet another attempt by government

to join the fight against the epidemic. The U.S. Senate recently approved an extra \$50 million for Western states to deal with dead trees from the bark beetle outbreak -- \$42 million of that going to the Forest Service and the remaining \$8 million to the National Park Service. The bill was introduced in November 2009 by Senators Mark Udall (CO) and James Risch (ID). Specific projects have not yet been announced.

Lummis' proposed bill argues that dead trees also increase the chances of wildfire and other threats to human safety. The bill was opposed by environmental groups and Jay Jensen, the USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment. Jensen brought to light provisions in the bill that would exempt private utilities that have rights of way through national forests from the costs of repairing damages from falling trees in infested areas, suggesting such measures could result in a larger responsibility for taxpayers.

Both sides agree on one thing: Bark beetles are a growing concern in the west, and something that needs attention and collaboration from all interested parties.

Conservation Calendar

- **July 18-20** – Pellet Fuels Institute 2010 Annual Conference, Asheville, N.C. Visit <http://www.pelletheat.org/3/institute/2010summerConf/index.html>
- **July 18-21** – SWCS Annual Conference: Ecosystem Services, St. Louis, Mo. Visit http://www.swcs.org/en/conferences/2010_annual_conference
- **Aug. 31-Sept. 2** – NACD Forest RPG Joint Meeting with NASF, Forest Products Laboratory, Madison, Wis. Contact Yenie Tran at yenie-tran@nacdn.net
- **Sept. 20-22** – "Who Will Own the Forest? 6" summit, Portland, Ore. Visit <http://wwotf.worldforestry.org/wwotf6>
- **Nov. 9-11** – Partners in Community Forestry National Conference, Loews Hotel, Philadelphia, Penn. Visit <http://www.arborday.org/shopping/conferences/brochures/pcf/2010/index.cfm>

Call for Two Chiefs' Award nominees

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U.S. Forest Service (FS) request nominations for their annual Two Chiefs' Partnership Award. The 2010 award is given in two categories, individual and group, to recognize exemplary partnership efforts promoting conservation and forest stewardship. Nominees must have worked jointly to achieve gains in forestry-related conservation with at least two of the following four organizations: NACD, NRCS, the Forest Service and State forestry agencies. Nominations should be submitted by August 27, 2010. To fill out the nomination form, visit the Joint Forestry Team Web site at <http://jointforestryteam.org>.

Share Your Success Stories

Districts are addressing communities' natural resource challenges and opportunities and we want to hear about it! Tell us about your district's work by sending your story to forestrynotes@email.nacdnet.org

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