



# Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry



## News Notes

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June 26, 2009

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### From the Director's Desk

#### Living in Interesting Times: Reflections on Fiscal Year 2008 Accomplishments

“May you live in interesting times,” states a well-known expression. I think we can all agree that the times are very “interesting” indeed. Rising energy prices, global climate change, an onslaught of exotic pests and fierce wildfires, a sagging economy—just one of these would be “interesting” by itself. Arguably, the need for technical and financial assistance to address critical natural resources opportunities and threats has never been greater. Our dollars may not go quite as far as they did just a year or two ago.

“Interesting” times require a renewed focus on the programs and activities most likely to yield the greatest benefits. Recently, I reviewed the Northeastern Area’s accomplishments for fiscal year (FY) 2008, which I will highlight here. Three initiatives in particular have equipped us with the tools we need to effectively target resources, focus on outcomes, and encourage innovation and cooperation:

- Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry (NA) and its State partners are actively engaged in the State and Private Forestry *Redesign* initiative. We funded 29 competitive projects in FY 2008, each intended to target specific landscape conditions and leverage contributions from State and other partners. Redesign’s catch phrase, *focus + priority = outcome*, captures what is needed to successfully negotiate interesting times.
- NA revised and updated its Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2008-2012. It focuses on two goals: promote sustainable forest management and enhance the forest’s capacity to provide public benefits. These goals reflect our unique situation in the Northeast and Midwest—forests lie primarily in the hands of private landowners, as do 600,000 jobs that depend heavily upon them.
- NA updated its Strategic Business Plan, identifying specific actions needed to achieve Strategic Plan goals and objectives. Each includes estimated FTEs, funds, skills, and partners needed for implementation. The plan also outlines management priorities to provide us with the skills, diversity, accountability, and effective external relationships needed to effectively serve the public.

Beyond the solid foundation provided by the aforementioned initiatives, our program accomplishments reassure me that we making progress in our efforts to strategically promote sustainable management. The following examples illustrate why our programs matter, and some of our successful efforts to deliver targeted assistance:



*Private forests provide both private and public benefits.* Almost half of the forested land in our Nation—354 million acres—is privately owned. These forests provide many important benefits including cleaner air and water, a healthy economy, a renewable source of energy, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities, to name a few. They also play an important role in mitigating climate change by absorbing carbon released by the burning of fossil fuels. Stewardship plans are a proven way to enhance forest benefits. In FY 2008, our cooperators wrote 9,500 new or revised Stewardship Plans covering about three quarters of a million acres, roughly 42 percent of the national tally. We accomplished that work with about a third of the national Stewardship budget, a good indication that we are fielding an efficient program. We made substantial progress in targeting our investments; more than 40 percent of the acres were in high-priority areas as identified by the Spatial Analysis program.

We also targeted specific natural resource issues. For example, 74 million people in the Northeast and Midwest drink water from forested watersheds. Millions of acres need restoration and protection. In the New York City watershed, about 12,000 acres of Stewardship Plans were written with water quality at the forefront. In the Chesapeake Bay watershed, cooperators restored more than 460 *miles* of riparian forests.

*Urban and community forests are important to environmental, economic, and social health.* A single tree can contribute as much as \$2,500 in environmental services during its lifetime. Studies also show that trees can help people feel a sense of community and contribute to economic revitalization. More than 74 million people in the Northeast and Midwest live in communities involved in the Urban and Community Forestry Program, assistance that was provided at a Federal cost of just \$0.08 per resident.

*Good management can help fight invasive plants, diseases, and insects.* Some of the most significant forest pests plaguing the United States arrived via ports located in the Northeast and Midwest. Early detection and treatment, when necessary, are the first line of defense. NA specialists and cooperators protected 716,500 acres of cooperative lands in FY 2008, 65 percent of the national total, using 31 percent of the national budget for that activity.

NA and its partners also treated more than three-quarters of a million acres to slow the spread of the gypsy moth, saving landowners and taxpayers millions in treatment costs and forest damage. Slowing the Spread is three times more cost effective than the economic impact of allowing natural spread. NA is also coordinating its efforts with multiple Federal, State, and local agencies to control the emerald ash borer.

*Reducing wildfire risk is integral to maintaining healthy, well-managed forests and restoring ecosystems.* Under the National Fire Plan, NA and its partners treated nearly 103,500 acres of forest for hazardous fuels and assisted with the development of 121 Community Protection Plans in urban-wildland interface areas. Assistance was provided to nearly 10,500 communities. These programs potentially saved lives and millions of dollars in property losses, besides creating healthier ecosystems. And again, we see an indicator of efficiency—36 percent of national accomplishments were achieved with 15 percent of the national budget.

For NA, “interesting times” has meant smaller budgets, less travel, organizational change, and a continued commitment to results. Our partners, cooperators, and employees deserve much credit for their hard work and creative problem-solving. Our FY 2008 accomplishments are on par, and in some cases exceed, our outcomes in prior years. I am proud of what we have accomplished.

— Kathryn P. Maloney  
Area Director



## Sustainable Operations Tip of the Month

### *Sustainable Landscaping Provides a Multitude of Benefits*

Matt Arm, NAS&PF, Area Landscape Architect

As citizens and professionals, we constantly work to “improve” our private and public landscapes, making them more attractive and functional. However, our conventional landscaping practices often limit the important ecological services that our landscapes provide: cooling and cleaning the air, filtering pollutants, and supporting biodiversity. In a given year we use 10 times the amount of chemicals and fertilizers on our residential lawns and gardens as farmers use on crops (EPA 2007), most of which winds up in our storm sewers, and eventually our streams and lakes. Stormwater runoff of these pollutants is the number one factor in the decline of urban streams (CWP 2006).

In contrast, sustainable landscape practices embrace the functions of healthy systems and natural processes. Sustainable landscapes can be visually pleasing, cost efficient, and environmentally friendly. A landscape developed with sustainable practices can improve the environment by conserving resources and reducing chemical applications. Using sustainable practices can reduce labor inputs, making it less expensive to implement them and maintain the landscape.

#### Some basic tips to start landscaping more sustainably:

- **Analyze**—Note the unique traits of your location, such as sun and shade condition, ground slope, available moisture, soil type, and air movement.
- **Create a site plan**—Use smart design to evaluate how your outside space will be used and what local and regional plants will thrive with minimal care.
- **Look to nature as a blueprint** by adding water-efficient native plantings.
- **Reduce the lawn footprint** and add soil amendments as necessary.
- **Replace impervious** patios and driveways with porous stone and pavers.
- **Examine your irrigation system** and watering plan for efficiency and minimal runoff—utilize drip irrigation, rain barrels, and rain gardens.
- **Use organic mulch** to reduce water evaporation and protect and nourish plants.
- **Reduce, recycle, and reuse** whenever possible, such as reusing plant containers, stone, and soil, and composting with organic waste and leaves.
- **Get creative**—Use discarded household items (colanders are particularly good for hanging plants).
- **Limit fossil fuel use** in maintaining your landscape. If you have to mow, do so at the highest setting (keeping roots and soil cool) and compost trimmings.
- **Keep weeds pulled**—they compete with your landscape for water.

Grey Towers has achieved a more sustainable landscape through efforts such as native plantings that reduce water use and installation of a semipervious parking lot. The Durham, NH, office is implementing components of a sustainable landscape design that was drafted by a student intern this spring, including removing invasive plants, reducing mowed area, mulching around trees and gardens, and composting. The USDA People’s Garden at the Jamie L. Whitten Building on the National Mall showcases organic gardening practices, raised beds and site furniture constructed of reclaimed urban wood, and native pollinators. It even includes a bat house to help control mosquitoes and provide organic fertilizer.



While sustainable landscape practices are finding larger audiences in government and nonprofit communities, homeowners have a particular opportunity to make a positive impact. In the United States, homeowners spend more than \$25 billion each year on lawn care products and services (EPA 2007). Yard and landscape trimmings contribute approximately 32 million tons to the municipal waste stream, representing more than 13 percent of the total municipal waste. We are slowly beginning to reevaluate traditional practices and have many resources available to help us make more thoughtful decisions about our landscapes.

As development pressures continue to grow in the Northeast and Midwest, and land itself becomes scarce and more precious, outdoor spaces need to be designed and maintained to deliver value on multiple levels—economic, ecological, and social. Sustainable landscape practices incorporate and balance our desire for beauty and function with the need to preserve our valuable resources.



**USDA Peoples Garden—phase one organic vegetable garden, Jamie L. Whitten Building, Washington, DC 2009**

Some additional reading:

[www.sustainablesites.org](http://www.sustainablesites.org)

[www.epa.gov/wastes/conservation/rrr/greenscapes/owners.htm](http://www.epa.gov/wastes/conservation/rrr/greenscapes/owners.htm)

[www.sustainability.uconn.edu/sustain/sustainfact.html](http://www.sustainability.uconn.edu/sustain/sustainfact.html)

References

CWP. 2006. Center for Watershed Protection. Urban Subwatershed Restoration Manual Series.

EPA. 2007. Greenscaping: The Easy Way to a Greener, Healthier Yard.



# Newtown Square Headquarters Office

## People's Garden Draws on Collaborative Efforts for Success

On Earth Day, the U.S. Department of Agriculture unveiled the People's Garden on the grounds of the USDA's headquarters at the Whitten Building. The Whitten Building is the only government office building that faces the National Mall. The garden, which will eventually cover 6 acres, expands on initial plans that Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced in February. Vilsack originally envisioned a vegetable garden only half the size of the new plot.

Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry Landscape Architect **Matt Arnn** and Natural Resources Conservation Service National Landscape Architect Bob Snieckus developed the People's Garden site plan with landscape architecture student intern Mike Hill. The first phase of the garden was construction of a raised-bed organic vegetable garden.



Pictured from left to right are Robert Snieckus, USDA; John Thomas, Chief, DC Urban Forestry Administration; Chris and Pat Holmgren, Sawyers-Seneca Creek Joinery; Monica Lear, Deputy Chief, DC Urban Forestry Administration; and John Crew, Director of Operations, USDA. (Photo by Brian LeCouteur, COG)

A unique collaborative opportunity arose in the construction of the raised garden beds. The team contacted the District Department of Transportation Urban Forestry Administration about using recycled urban wood to construct the raised beds. The Urban Forestry Administration provided a supply of logs from locust trees, which decay more slowly in soil than most trees, and red oaks. These logs were then milled into beams for the raised garden beds.

The milling was coordinated through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments staff. This group has a grant with the Wood Education and Resource Center to identify ways to utilize urban wood to prevent it from going to a landfill. In addition to the raised beds, recycled urban wood was used to make stepping planks and trellis structures for the garden.

Other features of the first phase of the garden include a Potager Pollinator Garden, a kitchen garden incorporating vegetables and flowers that will attract bees and butterflies; transition field plots; bioswale and rain gardens; bat houses; and a three sisters garden that showcases a traditional Native American technique combining corn, pole beans, and squash in one plot.

The landscape architects are creating a master plan for the People's Garden that includes children's gardens, a memorial walk, an education plaza, stormwater tree pits, and a green roof. The master plan builds on the work to date and extends sustainable practices beyond building "footprints" and out to public landscapes.



# Durham Field Office

## New York City Watershed Featured on Canadian Television



Reporter France Beaudoin of CBC Radio-Canada explains how a belt deflector works at the Frost Valley Model Forest. (Photo provided by FrostValley.org)

A television crew from "La Semaine Verte" ("The Green Week"), a national weekly environmental program based out of Quebec City, toured the Catskill/Delaware watershed the last week of May. Reporter France Beaudoin of CBC Radio-Canada coordinated the weeklong tour with representatives from the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC), a longstanding Forest Service partner.

"Our segment will focus on how regional New York State landowners partner with the city to provide clean drinking water for metropolitan residents downstream," Beaudoin explained.

The forested watersheds of Upstate New York supply more than 1 billion gallons of naturally filtered water per day to New York City's 9 million consumers. Forests are the primary land cover in the 1 million-acre watershed and are the best landcover to protect water quality.

The Canadian crew interviewed landowners and WAC forestry professionals, pulling together the region's clean water story. Tom Pavlesich, WAC's Forestry Program Manager, was excited about the Canadian's interest in WAC's working forests.

"We are delighted that our neighbors in Canada are interested in sharing our successes in keeping forests healthy and the water clean," Pavlesich said. "Without the support of two key partners, the **U.S. Forest Service** and New York City Department of Environmental Protection, it would be much more difficult to reach forest landowners with our conservation programs."

Since 1996, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry's Forest Stewardship Program has been assisting the nonprofit WAC's Forestry Program to develop and implement strategies to ensure that forest lands continue to produce clean, high-quality water for New York City while supporting the local economy through sustainable forestry practices.

The Canadian documentary segment, which follows water from the Catskill Mountains to New York City taps, will air in September 2009. Last year, the Watershed Agricultural Council provided similar tours for a documentary crew from TV Globo-Brazil and a contingent of Vietnamese scientists.



# Morgantown Field Office

## Forest Stewardship Training Sessions Held in West Virginia

Training sessions were held in March, April, and May for the West Virginia Division of Forestry's Forest Stewardship Program. Each session was held at the Days Hotel Conference Center in Flatwoods. Attendance was very good, and the interest, support, and feedback for the sessions were positive. The sessions included:

- **Forest Access Roads** on March 4 (140 attendees). Speakers included: Jim Kochenderfer, retired U.S. Forest Service; Ben Spong, West Virginia University (WVU) professor; Rick Campbell, West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection; Joe Lancaster and Rick Persinger, MeadWestvaco; Jeff Mills, West Virginia Division of Forestry (WVDOF); Ed Grafton, West Virginia Christmas Tree Growers Association; Dave McGill, West Virginia University Forestry Extension; and Glenn Juergens, Monongahela National Forest.
- **Media Outreach/Communications/Public Relations for Foresters and other Natural Resource Professionals** on April 7 (131 attendees). Speakers included: Dan Kincaid, WVDOF; Becky Osborne, WVU Extension; Dan Page, Editor and Publisher of The State Journal; Sarah Kapis, News Anchor/Reporter, WBOY-TV; Chris Lawrence, MetroNews Radio; John McCoy, The Charleston Gazette; Nerissa Young, Marshall University Journalism Professor; Rita Colistra, WVU Journalism Professor; Chris Atkins, Producer/Photographer, WSAZ-TV; and Matt Haught, Copy Editor, The Charleston Daily Mail.
- **Best Management Practices in West Virginia – Are They Working?** on May 5 (118 attendees). Speakers included: Randy Dye, WVDOF Director; Greg Cook, Jeremy McGill, and Mayford Lake, WVDOF; Mark Bozic, Weyerhaeuser; Jim Hays, Forestry Consultant; and Nick Zegre, Brian McDonald, Ben Spong, and Shawn Grushecky, WVU professors.

The training sessions were sponsored by the West Virginia Division of Forestry with assistance from WVU Forestry Extension and the Appalachian Hardwood Center. Financial support is provided by the U.S. Forest Service, and input into topics and speakers is provided by the West Virginia Statewide Forest Stewardship Committee.

Dan Kincaid, WVDOF, and Dave McGill, WVU Extension, lead the organization of the sessions, with support from Elizabeth Tichenor, WVU forestry graduate student, and June Mandel from the WVDOF in Charleston. Session participants included foresters from West Virginia and a few foresters from other States. Attendees earn continuing education credits that can be used to maintain their credentials for preparing forest stewardship plans and maintain their Registered Forester status. Credits can also be applied to their Society of American Foresters Certified Forester status at the national level.

The next regularly scheduled session will be held at the same location on August 26, 2009. The topic will be "Integrating Wildlife Decisions into Forest Management Plans." Registration information will be sent out around the first of August.



## Washington, DC, Middle School Students Learn About the Fungus Among Us

Plant Pathologist **Alan Iskra** presented “Get Acquainted with Fungi” at the Anacostia River Environmental Fair held in May at Anacostia Park in Washington, DC. This is an annual event that presents a variety of environmental-related science topics to middle school students. Iskra provided students with information about the benefits of fungi, emphasizing decay organisms. Students examined a number of specimens and viewed a poster that emphasized different types of fungi, their function, and their importance in the environment. Several classes participated in the all-day session.



Middle schools students in Washington, DC, learn about fungi at the Anacostia River Environmental Fair.

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

**DEADLINE!** The deadline for the next issue of the Northeastern Area News Notes is noon, Wednesday, July 22, 2009. News articles submitted after this time and date will be published in the next month's edition. Please e-mail final articles to Deborah Muccio at [dmuccio@fs.fed.us](mailto:dmuccio@fs.fed.us).

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