

FOREST COMMUNITY NEWS: THE *NATIONAL* PERSPECTIVE

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FROM THE EDITORS...

As the calendar year draws to a close, Congress takes its winter recess and many of us utilize what may be left of our annual leave to enjoy the holiday season with family and friends. At the same time, there are still a number of emerging and ongoing issues and activities that warrant FCN's attention, and we have tried to capture them for your consideration in this month's newsletter. So, as you curl up by the fireplace... or the heating vent in your office (whatever the case may be), may FCN be one of the more informative and enjoyable things you find yourself reading this year's end.

Happy Holidays!

FROM CAPITOL HILL...

BUDGET RECONCILIATION TAX PACKAGE

On November 18, 2005, the Senate approved a \$57.8 billion tax package, as allowed for under the FY 2006 Budget Resolution. The package includes incentives to encourage landowner donations of conservation easements to land trusts and includes some tax incentives for small forest landowners hit by the hurricanes. The legislation would allow expensing reforestation costs up to \$20,000 for forest landowners owning less than 500 acres that were hit by the hurricanes this year.

For more information, visit www.finance.senate.gov/sitepages/leg/111805legbill.pdf

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS

On November 15, 2005, the House Agriculture Committee met to hear testimony on recent litigation regarding categorical exclusions and the use of fire retardant. In September, a district court ruled and then clarified in the *Earth Island Institute v. Ruthenbeck* case that certain projects that are categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis, including recent categorical exclusions authorized under the Healthy Forests Initiative, are subject to the notice, comment, and appeal provisions of the Appeals Reform Act of 1992. Agriculture Committee Chairman Goodlatte (R-VA) and House Resources Committee Chairman Pombo (R-CA) have introduced legislation (HR 4091) to address this problem.

For more information, visit <http://agriculture.house.gov/hearings/schedule.html>

FOREST SERVICE FIREWOOD PERMITS

On November 8, 2005, House Resources Committee Chairman Pombo (R-CA) introduced the Home Heating Assistance Act (HR 4251). This legislation would waive fees required for

firewood collection in national forests by up to \$1000 per person. The legislation is intended to help families cope with the high costs of home heating during the winter months. Individuals are still required to get the appropriate permits and are only allowed to remove wood from trees that are already dead and meet the specifications determined by the District Ranger.

For more information, visit

<http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/Press/releases/2005/1108firewoodbill.htm>

NEPA

On November 17, 2005, the House Task Force on Updating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) held its sixth and final hearing. They heard about NEPA experiences from various federal officials and national representatives. Witnesses testified about the reasons for delays associated with NEPA litigation and federal agencies trying to implement the law's procedures. Several witnesses highlighted the time-consuming impact some lawsuits can have on the process of approving a project, causing delays of six to ten years. In other instances, witnesses spoke to the reasons why some lawsuits have been filed -- mainly because opponents disagree with a project and want to delay its approval or stop the project entirely. The Task Force is currently working to finalize a draft report to present to the House Resources Committee Chairman Pombo (R-CA). The report will be issued within the next month and will include the comments and testimony received from previous hearings and any recommendations the Task Force may have on improving NEPA.

For more information, visit <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/nepataskforce.htm>

POSTDISTURBANCE RESTORATION

On November 18, 2005, Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR) introduced S 2079, entitled the "Forests for Future Generations Act." It has been referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. No other Congressional action has been taken on the bill. On November 2, 2005, Representative Greg Walden (R-OR) introduced HR 4200, entitled the "Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act." It has been referred to the House Resources Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health, the House Agriculture Committee, and the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Hearings on the proposed legislation have been heard in both the House Resources Forests and Forest Health Subcommittee (November 15) and in the House Agriculture Committee (December 7).

On October 6, 2005, Representative Tom Udall (D-NM) introduced HR 3973, entitled the "National Forests Rehabilitation and Recovery Act of 2005." It has been referred to the House Resources Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health. No further Congressional action has been taken on the bill.

FROM THE ADMINISTRATION...

CERTIFICATION

The Forest Service said that it plans to look into independent forest management certification, a market-based, non-regulatory conservation tool intended to identify and promote socially and environmentally responsible forestry. If a forest has been formally certified, its management practices have been deemed sound by an independent certifying body, and wood-based products derived from that land might be labeled as such in stores. The potential for such certification is currently under evaluation on various sections of land in the National Forest System. Parts of Oregon's Fremont National Forest and Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest are among the first areas scheduled for audits. The certification standards set forth by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Forest Stewardship Council are part of this analysis.

RECREATIONAL MOTOR VEHICLE USE

Under a final management rule announced by the Forest Service, individual national forests and grasslands will designate where off-highway vehicles (OHVs) can travel. This rule calls for local and state officials to seek public comment on an effort to designate routes open and closed to OHVs within four years. It also requires all 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands to publish maps detailing the allowed use based on type of vehicle and time of year. The current approach to recreational vehicle use in national forests varies by region. While the new rule gives most of the decision-making power to local officials, federal officials hope to develop a framework for consistent management among forests across the country.

The text of the new rule can be found at www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/final.pdf.

NEW LEADERSHIP

Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth announced the selection of Jim Hubbard as Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry. In his new position, Hubbard will oversee activities related to fire and aviation management, the implementation of the National Fire Plan, cooperative forestry, forest health protection, conservation education, urban and community forestry, and tribal relations. Hubbard is currently the director of the Office of Wildland Fire Coordination at the Department of the Interior (DOI). Prior to his position with DOI, Hubbard was Colorado's State Forester from 1984 to 2004. He has also served as president of the National Association of State Foresters.

The Senate confirmed P. Lynn Scarlett on November 18, 2005 as the Deputy Secretary of the Interior Department. Scarlett's nomination has been held for several months, but she has been serving in an "acting" capacity to this point.

For more, visit www.doi.gov/news/05_News_Releases/051121a.htm

ROAD SAFETY

The Roadway Safety Foundation and the Federal Highway Administration recognized the Forest Service for a road safety project implemented after a major outbreak of wildfires in Montana in 2000. This Forest Service project included the development of standard signs to maximize visibility in smoky conditions at ongoing large fires. The agency is implementing the project nationwide and is distributing an installation guide to all wildland fire managers for the upcoming fire season. The Forest Service worked in concert with the Montana Department of Transportation and the Montana Department of Natural Resources, who were also recipients of the award.

For more information on the awards, visit www.roadwaysafety.org.

VEGETATION TREATMENT

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has posted a notice in the Federal Register announcing the programmatic environmental impact statement (EIS) for vegetation treatments on public lands using chemical herbicides and other methods. Written or e-mailed comments may be submitted by January 9, 2006. The BLM will hold public meetings to solicit written and oral comments on the proposed action during the 60-day public review period. Written comments should be sent to: Project Manager, National Vegetation EIS, BLM Nevada State Office, P.O. Box 12000, Reno, NV 89520-0006. Comments may also be sent by e-mail to vegeis@nv.blm.gov.

To see a copy of the Federal Register notice, visit <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20051800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2005/pdf/05-22345.pdf>

IN THE COURTS...

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS

A federal judge in Alaska is expected to rule soon on a request by the Forest Service to stay his rulings that briefly brought agency certain operations to a halt, including forest thinning, prescribed burns and other service projects. The Forest Service asked Judge James Singleton of the U.S. District Court in Anchorage to stay his order that the agency must send out projects that are legally "categorically excluded" under the National Environmental Policy Act for public comment, notice, and appeal. The issue is fully briefed, and Singleton is expected to rule at any time according to representatives from both sides of the case.

Adapted from Greenwire.

OTHER NEWS...

U.N. FOREST REPORT

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), some 13 million hectares of land around the world are deforested each year, mainly due to the conversion of forests to agricultural land, although the net loss of trees has finally slowed thanks mainly to new plantations. This information is derived from the FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment, an exhaustive survey covering 229 countries and territories. Based on the survey results, the FAO claims that the net loss of forest area between 2000-2005 was some 7.3 million hectares a year, compared with 8.9 million hectares in the 1990-2000 period. FAO officials hailed the improvement in the net loss figure, saying China, in particular, had embarked on a major tree-growing program to provide timber for its construction boom and to tackle the process of deforestation. *Adapted from a Reuters story.*

To access the full report, visit

www.fao.org/forestry/foris/webview/forestry2/index.jsp?siteId=101&sitetreeId=16807&languageId=1&geoId=0

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS & OTHER EVENTS

Non-timber Forest Products, January 12, 2006, Carlton, MN. The University of Minnesota Extension Service is offering a course on specialty forest products and how they serve a growing cottage industry. The three-hour course provides opportunities to learn forest management strategies for the sustainable harvest of non-timber forest products. The course costs \$20. For more information, contact Susan Seabury at 888-241-0724, ext. 6466 or sseabury@umn.edu or see www.cnr.umn.edu/cfc/wa/Support/wasess.htm.

Energy for a Sustainable and Secure Future, January 26-27, 2006, Washington, DC. The National Council for Science and the Environment's 6th National Conference on Science, Policy and the Environment: Energy for a Sustainable and Secure Future will take place January 26-27, 2006 at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, DC. The conference will serve as a forum for over 800 leaders in environmental science and engineering, policy and government, corporations and civil society, and education to identify opportunities for science and technology to improve the decisions that define our energy future. It will also be an opportunity for networking across traditional boundaries. Visit www.ncseonline.org to register and get program updates, details on the exhibition, poster session, and sponsorship opportunities, and information on travel and lodging.

RESOURCES

The following is a list of items—Web sites, books, reports, etc.—that have come across our desks over the past month and that we thought you might find useful or interesting. Have a look!

WEB SITES

- The mission of the **National Commission on Science for Sustainable Forestry** is to improve the scientific basis for the design, conduct and evaluation of sustainable forest practices in the United States. NCSSF sponsors work of the highest technical quality that is relevant to the urgent needs of forest managers, practitioners and policymakers. The organization's Web site features information on current research and upcoming conferences and events. Visit the site at www.ncseonline.org/NCSSF/.
- **The National Learning Center for Private Forest and Range Landowners** is a "virtual natural resource education center" providing interactive online instruction for private forest and range landowners. With the growth of technology and the increasing use of the Internet for educational purposes, this gateway provides an opportunity for natural resource education. Visit this site at www.forestandrange.org/.
- The new **Tree Care Industry Safety and Health Topics page** has been developed as a product of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Alliance with the Tree Care Industry Association. The webpage provides information on recognizing and addressing hazards in the tree care industry and guidance on how to develop a comprehensive safety and health program. It also includes links to OSHA standards, compliance directives, interpretations of OSHA standards, and national consensus standards related to the tree care industry. Visit this site at www.osha.gov/SLTC/treecare/index.html

CASE STUDY

MetaFore, a Portland, OR-based non-profit, has written a **case study of Spicers Paper**, a forest products company that has achieved positive environmental and financial outcomes through business innovation. By investing in technology to maximize paper production efficiency, Spicers Paper considers environmental business practice a competitive advantage. To download the full text of the case study, visit www.metafore.org/downloads/case_study_spicers.pdf

BOOK

A new book titled, ***Ecology and Management of a Forested Landscape*** (Island Press) presents information on the Savannah River Site, a 310-square-mile tract of land in the coastal plain of South Carolina. Various writers contributed thirty-two chapters that describe the site's history, land management, physical environment, plant and animal communities, endangered species, and game species. The book serves as a detailed case study in long-term land management, and provides scientists with an in-depth analysis of the natural history and physical and biological characteristics of a southeastern forested landscape. To learn more about the book, visit www.islandpress.org/books/detail.html/SKU/1-59726-010-X

GUIDE

The Rainforest Alliance's SmartWood program has published a manual titled, **"A SmartGuide to Paper & Print Resources,"** which provides information on certified paper

and printed material, as well as a list of sources for products that SmartWood has certified according to the standards of the Forest Stewardship Council. To download the guide, visit www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/forestry/pdf/smartguide.pdf

NEWSLETTERS/UPDATES

To sign up for American Forests' 'Policy News and Updates' or 'Farm Bill Listserve', please e-mail Laura Schweitzer at lschweitzer@amfor.org.

GENERAL RESOURCES

American Forests. Visit their website at www.americanforests.org
Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress. Visit their website at www.communitiescommittee.org

National Network of Forest Practitioners. Visit their website at www.nnfp.org

Pinchot Institute for Conservation. Visit their website at www.pinchot.org

The National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region, offers numerous community forestry-related documents available for free downloading. Check it out at www.ncfcnfr.net

CONTACT INFORMATION

To subscribe (or unsubscribe) to *Forest Community News: The National Perspective*, please email Paige McClanahan (pmcclanahan@pinchot.org).

Questions and suggestions should be emailed to Paige McClanahan and/or Laura Schweitzer at American Forests (lschweitzer@amfor.org).

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