

FOREST COMMUNITY NEWS: THE NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

No. 10

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FROM THE EDITORS

Washington, DC is awash in color as spring gradually replaces winter. The sounds of birds chirping, lawn mowers mowing, and, of course, tormented allergy sufferers sneezing fill the air. It is with this beautiful backdrop that we dive headlong into a spring also filled with intense activity within the agencies and on the Hill. Activity level is high as those working in the federal arena dash to address an array of issues ranging from biomass utilization to post-disaster restoration to funding allocations for 2007. Read on for the scoop.

FROM CAPITOL HILL

APPROPRIATIONS

On May 4, the House Interior Appropriations subcommittee approved by voice vote a \$25.9 billion Interior-Environment appropriations bill for fiscal year 2007. The funding level is \$145 million below current spending but \$418 million more than President Bush requested. Mark-up by the full Appropriations Committee is scheduled for May 10.

On May 3, the House Agriculture Appropriations subcommittee approved by voice vote a draft bill for fiscal year 2007 agriculture appropriations that would cut conservation programs but still provide more than President Bush requested. Mark-up by the full Appropriations Committee is scheduled for May 9.

BIOMASS

On April 27, the House Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health held a hearing on a report entitled "Woody Biomass Users' Experience Provide Insights for Ongoing Government Efforts to Promote its Use," which was released by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) the same day. The subcommittee heard from Robin Nazzaro of the GAO, other agency officials, and several private sector and nonprofit representatives. Two witnesses of note were Ryan Temple, Director of the Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities Partnership at Sustainable Northwest and Wade Moseby, Senior Vice President of Collins Pine Company.

FARM BILL

Potential Farm Bill Extension

Senators Jim Talent (R-MO) and Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) have introduced legislation that would extend the 2002 farm bill until the World Trade Organization (WTO) completes negotiations on a new trade agreement. The legislation, S.2696, would extend all of the authorizations of appropriations and direct spending programs under the Farm Security and

Rural Investment Act of 2002 until after implementing legislation for the Doha Development Round of WTO negotiations is enacted into law. The bill has been referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. For more information, please visit <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

Hearings

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

- May 10, 2006, Washington, DC to review the implementation of the sugar program.

GATEWAY COMMUNITIES COOPERATION ACT

The Public Lands and Forests Subcommittee of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will hold a hearing on May 10 to receive testimony on several bills including H.R. 585, a bill to require Federal land managers to support, communicate, coordinate, and cooperate with designated gateway communities; to improve the ability of gateway communities to participate in Federal land management planning conducted by the USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior; to respond to the impacts of public use of the Federal lands administered by these agencies; and for other purposes. For more information, please visit <http://thomas.loc.gov> or <http://energy.senate.gov>.

SALT CEDAR AND RUSSIAN OLIVE CONTROL DEMONSTRATION ACT

On May 2, the House passed legislation by voice vote to establish a demonstration program to assess potential water savings through control of salt cedar and Russian olive trees. By some estimates, a mature salt cedar — or tamarisk — can consume up to 200 gallons of water per day. Over a growing season, that means each acre of the non-native trees can consume seven acre-feet of water, a significant loss in the arid West. Russian olive is a small, usually thorny shrub or small tree that can grow to 30 feet in height, take root in very poor soil and, according to the National Park Service, “out-compete native vegetation, interfere with natural plant succession and nutrient cycling, and tax water reserves.” HR 2720 would direct the USDA Forest Service and Interior Department to study the extent of the spread of tamarisk and Russian olive trees in the 17 Western states served by the Bureau of Reclamation. The agencies would assess ways to control the trees, whether it would be possible to reduce their water consumption, and what would be involved in removing the trees. For more information, please visit <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

WATERSHED RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT AGREEMENT ACT

The Public Lands and Forests Subcommittee of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will hold a hearing on May 10 to receive testimony on several bills including S. 2003, a bill to make permanent the authorization for watershed restoration and enhancement agreements. For more information, please visit <http://thomas.loc.gov> or <http://energy.senate.gov>.

FROM THE ADMINISTRATION

FARM BILL

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has released summaries of the public comments that the agency received during its Farm Bill Forum listening tour. The summaries will serve as a basis for USDA policy review and analysis in preparation for the 2007 farm bill.

To read the summaries, visit

www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/s.7.0.A/7.0.1OB?contentidonly=true&contentid=2006/03/0106.xml.

CONSERVATION RESERVE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued a statement reminding agricultural producers and landowners that general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) runs from March 27 to April 14. CRP participants voluntarily enroll fragile cropland through long-term contracts of 10 to 15 years. In exchange for planting grasses, trees and other vegetation on the enrolled land, participants receive annual rental payments and a payment of up to 50 percent of the cost of establishing conservation covers. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will evaluate eligible CRP offers with the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI), a ranking of the land's contribution to improving soil retention, water quality, wildlife habitat, and air quality.

More information is available at local FSA offices and on FSA's Web site:

www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crpinfo.htm

EMERGENCY CONSERVATION

The USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will allocate close to \$20.1 million in Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) funding to 26 states that have been affected by natural disasters. For a producer's land to be eligible, the disaster must create new conservation problems that, if left untreated, would impair or endanger the land and affect its productive capacity. Conservation problems that existed before the applicable disasters are not eligible for ECP assistance.

For more information on ECP and other disaster assistance programs, visit

<http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>.

RECREATION RESIDENCES

The USDA Forest Service announced new regulations for managing the 14,500 recreation residences in National Forests. Recreation residences are privately owned, limited-use cabins. The new regulations address the annual fee paid by recreation residence owners, the timeframe and process for conducting appraisals, and the definition of a recreation residence lot. Permit holders will continue to pay a yearly fee of five percent of the appraised market value of a typical lot. Appraisals will now be conducted every 10 years rather than every 20 years.

For more information, visit www.fs.fed.us/news/2006/releases/03/recreation-residences.shtml.

FOREST SERVICE LEADERSHIP

The USDA Forest Service has announced that Jim Bedwell will serve as the agency's new national director of recreation and heritage resources. Bedwell, a 27-year veteran of the Forest Service, currently serves as forest supervisor on the Arapaho and Roosevelt national forests and Pawnee National Grassland in northern Colorado.

The Forest Service also announced that Christopher Brown will be the new national director of the agency's wilderness and wild and scenic rivers program. Brown currently serves as the acting assistant director of recreation and conservation for the National Park Service.

For more information on Jim Bedwell's appointment, visit www.fs.fed.us/news/2006/releases/05/recreation.shtml

For more information on Christopher Brown's appointment, visit www.fs.fed.us/news/2006/releases/05/wilderness.shtml

HAZARDOUS FUELS

The U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have released a new joint strategy detailing how the agencies plan to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires on public forests, woodlands, and rangelands. The 60-page report describes practices that have worked in the past and establishes a framework for future priority setting, accountability, and partnership to reduce the fuel buildup that leads to fires. The strategy calls for first priority to be given to the wildland urban interface areas where there is the greatest threat to human life and property. Outside these areas, priority is given to reducing fuels in areas where dense, over-grown vegetation is most likely to support catastrophic fires, especially where important watersheds or wildlife habitat is at risk. The strategy also provides details of the areas at risk, local priority setting, fire regimes and classes, and how federal and local agencies can integrate their fuels plans in the wildland interface areas.

For more information, visit www.usda.gov/wps/portal/lut/p/s.7.0.A/7.0.1OB?contentidonly=true&contentid=2006/04/0148.xml.

To read the report, visit www.fireplan.gov.

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP

President Bush announced his intention to nominate Dirk Kempthorne, the current governor of Idaho, to serve as Secretary of the Interior following the resignation of the current Secretary, Gale Norton. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee is expected to hold a preliminary vote on Kempthorne's nomination next week.

For more information, visit www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/03/20060316-11.html.

BLM ADVISORY PANEL

On March 23, outgoing Interior Department Secretary Gale Norton announced the creation of the Sporting Conservation Council. The 12-member council will advise the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service on habitat restoration and protection; the impact of energy development on wildlife resources; forest and rangeland health; hunting access on federal lands; and other resource conservation issues.

For more information, visit www.doi.gov/news/06_News_Releases/060323b.htm.

PUBLIC LANDS: RIGHT-OF-WAY

Interior Department Secretary Gale Norton announced new guidelines that could open roads that cross federal lands to rights-of-way claims by state and county governments. The new guidelines implement the principles outlined in the 2005 Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance v. Bureau of Land Management (SUWA v. BLM) decision by the United States Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit.

To read a Department of the Interior press release about the new guidelines, visit www.doi.gov/news/06_News_Releases/060322a.htm

OTHER NEWS

LAND SALES

International Paper, The Nature Conservancy, and The Conservation Fund have reached an agreement to protect 218,000 acres of forestlands across 10 states in the single largest private land conservation sale in the history of the South. International Paper will receive approximately \$300 million for the land at closing, which is expected to occur in the next several months. The majority of the land sold will remain working forests. Under the terms of the agreement, timber will be sustainably harvested from some tracts and a set amount of timber volume will be supplied to International Paper for local production. Sensitive areas will continue to be set aside from harvesting activities.

In a similar deal, International Paper has agreed to sell 69,000 acres of Wisconsin forestland to The Nature Conservancy. Proceeds from the sale are expected to total approximately \$83 million.

In New York State, International Paper signed an agreement with The Lyme Timber Company for the sale of approximately 275,000 acres of forestland in New York's Adirondack Park for approximately \$137 million. Under the terms of the agreement, Lyme Timber will continue to provide wood fiber to International Paper's Ticonderoga, N.Y., paper mill for 20 years. In conjunction with the sale agreement, Lyme Timber will assume a 257,000-acre conservation easement agreement IP negotiated with the State of New York and The Conservation Fund in 2004.

The three land sales are part of International Paper's plan to focus on uncoated papers and industrial and consumer packaging globally.

To view a map of the parcels of land included in the sale in the South, visit www.nature.org/pressroom/ip/files/map_southernforests.pdf.

FIRE

Federal land managers expect a very active wildfire season across large swaths of the Southwest. Wildfire potential is "significantly higher than normal" in much of the region, which includes Southern California, Arizona and New Mexico. Oklahoma, Texas and central Alaska are also expected to see more fires this year. The fire suppression budget is \$690 million this year, but the Forest Service and Interior Department also have a significant fire suppression emergency funds that can be carried over from last year. Those funds could total between \$400 million and \$500 million, according to the Forest Service.

To view a map of fire potential from the National Interagency Fire Center, visit www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/outlooks/g_seasonal-outlook.pdf.

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, & OTHER EVENTS

Collaborative Forest Management, May 18-19, 2006, Phoenix, AZ. This workshop will focus on collaboration in project planning and landscape-scale planning. Among other things, participants will learn about collaboration in the context of NEPA, FACA, and the forest planning process. The workshop is being presented by the Ecological Restoration Institute, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, the Society of American Foresters Southwest Community Forestry Caucus, The Nature Conservancy, and the USDA Forest Service. For more information, contact Karen Gilbreath at (928) 523-7925 or karen.gilbreath@nau.edu or visit www.forestrycenter.org/calendar.cfm?refid=78747.

Heartwood Forest Council, May 26-29, 2006, Ripley WV. Every Memorial Day weekend for the past 16 years, Heartwood has invited those who care about the health and well being of our nation's forests to gather together to learn, organize, and make plans. The Forest Council is an energizing gathering in a beautiful setting, featuring inspiring speakers, workshops, field trips, and strategy sessions. For more information, contact Andy Mahler at (812) 723-2430 or andy@blueriver.net or see <http://heartwood.org/fc06.html>.

Landowner Conference, June 2-4, 2006, Hocking Hills, OH. Farmers, foresters and community members will learn about creating income opportunities on the land at Rural Action's eighth annual Landowners Conference. Highlights of the conference sessions include: introduction to growing ginseng; basics of tax incentives; harvesting your own timber; developing a sustainable small business; leasing your land; and invasive plant control options. For more information, contact Cynthia Brunty at 740-767-4938 or cynthiab@ruralaction.org

The Community Development Society 38th Annual International Conference “Communities That Click: Individuals, Families, and Organizations Working Together, June 25-28, 2006, St. Louis, Missouri. This conference focuses on the vision of community and quality of life and the important role of practitioners as facilitators and enablers of that vision. For more information, please visit www.comm-dev.org.

Stewardship Contracting on Federal Forest Lands in the Northern Rockies, June 22-23, 2006, Missoula, MT. This conference will focus on increasing the capacity of participants to engage in local stewardship end result contracting projects. There will be discussion of how to increase dialogue and collaboration among environmental activists, agency personnel, tribes, and practitioners around contracting and of how to increase the use of stewardship authorities as tools to accomplish broad scale restoration. Participants will also visit a stewardship project to discuss lessons learned, successes, and challenges. For more information, please contact Carol Daly of the Flathead Economic Policy Center, cdaly1@centurytel.net, 406-892-8155 or Jenna Gibson of National Forest Restoration Collaborative, American Lands Alliance, jgibson@americanlands.org, 202-547-0188.

Advances in Threat Assessment and their Application to Forest and Rangeland Management, July 18-20, 2006, Boulder, CO. This conference is designed to encourage meaningful exchange among those developing new knowledge and tools for threat assessment and those responsible for managing forests and rangelands. Scientists and educators, policymakers, property owners, land managers, and students are invited to attend. For more information, contact John Pye at (919) 549-4013 or jpye@fs.fed.us or see www.forestencyclopedia.net/encyclopedia/threats.

Who Will Own the Forest?, September 11 – 13, 2006, Portland, OR. Forestry companies are selling their timberland throughout the United States and the world in response to increasing pressure for shareholder return, competition in the global market place, and consolidation in the industry. These trends have huge ramifications for the forest products industry, biodiversity, forest integrity, and forest-dependent communities. These issues will be explored this year at the “Who Will Own the Forest?” summit series this year at the World Forestry Center in Portland, Oregon. Forest industry analysts, timber investment organizations, forestry leaders, land management communities, and conservation groups are expected to attend. For more information, please visit <http://wfi.worldforestry.org/wwotf3/>

PlaceMatters, October 19 – 21, 2006, Denver, CO. PlaceMatters is a living laboratory where a national network of creative practitioners comes together to learn, share, inspire, and innovate, collectively elevating the art and science of planning for vibrant and sustainable communities. Here you’ll find up-to-date information on our annual conference and connect to a growing community of people, resources and online tools for learning and collaboration. For more information, please visit <http://www.placematters.org/>

The Columbia Basin 2006: a Cultural Environment and an Environmental Culture, October 19-22, 2006, Castlegar, British Columbia. This conference will be of interest to a wide range of individuals who are concerned about the Columbia River basin, its environment, arts, culture and heritage. The conference will involve basin-wide participants and will aim to expand public awareness and build partnerships among art, culture and

heritage organizations while drawing on information from scientists, academics and technical experts on the state of water, fisheries and environmental issues in the Columbia River basin. Senator Elaine McCoy will be the keynote environmental speaker. For more information, contact Margaret Birch at mbirch@birchlandheights.com or at (250) 365-0575.

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!

REPORTS

Dovetail Partners has written a report that provides an introduction to easements and their potential benefits. The report, which is titled **“Conservation Easements to Protect Working Forests,”** also examines some of the debate around the use of easements as a conservation tool for working forests. To download the full text of the report, visit www.dovetailinc.org/documents/DovetailEasements0206_000.pdf.

Dovetail Partners has published a report titled **“Biomass Energy: From Farms to Forests an Emerging Opportunity for Rural America.”** The report explores the ways in which the increasing importance of biomass as a source of energy presents opportunities for both the U.S. farm economy and the forestry and wood products sector. The report is available at www.dovetailinc.org/documents/DovetailBioenergy0306b.pdf.

BOOKS

Toward Forest Sustainability, a book recently published by Island Press, contains practical essays by some of the world's leading forests ecologists and managers from the United States, Canada, Finland, Sweden, Australia, and New Zealand. The authors describe the changes that have taken place in forest management, highlighting what worked, what didn't, and the lessons that have been learned. The book is available for purchase at www.islandpress.org/books/detail.html/SKU/1-55963-381-6.

William J. Ginn, Director of Forest Conservation at The Nature Conservancy, has written a book titled ***Investing in Nature: Case Studies of Land Conservation in Collaboration with Business***. The book describes new tools—such as conservation investment banking, innovative tax incentives, and emerging markets for nature's goods and services—that have allowed businesses to successfully partner with conservation interests to transform industries and ensure the protection of millions of acres of U.S. forest land. The book is available for purchase at www.amazon.com/gp/product/1597260134/sr=8-1/qid=1143668263/ref=pd_bbs_1/102-7867304-8028916?%5Fencoding=UTF8.

WEB SITES

The Rural Technology Initiative (RTI) was established in January 2000 by a federal grant as a pilot project to accelerate the implementation of new technologies in rural forest resource-based communities. The RTI web site contains tools to help landowners and managers achieve such tasks as building roads, placing culverts, and conducting forest inventories. To access the tools, visit www.ruraltech.org/tools/.

Researchers from the USDA Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Research Station are working on models and tools to assist land managers battling wildfires. To access these tools, visit the www.fia.fs.fed.us/tools-data/tools/.

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.

To sign up for the Pinchot Institute's quarterly publication, *The Pinchot Letter*, send an email request to subscribe@pinchot.org. The document is available both electronically and in hard-copy format.

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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