



Northeastern Area News Notes



December 29, 2008



From the Director's Desk

America abounds with secret recipes. We hear about them in corporate advertising and from the winners of chili cook-offs from St. Paul to Philadelphia and points north and south along the Eastern seaboard. The best secret recipes I know of come down through families, though. Many were passed down to me, as I will pass them down. I'm sure it has been this way for many of you.



We've worked hard in recent years on a recipe for success with the Area. Each year we add a new ingredient or two that gets us closer to where we need to be. Looking back at 2008, more than one change was made that brought us closer to the now not-so-secret recipe.

The establishment of the reorganized Business Operations Group was perhaps the biggest change going into 2008. The composition includes our grants and agreements group, and teams with critical functions in public affairs, creative services, budget, and knowledge management. The reorganization brought our professionals from multiple disciplines together to work in an integrated fashion on the top priorities impacting all our 20 States.

The reorganization positioned us to better serve NA's and our partners' needs, and to support a significant new expectation defined by Congress in the 2008 Farm Bill. The new expectation was that state assessments must be performed by partners in order for them to receive Farm Bill program support. The new structure of the Business Operations group lets us dedicate immediate support to our partners on these state assessments, while BizOps also expanded work or improved processes in GIS, legislative affairs, creative services, information technology, and grants.

A second major ingredient toward this recipe for success in the Area was the initiation of the new effort to expand stewardship delivery. This is a significant undertaking and to ensure my direct engagement, both Mark Buccowich and Mike Huneke are reporting directly to me, for the foreseeable future. Our intention is to rethink and redirect our traditional stewardship program delivery methods. Today, the Area and our partners reach tens-of-thousands of landowners, but there are literally millions of landowners we are not reaching. Through the successful reform of how stewardship services are delivered, we'll reach those landowners too. We will exponentially increase our influence on sustainable forest management, and broaden the support of communities, new partners, and citizens as well.



Toward the end of 2008, I rolled out the seven priorities of our Strategic Business Plan. I let everyone know during our all-hands call in December that the first 20 percent of everyone's time, at a minimum, will be to gain us ground with one or more of the seven items. This is another ingredient for success—having clear priorities and the discipline to pursue them!

If you know me, you know I repeat the things that I'm committed to seeing done. So here repeated, are the seven priorities of the Strategic Business Plan:

- Establish guidance and assistance for state assessment requirements under Redesign.
- Expand delivery of Stewardship programs.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to reduce adverse effects of emerald ash borer, including outreach.
- Establish an urban forest health monitoring effort, including inventory.
- Develop a watershed strategy.
- Advance NA's role in climate change.
- Ensure community wildfire protection plans.

While I've arranged our organizational structure and priorities to deliver the best to our partners, landowners, and the forest, I know NA's success will be built on your abilities, expertise, and professionalism. It is my hope that you willingly lend your talents to these endeavors, so together we will achieve the greater mission of the Area. Let's look forward as one Area to the things we will accomplish! So, when someone asks "what's cooking in NA?" you will have the ready answer of our recipe for success—clear priorities, top-notch people, and folks working together with common purpose! Thank you for all you do, and best wishes for every success in the new year.

— Kathryn P. Maloney
Area Director



Sustainable Operations Tip of the Month

The Art of Composting

Of all the recycling processes in use, composting is the oldest and most natural. Organic materials in nature decompose through the action of microorganisms such as bacteria and fungi as well as insects and earthworms to produce nutrient-rich humus. Without this natural process, planet Earth would be inundated in dead plant material.

According to the EPA, nearly 24 percent of all municipal waste consists of yard trimmings and food waste. Composting is an environmentally responsible alternative to putting organic materials into landfills or burning.



Compost can be made in a simple pile of organic materials, but enclosures made of wood pallets, snow fence, welded wire fence, or cement blocks make containing, aerating, and turning the material easier. Commercial compost drums made of plastic or metal are available, but are more expensive. Regardless of type, be sure to situate the bin in a dry, shady area near a water source. In-depth descriptions of several types of bins, material lists, and how-to instructions can be found at <http://extension.missouri.edu/explore/agguides/hort/G06957.htm>.

Composting works best with a ratio of about 30 parts carbon to one part nitrogen by weight. Carbon sources are usually brown items like dead leaves, pine needles, cardboard, wood chips, small twigs, straw, hay, and sawdust (not from treated wood). Nitrogen sources are usually green materials like grass clippings, garden waste, and weeds as well as chicken, horse, or cow manure, but not dog or cat droppings or used cat litter. Other green ingredients include coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, fruit peelings and cores, eggshells, cardboard towel rolls, cotton and wool rags, leather, and the vegetables in the fridge that started composting without you. Browns are slower to decompose without the addition of the faster decomposing green materials. Wood ashes and ground limestone can be used to balance the acidity of oak leaves and pine needles. Materials to leave out include plastic, metal, glass, large chunks of wood, and treated wood. It is usually recommended to omit bones, fats, meats, and dairy products to prevent attracting skunks, opossum, raccoons, and rodents.

The pile should be built in layers of a few inches of each material. Put in an occasional layer of coarse material so air can penetrate through the pile. Add some water to dry materials. Add a brown layer to the top of the pile to absorb odors. The optimum size is 4 or 5 feet wide and high. Any smaller, and it will lose heat too fast and never heat up enough to kill pathogens and weed seeds. When the pile cools down after the first week or two, it should be turned to mix the material and get fresh air into the pile so the microbes can finish their work. Turning will also help destroy insect larvae and pathogens. What seems like a large pile at first will eventually become a small part of the volume of the original materials. (A pile of grass clippings is about 90 percent water, and a pile of leaves is mostly air.) Depending on size, materials, and moisture, among other things, the conversion of organic material to compost can take up to 2 years, but manual turning can hasten the process considerably (e.g., 3 to 6 months). Commercial products that speed up the decomposition process are also available.



When the composting process is completed, the finished product can be used as a soil amendment or a protective mulch to suppress plant diseases and increase plant vitality and yield. Adding compost to gardens, flowerbeds, and shrubbery improves soil structure and moisture retention and eliminates the need for chemical fertilizers.

Other informational resources:

Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening or just Google *compost*.

<http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserve/rrr/composting/index.htm>

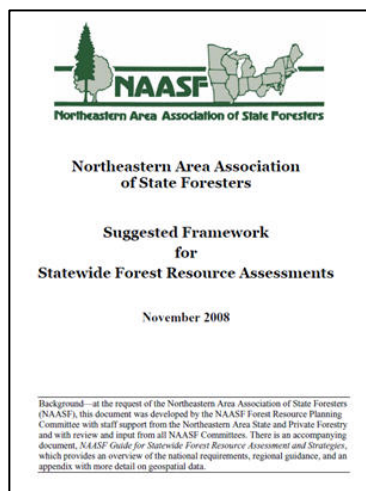
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compost>

<http://www.howtocompost.org/>

<http://www.compostinfo.com/tutorial/>

Newtown Square Headquarters Office

Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies & Upcoming Webinars



The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the Farm Bill) amends the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA), requiring States to develop:

- “A statewide assessment of forest resource conditions” (State Assessment)
- “A long-term statewide forest resource strategy” (State Strategy)

The State Assessments and Strategies are due by June 2010 and required for States to be eligible to receive any funds under the authorities of the CFAA (that includes U.S. Forest Service core funding and Redesign competitive grants given to the States). The State Assessments and Strategies also “shall be deemed sufficient to satisfy all relevant state planning and assessment requirements under this Act.”

The Redesign Implementation Council approved the national requirements for State Assessments and Strategies in October 2008. The national requirements and other information pertinent to S&PF Redesign are located at <http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/redesign/>.

Two regional guidance documents focused primarily on State Assessments were approved by the Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters (NAASF) in late November: (1) *NAASF Guide for Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies* and (2) *NAASF Suggested Framework for State Assessments*. With facilitation and support by **Sherri Wormstead** and **Tom Luther**, these documents were developed by the NAASF Forest Resource Planning Committee, State Assessment and Plan Core Team. They are available on the new NAASF Forest Resource Planning Committee Web site at <http://www.northeasternforests.org/FRPC/>.



A new NAASF and NA State Strategy Team is beginning work to develop regional guidance for the State Strategies. This team is led by Sherri Wormstead and Tom Luther and is made up of State planning committee members, a State representative from each NAASF Committee (Cooperative Forest Management, Fire, Forest Health, State Lands, Urban and Community Forestry, and Utilization), and an NA representative for each program.

Sherri presented a webinar about State Assessments and Strategies for the St. Paul Field Office staff on December 15. This presentation and discussion session, “Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies: What is Required, Regional Guidance, and How to Help,” will be held for other NA offices as follows:

- Morgantown Field Office and WERC staff—January 7, 1-2 p.m. Eastern
- Newtown Square staff—January 21, 10-11 a.m. Eastern
- Durham Field Office staff—February 9, 9-10 a.m. Eastern

The Morgantown and Newtown Square sessions will be held via Webinar, so staff who are not physically located in one of these offices can connect by Webinar and phone if desired (please let Sherri know).

Durham Field Office

Aviation Team Meets with Forest Health Managers to Deliver Digital Aerial Sketchmapping System

On November 13, 2008, the Northeastern Area’s Aviation Team of **Rod Whiteman** and **Bill Frament** met with forest health managers of the Maryland Department of Agriculture and Delaware Department of Agriculture. One of the purposes of this meeting was to deliver two Digital Sketchmapping Systems (DASM) to the State of Maryland.

As part of the visit, Whiteman and Frament demonstrated the hardware and software associated with the DASM and how the system is set up and used to collect aerial survey data and post-process the data. In the afternoon, the demonstrators took the equipment outside, placed it in vehicles, and collected data. During this exercise, they explained how to process the data after collection to conform to National Forest Health Monitoring Program standards. Both Maryland and Delaware personnel indicated that the DASM would fit very well into their program and make collecting aerial survey data much easier.

The presentations and field exercise, which included an overview and familiarization of the equipment that Bill provided, were very well received. This meeting represented a fine example of cooperation, communication, and integration of program efforts between the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Delaware Department of Agriculture, and the Northeastern Area. The participants appreciated the time and effort of the Aviation Team.



Morgantown Field Office

Plant Pathologist Writes Article on Bacterial Leaf Scorch for Buckeye Magazine

Morgantown Plant Pathologist **Al Iskra** has recently written an article on bacterial leaf scorch (BLS) for the monthly magazine *The Buckeye*. The article will appear in the January 2009 issue. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources will use this article as an educational tool when they start their BLS statewide survey in 2009.

The Northeastern Area is supporting statewide surveys for BLS. Many States in the North East as well as two diagnostic laboratories are cooperating in this multiyear survey that will delineate the occurrence of BLS throughout the States. BLS occurs in many tree species, including oaks, elms, maples, American sycamore, flowering dogwood, and white mulberry. Oaks in the red oak group, such as northern red and pin oak, are mostly affected.

Iskra has studied and surveyed BLS for many years. He has observed the lethal decline of hundreds of urban trees in New Jersey. In 2005, Iskra found that the disease occurred prevalently in New Jersey woodlands. Until that time BLS was considered to be solely an urban or landscape disease. Since then Iskra has determined that the disease is present in both New Jersey and Delaware forests. He is presently working with the New Jersey Forest Service on a silvicultural treatment project to determine if using a thinning harvesting technique within a forest environment can diminish BLS. He is also working with the Delaware Forest Service to determine the intensity and rate of BLS spread within a Delaware State forest.

Environmental Education Program Presented at Cheat Lake Elementary School

Dan Snider and **Rick Turcotte** gave a presentation about arthropods at the Cheat Lake Elementary School. Third graders spent about an hour discussing arthropod biology and the ecological role of insects and spiders, and their close relatives in the environment. Live insects, spiders, and other organisms, along with a video camera and monitor, were used to provide an up close look at the interesting and strange world of arthropods. The presentation was well received by the students and staff, and a large number of them asked questions about arthropods and their importance in the environment.



St. Paul Field Office

Workshop Blends Diversity and Culture with Natural Resources Programs

The Northeastern Area Civil Rights Committee is sponsoring “Dialogue on Diversity” workshops for Northeastern Area staff to build awareness and understanding of diversity and culture as well as develop actions to increase program participation by diverse audiences. These workshops are intended to develop a tool that natural resources professionals can use to increase the diversity of audiences engaged in natural resources activities. The program began with a vision of helping staff and partners of the U.S. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program provide more effective outreach. We have found that it has relevance to ALL natural resources programs offered by the Forest Service. The Northeastern Area’s **Lisa Burban** and Dr. Maureen McDonough from Michigan State University have hosted workshops in Durham, NH, and St. Paul, MN, and are planning workshops in each of the Field Offices and Newtown Square.

Watershed Planning: From the Forest to the Faucet

Teri Heyer, St. Paul Field Office watershed planner, hosted a Webinar about the “From the Forest to the Faucet” project for The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) agricultural watersheds learning group. The Nature Conservancy is interested in overlaying the results from this analysis with their Upper Mississippi River Basin conservation priorities for freshwater biodiversity in order to target TNC projects. TNC is particularly interested in the Meramec watershed west of St. Louis, MO. This area is receiving attention by many organizations, including the Northeastern Area and the Missouri Department of Conservation, due to its high level of biodiversity and its proximity to a major metropolitan area.

Beetles, Bats, and Beyond: Illinois Team Encourages Urban Wood Use

Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry is among a long list of partners on the Illinois Emerald Ash Borer Wood Utilization Team. The team is seeking uses for ash trees felled by the emerald ash borer, and helps assess urban timber potential and ways to safely fell trees as marketable saw logs. The team was funded in 2007 by the Wood Education and Resource Center of the U.S. Forest Service and consists of 13 Federal, State, and industry leaders who support a wider network of over 100 stakeholders—urban foresters, wood processors, municipalities and other landowners, green builders, economic development organizations, and consumers committed to finding productive uses for Illinois urban wood.

Minnesota Arboriculturalists Present Award of Merit to Lisa Burban

Lisa Burban, Forest Resources Group Leader in the St. Paul Field Office, was recently honored with the Minnesota Society of Arboriculture 2008 Award of Merit. This award recognizes a single major contribution to the field of arboriculture or urban forestry. Lisa was recognized for her dedication and leadership in the field of community forestry on the national, regional, and State levels.

Don Mueller of the Minnesota Society of Arboriculture presents the Society’s Award of Merit to NA’s Lisa Burban.



Chicago Youth Experience Potential Careers in Conservation

The Chicago, IL, Cook County Friends of the Forest Preserves' Restoration and Prescribed Fire Internship Program was back this fall and it was bigger and better than ever. This year the program offered seven paid internships that provided training and experience to encourage members of minority communities to pursue careers in conservation. The program includes environmental education classes, prescribed fire training, and a team-building trip to New Hampshire in partnership with the Student Conservation Association. Throughout the 12-week program, the interns contributed more than 2,000 hours of service to the Cook County Forest Preserve District removing invasive plant species, restoring badly eroded trails, and conducting several prescribed burns. The program was developed jointly by NA Natural Resources Specialist **Tom Dilley** and Renee Thakali, Ecosystem Restoration Team Leader from the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Additional program partners include the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois Conservation Foundation, Student Conservation Association, and Chicago Wilderness Alliance.



Left photo: Tandy Garvin and Ricardo Contreras work on a prescribed fire.

Right photo: Tandy Garvin and Samuel Vergara put out flames along the firebreak.

Urban Conservationists Meet to Preserve Chicago's Natural Spaces

The sixth biennial Chicago Wilderness Congress was held November 13 and was hosted by the University of Illinois at Chicago's Institute for Environmental Science and Policy. Chicago Wilderness is an alliance of organizations that champions biodiversity and its contribution to the quality of life in the urban, suburban, and rural areas of the Chicago metropolitan region. Northeastern Area Natural Resources Specialist **Tom Dilley** co-chaired the Congress' planning committee with Johanna Garsenstein from the Land Trust Alliance. **Lisa Burban**, Forest Resources Group Leader in the St. Paul Field Office, moderated sessions on invasive species, urban forestry, and native plantings. Forest Service attendees included **Phillip Rodbell**, NA Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager; and Renee Thakali, Logan Lee, and Mike Rizzo from the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

Workshop Blends Diversity and Culture with Natural Resources Programs

The Northeastern Area Civil Rights Committee is sponsoring "Dialogue on Diversity" workshops for Northeastern Area staff in all field locations, Grey Towers, and Newtown Square. The goals of the workshops are to build awareness and understanding of diversity and culture as well as develop actions to increase program participation by diverse audiences. The workshop covers topics such as why outreach is important and critical to program effectiveness; an overview and background on the value of diversity; developing a sense of personal cultural awareness; and understanding culture, particularly that of the Forest Service, and how this culture can positively or negatively impact our ability to work with diverse groups.



EDITOR'S NOTES

DEADLINE!