



NWTF promotes Operation Oak

Trees are an integral part of good wildlife habitat and a must for preventing soil erosion and maintaining good water quality. The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) is offering free tree seedlings to private landowners through a program called Operation Oak.

Operation Oak is offered this year in the following states: Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, South Carolina and Virginia. Each state will receive 5,000-10,000 tree seedlings that will be available to landowners free of charge, if they are or become NWTF members.

These native tree seedlings are grown under a specialized nursery protocol at the Flint River Nursery in Georgia. The result is a large, vigorous seedling with high survivability, high growth potential and the potential to produce mast in about 10 years. The roots on these seedlings are very large and will require a hand-held or tractor mounted auger for planting. Each state will receive regionally adapted seedlings.

Participants are also required to pick-up

their seedlings from a centralized location in the state and there is a 100 tree order minimum. Pick-up locations and dates will be finalized later, and trees will be available in February or March 2008. Applications will be reviewed and seedlings will be provided to as many interested landowners as possible.

If you or your conservation district is interested in participating in Operation Oak this year, contact Kay Morris at (803) 637-3106 for your seedling application. Seedling applications must be received on or before January 1, 2008. The National Wild Turkey Federation Web site is <http://www.nwtf.org>.



Flexible energy ... cont. from page 1

builders from making on-the-spot decisions. Part of the reason, says Bihn, is that natural gas is currently affordable in Colorado, and difficult to justify using biomass. In the future, however, increasing fuel costs or disasters like Hurricane Katrina can affect those decisions and builders need to keep that in mind.

"If the price of natural gas went to the post-Katrina levels, builders would be making different decisions tomorrow from the ones they make today," he says.

"We're trying to get people to move away from saying yes or no," says Bihn "to saying

yes now or yes later."

Other important steps in Colorado have encouraged Bihn that the desire is there to make a switch. Eagle County has committed to ensuring that all new public buildings include biomass-friendly designs.

In the future, Bihn says, he'd like to secure more funding to build a full Web tool kit where prospective builders can evaluate design options.

To learn more about Flexible Energy Communities, visit <http://www.fleci.org> or email Dan Bihn at dan_bihn@bihnsystems.com.

Conservation Calendar

- **Nov. 14** – Firewise Chat Session for state and tribal liaisons concerned with the Firewise Communities/USA recognition program as an end-of-year wrap-up. Information at <http://www.firewise.org/events/nov07-1.htm>
- **Nov. 14-16** – Partners in Community Forestry National Conference, Baltimore, MD. Visit the conference website at <http://www.arborday.org/shopping/conferences/brochures/pcf/2007/index.cfm>
- **Nov. 15-16** – Assessing Wildfire Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone Training Workshop, Tampa, Fla. by National Firewise Communities Program. Information and registration at <http://www.firewise.org/hizworkshop>
- **Jan. 28-31, 2008** – "Fire in the Southwest: Integrating Fire into Management of Changing Ecosystems," Tucson, Ariz. Contact: Erik Berg, Wildland Fire Science Lead, 703/648-4243, or eberg@usgs.gov
- **Feb. 10-13, 2008** – NACD 2008 Annual Meeting, "Conservation Beyond Boundaries," Reno, Nev. Information available at <http://nacdnet.org/events/annualmeeting>

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Planning for a green future

Flexible Energy Communities Initiative encourages biomass-friendly designs



Dan Bihn wants builders to consider the fuel needs of tomorrow. Too often, Bihn says, plans prevent public buildings – such as libraries, office buildings and schools – from making design adjustments to suit future needs or desires.

It's why Bihn helped create the 'Flexible Energy Communities Initiative,' a non-profit whose mission is to help communities prepare for an uncertain energy future by using woody biomass and solar power to heat and cool public spaces.

Why builders should consider woody biomass ...

- **helps the forest**
much of the material used as green fuel is taken from forest thinning efforts, aimed to prevent wildfire
- **it's renewable**
unlike fossil fuels, which are in tight demand, green fuel can be replenished

of renewable energy technology for a specific site based on location, size, budget, community values and other factors

- **Energy Road Maps** – charting the pros and cons economically, aesthetically and socially of renewable energy technology for both present and future scenarios
- **Community Forums** – hosting forums in communities to expose decision makers to existing technology and other resources

"We like to call it 'design assistance,' and we like to put the word 'free' in front of it most of the time," Bihn says.

The group recently published a book, entitled "Where Wood Works: Strategies for Heating with Woody Biomass."

The services the Initiative provides include:

- **Technical Assistance** – meeting with designers and decision makers to analyze the feasibility

- **Seed Funding** – selecting several communities for a small matching seed grant to get their project underway
- Bihn says builders need to ask important questions that may have no bearing today. For example, is there road access where a truck could deposit material? Could a generator replace a furnace in its current location?

"The same people who pay to build it are the people who pay to operate it," he says. "If you make a decision based on today's economics, we suspect it's probably not going to be the same decision at some point down the road."

The project began when Bihn tackled a U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management funded project with Carla Harper in Montezuma, Colo., to promote woody biomass use. After looking at several plans, says Bihn, "we felt it was difficult to tell builders to put biomass in today."

The cost of converting to biomass heat can sway

See 'Flexible Energy' on Page 4



Dan Bihn believes future fuel needs and desires should be considered when designing a building plan.

Next Month

A forward-thinking district has built a unique guidebook for landowners to use





Morgan makes use of firebreaks

By Myra Badger

Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation District and NRCS Field Office

There is an almost audible sigh of relief coming from the local vegetation when the bottom falls out of an afternoon thunder-shower. These showers give a few moments of relief from summer heat to plants, people and wildlife, but they also bring dangerous lightening. Lightening and dry vegetation make a bad combination. Although people are the number one cause of wild fires, lightening can be a likely culprit especially in an area where vegetation struggles for water.

The Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation District in Alabama has the responsibility of a 647 wetland property in a drought stricken area of the state. The District, in partnership with NRCS and the Morgan County Commission, is taking precautions concerning fire prevention on the Flint Creek Wetland Mitigation Bank property. Brad Bole, Flint Creek Watershed Coordinator; Foy Kirkland, NRCS District Conservationist; and Ken Livingston, District Two Commissioner, have coordinated efforts to create firebreaks on the wetland property. "These firebreaks are being installed so that if a fire breaks out in one section of the wetland it can be slowed and stopped before it burns all of the wetland," states Brad. These firebreaks will also protect homes and businesses surrounding the wetlands. The installation of these firebreaks is part of the master development plan for the wetland property.

The Flint Creek Wetlands Mitigation Bank was initiated by Robinsong Ecological Resources in 1998. It was the first privately-owned mitigation bank in the state of Alabama. Since inception, it has sold its "credits" (acres of wetlands) to airports, municipalities and private industry whose growth imperiled wetlands within the watershed. Now that all acreage credits are sold, the wetlands bank has become a wetland preserve that will be protected in perpetuity by the Morgan County Commission and the Flint Creek Watershed Conservancy District.

Activities scheduled for future development include the first phase of educational trails and construction of an observation deck. This will provide area students and teachers access to the wetland area where they can enjoy the wildlife and plant life while learning about the importance of conservation.

For more information about Alabama's Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation District and its use of firebreaks, contact Myra Badger at 256/773-6543 ext 103 or email her at Myra.Badger@al.nacdn.net.

(Below) Ken Livingston, District Two Commissioner, and Foy Kirkland, District Conservationist, discuss the success of the mowing done by the District Two Shop.



Agencies come together on Healthy Forests and Rangelands Web site

Late this summer, Healthy Forests and Rangelands

(<http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov>), an inter-agency Web site addressing a host of forest-related issues, was launched. The site is a collaboration of the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Defense, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the National Park Service.

The site's goal is to provide a comprehensive vehicle to disseminate information about the common obstacles each agency faces. Healthy Forests and Rangelands has a wealth of success stories on the site, aimed to showcase how grant-funded projects have made a difference. "We believe the site can help get the word out on topics such as woody biomass utilization which helps rural communities that rely on timber from the forest," said Ed Gee, the national woody biomass utilization team leader and national partnership coordinator of forest management for the U.S. Forest Service.

The site also offers valuable information on the National Fire Plan, Healthy Forests Initiative and other areas of agency overlap.

Gee said the site is the "collective energy, wisdom and thought process of all the different departments."

"We felt it was better for us to work together on one site instead of five sites," he said.

According to Gee, it took the group about a year and a half to organize a charter and find common ground on which topics would be addressed. "It's really nice to see that much collaboration," he said. "We can accomplish a lot more working across all of those boundaries."

Still, Gee considers the site very much a "work in progress" and the group plans to add to its content regularly. The groups plan to meet regularly to keep the site current.

For more information, visit the site at <http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov> or email Ed Gee at eagee@fs.fed.us.



The National Forest Insect and Disease Risk Map

By Frank J. Sapiro and Frank J. Krist
US Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service and its cooperating state agencies have recently completed a national assessment of forest insect and disease risk. This assessment estimates that trees on 58 million acres of the nation's forest land are at risk of mortality from insects and diseases. Most can be attributed to 42 risk agents; including 13 non-native forest pest species already established in the contiguous U.S. and Alaska. To develop this strategic assessment, 188 different insect and disease models were integrated into this one product.

The primary goal of the 2006 risk assessment is to provide a strategic assessment for risk of tree mortality. This work does not predict local insect activity, but relies on a projection of forest conditions to predict the impact on tree mortality when insect outbreaks occur.

The threshold for mapping risk of this version is: the expectation that, without remediation, 25 percent or more of the standing live basal area on trees greater than 1 inch

in diameter will die over the next 15 years due to insects and diseases. This roughly represents a 3 fold increase over "normal" tree mortality.

Although the National Insect and Disease Risk Map (NIDRM) was developed as a national strategic tool to identify large areas of the country most at risk to insects and diseases, it still has utility for local conservation officials. Questions regarding what pest complexes may be significant in and near local conservation districts or what proportion of the total risk in NIDRM is due to established exotic insects or diseases may be useful. NIDRM is built upon a database framework, and various types of queries may be implemented.

The map below depicts major risk agents and how they contribute to risk in various parts of the country.

NIDRM displays the projected risk of mortality at a national scale. It is constructed at a 1-kilometer spatial resolution, and may be updated as new data and/or models become available. This "live" approach will greatly facilitate production of new risk maps, which are currently expected every

five years.

The Forest Health Technology Enterprise Team (FHTET), a unit within State and Private Forestry, USFS, is developing a variety of online access tools so users can explore the NIDRM database. Web enabled Geographic Information System (GIS) will allow users to explore individual pixels on the map and identify major or minor components of insect and disease risk. High resolution printing capability will allow Web site visitors to print customized large plots.

Access to various views of NIDRM and on-line tools as they become available can be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/forest-health/technology/nidrm.shtml> and currently include the 2006 National Composite Insect and Disease Risk Map pictured below, as well as maps showing acres at risk by state; risk by ownerships; at risk from bark beetles; watersheds most at risk; and exotic insect and disease risk.

