
Communities and Forests

The newsletter of the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress

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Summer 2001

Los Angeles: Building community capacity through forestry

by Jennifer Shepherd

L.A. The two letters alone can conjure images of sun-baked strips of concrete, looping highways choked with idling cars, or rows of stucco bungalows lining treeless streets. And of course, Los Angeles is also known for its ability to make dreams into “reality” on the stages and sets of Hollywood. But living and working in this mythical urban jungle are a variety of organizations and individuals who have very real dreams of creating a different kind of city; one that has a thriving human habitat as well as a vital natural habitat.

After the fire

The current era of urban forestry in Los Angeles has its roots in the ashes left from fires that blazed across the city just under a decade ago. In 1992 the city was devastated by the rioting that followed the infamous Rodney King trials. Fifty-three people died in the violence, and over 600 buildings were destroyed by fire. Many lots remain empty—scars of an estimated \$1 billion worth of damage.

In an initial effort to help the city recover from some of the damage, the U.S. Forest Service initiated a jobs program called Opportunity L.A. as well as an urban garden grants program called the Urban Greening Initiative. A host of non-profit organizations joined in the effort to implement projects that included “green” industry job-training

continued on page 6

Feature: Los Angeles forestry.....1

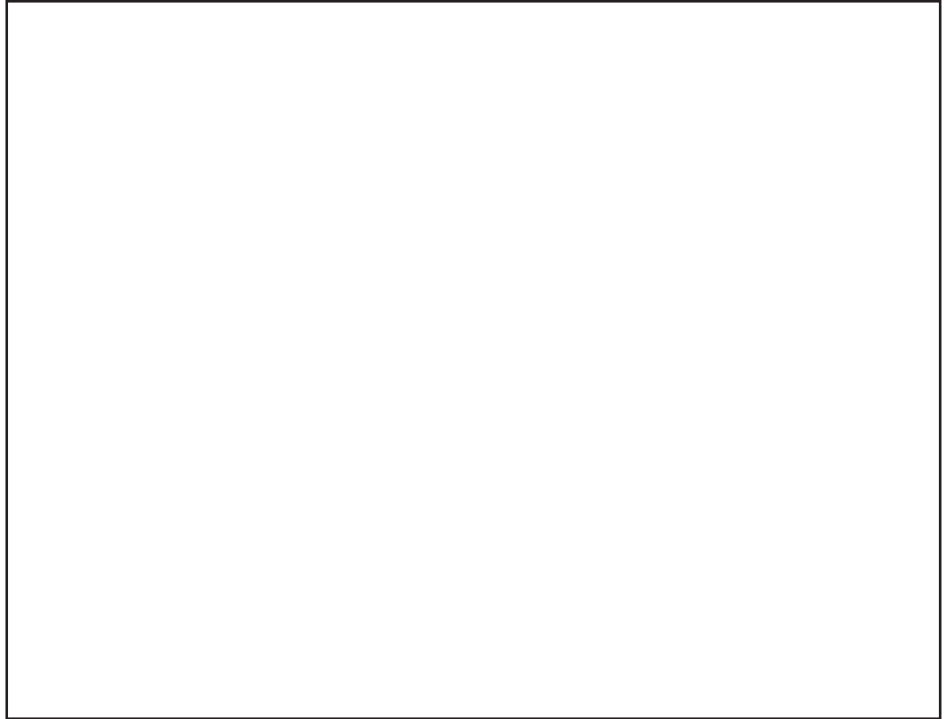
Feature: Forest restoration.....1

The Inside Scoop: Week in Washington...2

Member Profile: Eleanor Torres.....4

News & Views: Research roles..... 5

Resources.....7



Making a living from forest restoration

by Ann Moote

The arid forests of the southwestern United States once produced more timber than any other region in the country, but by the late 1980s, most were considered unhealthy fire hazards. By the early 1990s, changing federal policies and environmental groups’ lawsuits had stopped most timber production in the Southwest, devastating small communities that were economically dependent on the timber industry. Today, many of these same communities are looking to forest restoration to fill the employment void left by the departing timber industry. They are developing innovative, value-added markets for the small-diameter timber and waste products produced by forest thinning. Yet they remain challenged by the uncertain supply of raw materials from national forests and the low wages paid for most restoration work.

Catron County, New Mexico

At its peak, timber harvest in Catron County removed up to 30-million board feet per year and employed 300 people. Most residents now agree that that level of harvest was not sustainable, says Bob Moore, coordinator of the Catron County Citizens Group (CCCG). The CCCG, working with the U.S. Forest Service and environmental group representatives, has mapped the entire county and projected a sustainable level of forest restoration activities, based on forest inventory data. The group thinks the forest can sustain a harvest of 5-7-million board feet of mostly small-diameter timber for 50 to 70 years—without any activity in roadless areas, threatened and endangered species habitat, or other ecologically sensitive areas. Feasibility studies conducted by the CCCG indicate that a value-added wood industry utilizing small-diameter timber can employ 150-200 people.

continued on page 3

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The Inside Scoop

Forest practitioners' Week in Washington

by Maia Enzer

This past April, seventeen forest practitioners from around the country gathered in Washington, D.C., to participate in the third annual "Week in Washington," organized by staff from American Forests, the National Network of Forest Practitioners, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, and the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress. The Week in Washington provides community forestry practitioners with training on how to influence the federal appropriations process and build relationships with key federal policymakers. This year, the Week in Washington included briefings with the Forest Service, the Senate, and the House as well as a roundtable discussion with representatives from national environmental organizations. In addition, Week in Washington participants received advocacy training and testified at three congressional oversight hearings.

Sharing stories

During the course of the week, participants told each other their stories. These included the Maidu Cultural Development Group's work to implement cultural stewardship in northern California; the efforts of underserved minority landowners in Mississippi to receive federal assistance; the Forest Stewardship Project in Methow Valley, Washington, where residents aim to ensure that federal forest managers "take a holistic perspective with a long view;" and Arizona and New Mexico initiatives in which practitioners endeavor to add value to the byproducts of forest restoration.

While the stories are unique, participants were struck by the commonality of the challenges they face. "It was great to meet other people who are working on a parallel track, forging the middle way, and working to implement projects that are good for the environment and create jobs," said Melanie Parker from Swan Valley, Montana. She added, "The week was also an incredible civics lesson. I got to see how my issues get acted upon at the D.C. level—from both a funding and a policy perspective."

Testifying before Congress

The House Resources Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health held its first oversight hearing on community-based forestry and invited four practitioners to testify. Another practitioner testified before the House Agriculture Committee on the National Fire Plan. Four practitioners testified before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Forests and Public Land Management.

All of those who testified spoke of the need to invest in rebuilding social and natural capital in order to create a conservation-based economy. Several focused specifically on the need for workforce training and business development related to ecosystem management and forest restoration.

At the Senate Hearing on the National Fire Plan, Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) asked Lyle Laverty, a regional forester with the U.S. Forest Service, when communities could expect the contracts from the 2001 federal fire plan to be on the street and what percentage of those contracts he expects will be awarded locally. Laverty indicated the contracts would be awarded in May and that at least half were expected to go to local firms. At the hearing, Nils Christoffersen of Willawa Resources in Oregon, testified in response that "We are very pleased that the Forest Service is willing to make that kind of commitment. However, we think there are a number of significant obstacles in budgeting and contracting that still need to be overcome in order to meet that target." Christoffersen was referring to the complex federal budgeting process, performance targets that are inappropriate to forest restoration work, and contracting that is geared toward commodity outputs, among other problems.

continued on page 8

Restoration, *continued from page 1*

“For the community, forest thinning provides a means to create jobs and replace an historical timber industry that was not sustainable,” Moore says.

The jobs would be in niche markets. For example, CCCG plans to build a turning mill to produce round poles from small-diameter trees for furniture-making, custom fences, and other products. Residue and waste materials may be used to develop landscaping and mulch products. CCCG is also exploring a wood-concrete-mix product that can be used for landscaping products like stepping stones and outdoor furniture.

Identifying new markets

The Southern Utah Forest Products Association (SUPFA) is similarly working to develop value-added forest product market opportunities to replace the region’s dying timber industry. SUPFA considers the timber industry in southern Utah unsustainable because the large volume and high minimum bid price for timber sales exclude local operators, and because timber produced from this region (primarily Engelmann spruce, sub-alpine fir, and quaking aspen) is fairly low-value.

A study commissioned by SUPFA in the mid-1990s found potential for nontraditional wood products markets in the region but also showed that products would have to be produced in larger quantities than any one operator could handle and local operators were unwilling or unable to risk investing capital resources required to develop value-added products.

The cost of refurbishing timber-harvest industries for forest restoration and non-traditional products has also stymied La Montaña de Truchas, a community-based forestry company in northeastern New Mexico that works to create economic development projects for traditional rural communities, some of which have depended on the national forest for its livelihood for over 200 years. Max Cordova, President of La Montaña de Truchas, says his company is bidding on forest restoration contracts without the ability to defray costs with value-added processing. “We need to get into the niche markets with value-added products, but to do that we need specialized equipment that we can’t afford,” Cordova says.

Catch-22 situation

Lack of appropriate equipment is a common problem across the Southwest, says Carla Harper of the Four Corners Sustainable

Forestry Partnership. “People are in a Catch-22 situation because they don’t have work to raise money to retool for forest restoration work, and then they aren’t in a position to do the work when it becomes available. The timber industry is being creative and learning to work with small-diameter wood and waste products, but they aren’t willing to put up capital to retool until they have an assured supply of these forest products.”

In Southern Utah, SUPFA is working to address some of these challenges through its new Southern Utah Forest Products Resource Center, which is intended to “provide the technical assistance necessary for local businesses to access both a sustainable timber supply and achieve nontraditional, high-value markets.” A second innovation was the incorporation of SUPFA as an agricultural cooperative. Still, SUPFA coordinator Susan Snow says, these efforts may not pay off if the group can’t develop an assured supply of raw materials.

Forest access uncertain

Virtually all forests in the Southwest are national forests, which makes forest restoration and wood products businesses entirely dependent on Forest Service contracts. By law, Forest Service contracts have to be reopened every year and changing federal policies mean the number of contracts available can vary considerably from year to year. Variable supply has forced Tierra Alta Fuels, a new cooperative in southern New Mexico that turns sawdust and other waste products into high-energy fuel pellets for wood-burning stoves, to turn to Mexico for its sawdust supply.

“The bottom line is supply,” says Carla Harper, who believes that forest restoration and fuels reduction work will not be economically self-supporting until the U.S. Forest Service starts consistently providing annual timber sales. “It doesn’t have to be a lot—no one is expecting or even hoping for a big timber sale program. But there has to be a reliable supply.”

Local forest district staff agree that contracting has been variable, and say budget and staff reductions over the last five years have made it difficult to maintain their timber sale programs.

The Camino Real Forest District in the Carson National Forest has tried to address local needs for small-diameter wood by developing a system of one-acre “stewardship blocks.” Each block is managed by an individual who enters into

an agreement with the district to thin the block according to Forest Service specifications. Henry Lopez, lead forestry technician on the Camino Real District and manager of the stewardship block program, says demand for the stewardship blocks is much greater than he can keep up with. Other forest districts are interested in developing similar programs.

Paying for forest restoration

Even with assured supply, however, “true forest restoration activities cannot be expected to be economically feasible by themselves,” say Bob Moore. “We can help offset some of the costs by producing value-added products from the material we remove, but the Forest Service is still going to have to pay to get the forest restoration work done.”

Current Forest Service contracts for restoration services don’t reflect the cost of the work, according to Max Cordova. “The Forest Service is offering \$6.47 an hour for thinning jobs. At those wages you’re competing with McDonalds. If they’re serious about getting quality thinning, they’ll have to pay at least \$10 an hour. We have the same problem with contracts for restoration. It’s not possible to do forest restoration work at \$75 an acre, but that’s what they’re offering.” The CCCG estimates that it will cost the agency about \$300 an acre for high-quality forest restoration work in Catron County. Without the value-added products, that same work would cost up to \$500 per acre.

“There is a burden to the public to do forest restoration,” Moore says. “Our biggest concern is that we don’t really have buy-in yet from the public, the Forest Service, or Congressional leaders.”

Ongoing maintenance

Max Cordova says the Forest Service, Congress, and the American public need to start thinking of restoration as ongoing maintenance. “We’ve found that in some areas, about three years after we thin, the trees release seeds, and about six years after that, you have more trees,” Cordova says. “So the work is not permanent; it requires ongoing maintenance. It’s been very hard to sell this concept to the agency. They still think we should only have to go in once to remove trees.”

Calling forest restoration “the new forestry,” Harper says, “We should be looking at forest restoration as basic forest management, an ongoing activity that provides real family-wage jobs, not just minimum-wage jobs.

Member Profile

Eleanor Torres

I am the executive director of Integrated Infrastructures, Inc., a company that strives to integrate traditional and nontraditional urban planning and resource management methods to work towards economic, ecological, and social sustainability. I live and work in Pasadena, California. Prior to getting involved in community forestry issues, I worked as a consultant on municipal human services policy and implementation in Los Angeles.

Addressing social needs through urban greening

I began working in the environmental field in 1992 when I became executive director of L.A. Harvest. After the devastating Rodney King riots earlier that year, the U.S. Forest Service set up a fund of \$3.5 million to establish urban greening programs in Los Angeles. L.A. Harvest was one of the nonprofits contracted to initiate those projects. I saw a link between the social issues I had been dealing with previously in human services and the environmental issues that L.A. Harvest dealt with, and I began to understand how important urban greening is and how effectively it can address social needs. There is a great potential for communities to become empowered through involvement in these kinds of projects.

After I left L.A. Harvest, I became the director of forestry at Tree People, where I continued to work on conservation issues and community gardening. At this time I started to identify green infrastructure as an important engineering tool, especially where there are growth problems such as water runoff and pollution. Addressing the energy and water-quality impacts of different municipal infrastructure approaches can lead to significant long-term savings, especially when it comes to energy expenditures or managing stormwater runoff.

Integrated Infrastructures, Inc.

In February 1999, I left Tree People and started my current company—Integrated Infrastructures, Inc. I like to call it a “one-stop company” where nonprofits can partner with engineers and developers on projects to address local problems. I think I bridge a lot of the gaps between the social services community and the environmental community. I try to get people to understand that human habitat restoration is as important as natural habitat restoration.

Our company’s initial role is to help each community assess and determine its own needs. It doesn’t do any good to go into a community and tell it what’s missing—local residents already know what will serve their own needs best.

One area my staff has been involved in builds on an ongoing project in Los Angeles that is funded by the Department of Water and Power (DWP). DWP is working to “cool schools” and make them more energy efficient through urban greening projects. I’ve really enjoyed incorporating environmental education in K-12 schools in conjunction with these efforts. I educate teachers and students about the environmental, social, and economic linkages inherent in these kinds of urban greening projects.

At the Paquoima Elementary School, for example, the kids weren’t going to school some days because of standing water in the yard and in bottom floors of the building. An increase in impermeable surfaces had resulted in an urban environment that could no longer handle the kinds of intermittent flooding that occurs there. We brought in engineers who looked at the topography and geology of the schoolyard, and saw that it required a percolation system. We let the school children themselves design the percolation system. They chose to develop a river through their schoolyard, and that river now serves as an environmental education site.

Job development and training

Community-based income generation is also an important aspect of Integrated Infrastructures’ programs. We are dedicated to providing urban communities with job-training and development opportunities. There are a lot of people interested in learning skills for green-collar jobs, and I believe this is a growing employment sector. We teach people tree maintenance and planting skills so that there will be people to hire to do this kind of work.

One way we’ve provided job training is through our work on sustainable designs for low-income housing. In a senior low-income housing project in Pomona that Integrated Infrastructures worked on recently, there were 150 units that needed habitat restoration. To do the work we employed parolees from Pomona and trained them at high-level environmental construction skills.

We also did a cost-benefit analysis on these units and found that the improvements were indeed saving the residents money. One of my biggest beefs with the environmental sector is that it tends to offer only environmental technologies that disadvantaged communities can’t afford.

Communities Committee encourages integration

Many of the ideas that guide my work were developed through conversations with other Communities Committee members. I strongly believe that we need to foster an increased appreciation for the social variables that contribute to environmental issues. The Communities Committee is closer to articulating and comprehending that fact than any other entity I know. It promotes dialogue that allows people to hear voices from different perspectives. The Communities Committee is by far the most diverse committee I have ever served on, and I value the open, honest dialogue we are able to have.



Eleanor Torres’ work bridges social services, civil engineering, and environmental restoration.

News & Views

“What is an appropriate role for academic research in community forestry?”

We asked four community forestry practitioners to address this question. Here are their responses. - Editor.

Carla Harper, Montezuma County Federal Lands Liaison and State Representative to the Four Corners Sustainable Forests Partnership, Colorado

Researchers at universities and other institutions are important keepers of history, progress, and common themes. They can be important sources of information for communities. But they often do not leave communities with a sense of mutual benefit. The researchers get degrees and publications, and the communities often don't even get the information that has been gathered. In the worst cases, communities are sometimes the victims of superficial or biased research that can hurt them.

It is important that researchers find out what a community needs and tailor their research to meet that need or even do additional research if the community requests it. Sharing research with communities engenders a sense of goodwill and makes communities more receptive to the next researcher.

Max Cordova, Director, La Montaña de Truchas, New Mexico

I think it strengthens communities to get involved in academic research. I see it as a two-way process, with both sides learning from each other. Communities have learned a lot from some researchers, but there is also a lot of what I call traditional science within the community that often surprises researchers and that they can learn from. Traditional science is knowledge that has been passed on from generation to generation and is built into the community.

In a sense it is knowledge that is taken for granted. I like to say that while researchers may have B.S.'s and M.S.'s, we have "T.S.'s" —degrees in traditional science—that allow us to make good decisions on the land. Researchers need to recognize and work with the traditional scientists.

Donna House, Botanist and Diné from the Navajo Nation, Arizona and New Mexico

Let me begin with an example of inappropriate research behavior. The Salish and Kootenai Community College has a collection of various media and documents of elders' knowledge of plants, animals, etc. A local botanist gained trust with the college and requested to review notes and view tapes and videos of elders sharing their knowledge. The college and the tribe's cultural committee agreed, with the condition that no notes or knowledge would be shared with others outside the tribe. Within the year, the botanist had an ethnobotany book published, based on the Salish and Kootenai elders' knowledge, without permission and knowledge of all parties.

Knowing the history of peoples and the land they live on can be important to a researcher's success in working with an Indigenous community. The researcher needs to ask her/himself: Is the research question appropriate? Who will benefit from this research? Who owns the copyrights/intellectual property rights? Did the community have a role in the design of the research question? Will the academic researcher respect the community's protocols? How can the community participate in the data gathering or monitoring? Will the results be shared with the community? What is the impact on traditional economics? On community dynamics and structure? What are the protocols in obtaining permission from the community and its government?

To conduct research that is sensitive to an indigenous community, researchers need to spend time getting to know that community and need to ask for the community's input and permission to conduct the research. Let the community and the land be part of the collaborative team that formulates the research question. Maybe the question is not what the researcher originally thought it would be.

Maybe the question awaits in the community and its environment.

Scientists have to be educated on how to work with communities. There is a lack of research protocol and lack of information on how communities benefit from or are harmed by research.

Appropriate roles for researchers are to share information, to work within the context of the community, and to work within the community's protocols. Community participation, within the community's cultural context, should be a key part of the academic's research approach and research question.

Eleanor Torres, Executive Director, Urban Infrastructures, Inc., southern California

There are two areas of research I feel would be extremely helpful to community forestry. One is research on ways communities and nongovernmental organizations can conduct evaluation and monitoring of their programmatic effectiveness. I see many NGOs struggling to create evaluation and monitoring programs without benefit from existing academic knowledge.

Often my work takes me to universities in search of faculty and their graduate students who are interested in assisting organizations with monitoring and evaluation work. I have found that evaluations undertaken by or with academics provide a tremendous amount of credibility that community groups can then leverage to obtain future funding sources.

Secondly, I feel that academics can do a great deal more to educate local policymakers regarding the linkages between civil infrastructure and green infrastructure. Local policymakers require a lot of hand-holding before they can see the connections between the environment and things like public health, educational opportunities, job development, cost effectiveness, and the like. But once they do see it, they can provide some powerful opportunities for community forestry.

I often read research papers or attend academic seminars and find myself wondering why our local policymakers aren't aware of this information. Research has such important bearing on urban planning, yet there's a real problem with information dissemination to planners and policymakers. The information that exists doesn't always get out to the people who can use it.

LA, continued from page 1

for the chronically unemployed and targeted greening activities in those neighborhoods most severely impacted by the riots.

Nurturing community

Another Forest Service project, GreenLink, was formed in 1994 in an attempt to maintain the momentum created by the Urban Greening Initiative and Opportunity L.A. GreenLink's goal is to respond to community priorities and facilitate partnerships between urban communities, the Forest Service, and other organizations.

Originally, GreenLink emphasized building community capacity, working from the theory that urban greening projects can give communities non-confrontational, non-political opportunities to work together and effect a positive change in their environment. After this initial step of building capacity, the theory suggests, community members can build on the networking capacity they have established and tackle other issues.

One way GreenLink has tried to foster community health is through a family camping program, which it runs with the California Department of Parks and Recreation. "We try to provide opportunities for youth and families to have quality experiences in the urban national forests. It sounds corny, but families that camp together stay together," says Rudy Retamoza, urban forester and director of GreenLink. This program also provides training opportunities for youth, several of whom go on each year to become trip leaders.

Education and job training

Other organizations have been successful at incorporating educational and job-training opportunities into urban forestry projects. Scott Wilson, Director of NE Trees (working in northeast Los Angeles), has put a lifetime of experience as an educator to work in developing innovative school programs that combine environmental education with greening and infrastructure improvements to area schoolyards.

NE Trees' successes include revitalizing part of the once famous Elysian Park into a children's arboretum and establishing a successful youth

training program. "I'm very gratified with the progress we've been able to make," says Wilson. "Many of our kids have gotten summer jobs as gardeners and doing tree maintenance as a result of the Saturday training program we offer."

Eleanor Torres, former director of forestry at Tree People, recounts a similar program undertaken by that organization. "We worked with at-risk youth and the homeless from the L.A. Free Clinic," Torres says. "These are considered problematic populations, but we managed to leverage training with another entity that does job placement. As a result, three of the people we trained were hired to do tree maintenance for the city."

The Los Angeles Conservation Corps trains youth teams to conduct forest restoration and maintenance work on the urban national forests in and around L.A. These young adults receive educational training, leadership training, and paid employment, and frequently transition on to work in the natural resources field.

In a similar program, GreenLink has partnered with the California Environmental Project to sponsor bilingual Forest EcoTeams who help forest recreationists communicate with non-Anglo, inner-city communities that recreate in the national forests. The Forest EcoTeams have helped reduce litter and prevent forest fires in the high-use canyon areas of the Angeles and San Bernardino National Forests.

Other California Environmental Programs, such as Adopt-a-Canyon, encourage volunteers to come personally involved in the restoration and maintenance of a specific canyon, forest, or other natural area.

Meeting needs without funds

While nongovernmental organizations around the city continue to focus on capacity-building programs, there has been a reduction in funds for these efforts, particularly for GreenLink.

Significant budget cutbacks at the U.S. Forest Service have made that agency reluctant to funnel dollars to communities when funds are already being cut from more established areas of the agency's urban forestry programs.

"The emphasis has really shifted to just getting the trees in the ground, and this has left a void in our involvement with communities," says Retamoza. "It's

been challenging to maintain a real coherent connection with the community needs."

Retamoza has had to adapt to the changing funding situation. "My role has shifted from one of a funder and grant provider to more of a facilitator of relationships. People come to me now to talk about ways that they can link up with other groups or other funding sources. I try to nurture the connections that exist," he says.

Retamoza s feels a 'bottom-up' approach may be most effective. He also believes that in some ways communities working on getting grant money are restricted by the conditions of the grant, which may not coincide exactly with their particular needs: "When someone comes to me for help, we sit down and try to identify a specific need or issue that pertains to their community, and then we figure out how we can develop a solution. There's no compromise, and it really seems to be working for us and taking some hold in terms of addressing the real needs of these communities."

Building a sense of community

Another challenge for community forestry in Los Angeles is the city's sheer size. L.A. sprawls out over 470 square miles, and the community forestry efforts initiated in 1992 were widely dispersed. The layout of individual neighborhoods raises problems, as well; the urban environment here is not often conducive to a sense of community.

Despite these spatial challenges, there are some shining success stories. "Take for example the L.A. Regional Food Bank Community Garden in South Central Los Angeles," says Retamoza. "The neighborhood is in a light industrial area, so there are houses mixed in with warehouses, separated by railroad tracks. Yet residents in this neighborhood have been able to establish a seven-acre garden that is enabling almost 400 families to grow their own food and, in some cases, sell produce to local restaurants.

"Perhaps more importantly, the garden has really created a sense of neighborhood that didn't previously exist. The garden created a place where people can get together—it's become the focal point for the entire community."

Resources

Publications and Web sites

Four Corners Sustainable Forests Partnership. The Four Corners Sustainable Partnership builds linkages between healthy forest ecosystems and healthy communities in the Southwest. Learn more about the Partnership's grants programs and funded projects at <<http://www.fourcornersforests.org/>>

Tree People. This Los Angeles NGO uses education, planting projects, and policy development to promote integrated urban watershed management in Los Angeles. Visit its Web site at <<http://www.treepeople.org/>>.

Community-Based Collaboratives Consortium. This Web site provides a venue for researchers, community groups, government agencies, and funders to share information and find out about new developments concerning community-based collaborative groups working on environmental issues. The site includes searchable databases of projects, research, and publications at <<http://www.cbcc.org/>>

Understanding Community-based Forest Ecosystem Management. 2001. Edited by Gerry J. Gray, Maia J. Enzer, and Jonathan Kusel. A collaborative effort by over 50 community practitioners, public-land managers, scientists, and interest-group representatives, this book examines community-based ecosystem management in the United States. Detailed chapters on stewardship, monitoring, global linkages, governance and institutions, economic investment strategies, and other issues. Available for \$49.95 from American Forests at 202-955-4500 or at <http://www.americanforests.org/forest_pol/index.html>.

Allocating Cooperative Forestry Funds to the States: Block Grants and Alternatives. 2001. By Perry R. Hagenstein, Nadine E. Block, and James W. Giltmier. This report to the USDA Forest Service analyzes the benefits of "block-granting" all or part of the Forest Service's cooperative forestry program. Available from the Pinchot Institute at 202-797-6580 or <alsayed@pinchot.org>, or online at <http://www.pinchot.org/pic/gtp_pubs.htmPolicy>.

Working Forest Conservation Easements: A Process Guide for Land Trusts, Landowners, and Public Agencies. 2001. By Brenda Lind. This book explains how forest conservation easements work and how to draft them. It includes discussions of forest management plans and monitoring and sample conservation easement language. Available for \$30 from the Land Trust Alliance at 202-638-4725, or on the Web at <<http://www.lta.org/>>.

Balancing Ecology and Economics: A Start-up Guide for Forest Owner Cooperation. 2001. By Cooperative Development Services, Community Forestry Resource Center, and the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperation. This 160-page guide draws from several sustainable forestry cooperatives to show how private landowners can improve ecological conditions and their economic well-being by working together. Available for \$13 from the Community Forestry Resource Center at <forestrycenter@iatp.org> or at 612870-3407; free online at <<http://www.forestrycenter.org/>>.

Events

Community Research Network Conference. July 6-8, 2001, Austin, Texas. The fourth annual Loka Institute conference on community research will focus on legitimizing community knowledge as part of the research process. For more information, contact the Loka Institute at 413-559-5860, <Loka@Loka.org>, or at <<http://www.loka.org/pages/conf.htm>>.

National workshop on collaborative research. August 6-8, 2001, Las Vegas, Nevada. Sponsored by the Community-based Collaboratives Research Consortium, this workshop will examine current developments and new research related to community-based collaborative approaches to natural resource management and explore how this knowledge can inform future research. There is no fee to attend the workshop, and a limited number of travel scholarships are available. For more information, contact Karen Firehock at 804-924-5041 or at <kef8w@virginia.edu> or visit the conference web site at <<http://www.cbcc.org/>>.

Annual National Urban Forest Conference. September 5-8, 2001, Washington, D.C. The 2001 conference, "Investing in Natural Capital," will focus on the benefits of and opportunities to improve green infrastructure (trees, open spaces, and natural areas). For more information, contact American Forests at 202-955-4500 or visit the conference Web site at <http://www.americanforests.org/trees_cities_sprawl/conference/>.

Oregon Sustainability Forum. September 6-8, 2001, Portland, Oregon. This forum, organized by Sustainable Northwest, will examine what's working, what's not working, and what's next for sustaining communities, economies, and the environment of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. For more information, contact Kelly Rae Connolly at 503-222-1911 or visit the Sustainable Northwest Web site at <<http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/>>.

National Network of Forest Practitioners Annual Meeting. September 8-11, 2001, Hoopa, California. The 11th annual NNFP meeting, "Back to the Land, Back to our Roots," will be hosted by the Hoopa Tribe in northern California. For more information, contact Wendy Gerlitz at 503-449-0009 or at <wgerlitz@nnfp.org> or visit the NNFP Web site at <<http://www.nnfp.org/>>.

The Wildland-Urban Interface: Sustaining Forests in a Changing Landscape. November 5-8, 2001, Gainesville, Florida. This conference, geared toward forestry professionals, will provide current information and tools to enhance resource management, planning, and policymaking at the urban-wildland interface. For more information, contact Dianne Powers at 352-392-5930 or at <dpow@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu>, or visit the conference Web site at <<http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/urban/index.html>>.

Working Landscapes in the Midwest: Creating Sustainable Futures for Agriculture, Forestry, and Communities. November 8-10, 2001, Develan, Wisconsin. The conference will explore practices and policies that promote land-based economic activity to sustain families, communities, and ecosystems while also providing multiple benefits to society. Cosponsored by 15 regional organizations and federal agencies. For more information, contact Marin Byrne at 612-870-3436 or at <marin@iatp.org> or click on <<http://www.iatp.org/enviroag/>>.

Week in Washington, continued from page 2

For many of the practitioners, testifying before Congress was a new experience. Cece Headley, interim executive director of the Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters said, "It was great to be in the company of other community-based forestry practitioners. I might not have gone if they weren't going to be there. It was scary. They provided me with moral support."

Influencing policy

Congressional staffers say that the Week in Washington provides them with an important opportunity to hear how policies made in the nation's capital make a difference on the ground and offers feedback that helps them make better policies. Kira Finkler, Democratic staffer for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said, "When I started working on the Hill in 1993 it was about jobs versus the environment. You couldn't care about both. It was very frustrating. Community-based forestry groups are showing how you can care about both. They are making it work."

Mark Rey, Republican staffer to the same committee, advised community-based forestry practitioners to continue doing good work on the ground, to continue educating Congressional members, and to participate in the dialogue at the national level. Reminding the group that "Congress is a reactionary body," Finkler added, "Don't take no for an answer. Keep asking for

what you want. You are the experts. You know what's happening on the ground, and your knowledge is power."

Ongoing work

The Communities Committee's policy task group is committed to helping Communities Committee members bring their knowledge into the national dialogue. For more information on the Week in Washington or other policy task group activities, contact Christina Cromley at American Forests at 202-955-4500 or at <ccromley@amfor.org>.

Maia Enzer manages the Healthy Forests/Healthy Communities program at Sustainable Northwest. She co-chaired the policy task group from October 1996 to May 2001.

Mission Statement: The purpose of the Communities Committee is to focus attention on the interdependence between America's forests and the vitality of rural and urban communities, and to promote:

- improvements in political and economic structures to ensure local community well-being and the long-term sustainability of forested ecosystems;
- an increasing stewardship role of local communities in the maintenance and restoration of ecosystem integrity and biodiversity;
- participation by ethnically and socially diverse members of urban and rural communities in decision-making and sharing benefits of forests;
- the innovation and use of collaborative processes, tools, and technologies; and
- recognition of the rights and responsibilities of diverse forest landowners.

Communities and Forests

Communities Committee of the
Seventh American Forest Congress
919 Elk Park Road
Columbia Falls, MT 59912