

Communities and Forests

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Woodberry residents lost a battle against development but persevere toward their dream of a working urban forest.

Photo by Tracey Brown

Dreams for a post-industrial landscape

by Ian Leahy

When Loyola College went searching for places to build a Division I athletic complex, it seemed logical to consider a 100-acre empty property partially atop an old landfill in the middle of Baltimore—a city desperate for development in its neighborhoods. Facing unknown contamination issues, the city was trying to sell the property as industrial land when the college came along in search of a large tract upon which to spread its division 1 stadium, tennis courts, fields, and parking lots. Loyola's "Field of Dreams," as the project came to be called, would be a 71-acre development with numerous parking lots and buildings, including a 6,000-seat stadium.

But residents of Woodberry, the Baltimore neighborhood where the property is located, had a different dream for this land. Between the time that the landfill was capped in the 1960s and Loyola submitted a formal bid to buy the land in 1999, a forest had grown on the site. Not necessarily a beautiful forest. Woodberry Woods captures much of the city's trash during rains and releases seepage from the poorly capped landfill into the Jones Falls, which runs through Baltimore's Inner Harbor to the Chesapeake Bay. At about 100 acres, though, this forest is a big swath of open land for a major city, and has been voted some of the best hiking in the city.

More importantly, the forest defines the neighborhood in which it grew. Woodberry is an inner-city neighborhood with a rural feel, a contrast to the rows of townhomes, marble steps, and sidewalks that define most of Baltimore. Woodberry residents' reaction to Loyola's proposal demonstrated the power of the personal relationship between the neighborhood and Woodberry Woods.

City's liability is neighborhood's asset

Although by Baltimore standards there are certainly more desperate neighborhoods, Woodberry has its fair share of economic hardship, poverty, and disenfranchisement. But, residents say, they have one asset: this forest. They see it as the linchpin to rebuilding their neighborhood.

The 100-acre forest is unique not only in that it's an unprotected forest in a major American city, but also because of its location. It abuts the Jones Falls waterway on the east and acts as a greenway link between the Cylburn Arboretum on the north and the 674-acre Druid Hill Park on the south. Residents believe it is an important environmental resource for the city, and could be an important recreational gateway as well, with several existing trails, including the East Coast Trail, slated to be built right through it.

The City sees things differently, however. Mayor Martin O'Malley told *The Baltimore Sun*, "A lot of give-and-take will take place in the course of planning, but it's a former dump, and I think [the athletic complex] is an improvement."

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Wildfire media tour

by Jane Braxton Little

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The Committee's listserv, communityforestry@lists.nau.edu, is a bulletin-board type list where committee members post weekly federal policy updates, announcements of upcoming workshops and conferences, job announcements, and related notices.

Subscribers may also post questions or comments for general discussion. However, use of the listserv for extended debate is discouraged and personal attacks are not tolerated.

To subscribe to the listserv, send the following message to listserv@lists.nau.edu:

subscribe communityforestry
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(Type your first and last name in place of "NAME")

On a hot and dry early summer day in the Southwest, wildfire lured a group of journalists to a ponderosa pine forest near Dolores, Colorado. Instead of smoke, flames and devastation, the journalists were focused on fire-adapted ecosystems: how they have become so vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire and what local communities are doing to return them to a more natural state.

The information these writers took away from the San Juan National Forest in April could help deepen Americans' understanding of natural fire and the role rural groups play in restoring forests. Months later, after wildfires scorched nearly seven million acres across the West, the reporters who attended the *Communities and Western Wildfire* field tour were continuing to produce stories that reflect the complexities of land management, rural economies and national forest policy.



Journalist Mark Matthews and Ponderosa Pine Forest Partnership member Mike Preston examine a Ponderosa pine fire scar. Photo by Jane Braxton Little

The tour was planned to generate media interest in community projects to restore ecosystems in neighboring national forests. While newspapers and magazines are full of heroic efforts to fight wildfires, they seldom report on local responses to forest health and wildfire challenges. The field trip took participants to various San Juan Forest sites, where federal officials have been working with the Ponderosa Pine Forest Partnership to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and improve ecosystem health. Participants also visited a sawmill where the owner is processing small-diameter trees cut on federal lands.

Speakers the following morning presented industry and environmental perspectives on the community role in fire management. A panel of academics and local business owners discussed how some communities are making the transition from industrial logging to a restoration economy. Other panel discussions addressed national forest and fire policy and the global influence on forest-based communities.

In an hour-long feedback session, the journalists called for more contact with people who practice forest restoration and who represent communities. The sessions were too dominated by agency officials and academics, they said. Several noted that they would have a greater appreciation for what rural coalitions have achieved if they were given a stronger sense of the obstacles community groups have had to overcome.

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Legislation for a new era

by Christina Cromley

On June 24, 2002, Senators Bingaman (D-NM) and Craig (R-ID) introduced bipartisan legislation aimed at restoring and maintaining degraded rural environments and degraded rural economies.

Although half a dozen bills addressing forest management and wildfire have been introduced in Congress since last summer, the “Community-Based Forest and Public Lands Restoration Act” (S. 2672)—cosponsored by Senators Bingaman, Craig, Smith (D-OR), and Wyden (D-OR)—was not written in reaction to the 2002 wildfire season. The community-based forest restoration bill reflects almost a decade of effort by community forest practitioners and national policy-makers to restore and maintain healthy forests and healthy communities.

At a June 2002 hearing on the restoration bill, Senator Bingaman said that over the past several years, “two important facts [have become] clear. First, forests and adjacent communities depend on one another for their long term sustainability. Second, our national forests and public lands are in desperate need of restoration to establish healthy, fire-adaptive ecosystems and to improve water quality and quantity.”

The bill’s drafters hope to move forest management from an era of resource extraction to one of restoration by directing the Departments of Agriculture and Interior to invest in ecosystem restoration and maintenance activities using community-based approaches. A “community-based approach,” they explain, means that people living in and adjacent to forests are involved in a meaningful way in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of restoration activities. It also means that investment is made in restoring and maintaining degraded lands and degraded communities. And it means that monitoring and evaluation are done in a way that is practice-based and brings lessons from the ground to policymakers to improve decisions.

New tools for new times

The bill would develop consistent and long-term community-based restoration through a number of mechanisms. First, it would create “value-added centers” to help link research and learning to practices on the ground. These centers are intended to help communities develop effective restoration treatments and use the by-products of restoration—such as small diameter trees—in an economically viable manner. For example, small rural enterprises working with value added-centers might learn how to take traditionally low-value material such as small trees and add value to it by turning the wood into flooring, paneling, and kitchenware such as cutting boards and bowls.

As the legislation is currently written, local non-profit organizations, conservation groups, and/or community

colleges would run the value-added centers in partnership with the Forest Service, giving non-federal entities a central role in planning and providing technical assistance.

“These value-added centers would be a perfect fit in communities like Cascade, [Idaho],” said Senator Larry Craig (R-ID). “Cascade has a ready made a workforce of skilled forest workers and business people who are eager to undertake work designed to improve our public lands. This legislation would help communities like Cascade, it would help our federal land managers reestablish a close working relationship with them communities, and it would help cure our ailing public forests.”

Second, to make the restoration economically viable and beneficial to communities, the bill would provide innovative contracting mechanisms that direct how the work is contracted and who gets the work. For example, the bill authorizes the use of a tool called best-value contracting for doing restoration work such as road decommissioning and for cutting trees for restoration purposes like habitat enhancement. Best-value contracting allows land management agencies to consider non-economic factors when awarding contracts, including the contractor’s ability to meet the ecological objectives of the contract and provide local training opportunities.

Third, the bill would require multi-party monitoring of projects and the program itself, to ensure accountability, promote collaborative learning, and provide feedback mechanisms to ensure corrective action is taken. Multi-party monitoring and evaluation are not analogous to scientific research projects, which often take much longer to complete and are designed to test hypotheses that can lead to generalized results. Multi-party monitoring is designed to provide timely feedback that considers whether specific ecological, economic, and administrative goals are being achieved. It is designed to ensure a practice-based approach to restoration whereby lessons from the ground are fed back into the system to improve decisions.

Finally, the bill would direct the Forest Service on how to work with the centers to promote collaboration between federal and non-federal entities.

A work in progress

Initial drafting of S. 2672 began in 2000. The bill was developed by Senators Bingaman and Craig and their staff, with input from other Congressional offices. It was introduced in June 2002 in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests. On October 3, the bill passed the Senate. It still must pass the House and conference committee and receive the President’s signature before it becomes law.

Christina Cromley is Director of Forest Policy at American Forests.

I moved to New England over 20 years ago, to attend Williams College in Massachusetts. I've lived in the region ever since, except for a brief stint in Oxford, England where I earned a Master of Science degree in agricultural economics. I had planned to work overseas after graduate school, but one of my professors really impressed on me the need to spend years getting to know the local culture before trying to introduce new practices—she had a wealth of examples of disastrous “agricultural improvements” from the Green Revolution. So I decided to go to work in a culture that I knew, and returned to New England to get some practical experience working first on farms and eventually with Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), the domestic arm of the Peace Corps.

Lessons from agricultural models

As a VISTA volunteer, I supported small farmers in southern Vermont by helping organize farmers' markets, marketing pools, and other cooperative efforts. I gained first-hand knowledge of how market pressures to “get big or get out” all too often left some of the most caring and skillful farmers behind.

In the early 1980's, I settled in Craftsbury, Vermont, where I taught environmental economics, alternative agriculture, and outdoor skills at Sterling College, a small natural resources-oriented school. I got interested in forestry because I saw that economic incentives affected both sectors in similar ways, rewarding behavior that produces short-term profit, often at a cost to the long-term health of the resource. I wondered how organic and community-supported agriculture models might be applied to forest products to shift these incentives.

In Community Supported Agriculture, a group of consumers support a local farm by helping with planning, physical work, and an up-front payment that covers all farm costs. In return, the members accept whatever the farm yields that season, sharing in unusual bounty and accepting the risk of crop failures. The principle is not so different from consumers buying products from “low-grade” and small-diameter wood, because those are the products that promote a healthier future forest.

Putting it into practice

Over time, I came to feel that I needed to get out and wrestle with real-world solutions. I got that chance in 1999 when Spencer Phillips, a resource economist with The Wilderness Society, advertised for someone to help research the community impacts of wildlands. The Wilderness Society is taking on the challenge of addressing the community impacts of wildland designations it advocates. Our office works with communities to understand and mitigate any negative impacts and to promote the many positive impacts that wildlands have on local communities.

Making forest certification affordable

One of our projects deals with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification on private forest lands in Pennsylvania. That effort started as a proposed loan fund to finance the costs of certification. As a private woodlot owner myself, I was sensitive to the challenges certification poses for private forest landowners. For most small woodlot owners, managing their forest is not a full-time business. Most would not be interested in a \$5,000 loan for certification until they can see an economic return on that investment.

We need a strong consumer commitment to buying certified wood, but FSC-marked wood products are a harder sell than organic food. People buy organic primarily for their own health, and secondarily because it's good for the environment. Consumers see no direct personal benefit from certified-wood purchases, so we need to educate them about the value of long-term benefits to the broader landscape.

The organic food market was built from the ground up; consumers were educated one at a time as they bought from their farmer neighbors. I'd like to try building a market for regionally-grown, certified wood by promoting loyalty to local woodlots. That approach captures the selfish part of certified marketing—people can see the connection of their purchase with the health of the landscape they love.

Community values for private property

When I joined the Communities Committee, I wanted to encourage people to think about the challenges for community forestry in the East, where most forests are privately owned. Often local residents feel a real connection to the forest, but they have little influence over what happens to it. The big challenge here is: How can communities have a voice in the landscape around them without threatening private property rights? That's a question we are just beginning to tackle.

The other big question we need to address deals with markets. How can we protect community values while still working within our private market system? We found ways to do it in the community-supported agriculture movement, and now we need to do it for forestry.



Ann Ingerson is a research associate in The Wilderness Society's Ecology and Economics Research Department.

Photo by Eleanor Torres

Stewardship contracting: The jury's still out

by Patricia Greenburg and Ann Moote

The Monroe Mountain stewardship contracting project in southern Utah "is two years beyond schedule due to delays in the NEPA process," says project leader Don Oakerland. In Montana, the Paint Emery stewardship demonstration project is "about one year behind schedule because we could not award the original contract," according to Betty Kuropat. Indeed, "This project is delayed" may be the most common report from stewardship contracting pilot projects around the country.

A demonstration program that tests new ways for the Forest Service to do business with private foresters, stewardship contracting was authorized by Congress in 1999. By 2002, however, few stewardship contracting projects had broken ground. Agency personnel shortages, confusion over the contracting process, appeals and litigation, a lack of funding, and a lack of industry and markets for small-diameter wood have all been blamed for the delays.

New ways of doing work

As of 2002, 84 pilot stewardship contracting projects have been designated by Congress to test five "new authorities."

Exchange of goods for services allows contractors to keep some or all of the products removed from the site to offset costs. This authority also allows the "bundling" of activities, such as a timber sale and restoration activities, within a single contract.

Receipt retention similarly allows portions of proceeds from the sale of commercial products removed from the site to be retained locally and reinvested into a stewardship project.

Designation by description or prescription, or "end-results contracting" is intended to save time and money by allowing the contractor, rather than Forest Service staff, to mark trees and supervise tree harvesting as long as the project meets agency-designated objectives.

Best-value contracting allows the agency to award contracts based on factors such as prior contractor performance and work quality as well as contractor's bidding rates.

Multi-year contracts allow contractors to engage in long-term management services. Traditional timber and service contracts are typically limited to one year.

Another innovation of the stewardship contracting program is a multiparty monitoring system, which requires national, regional and local-level teams representing diverse interests to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

NEPA reviews, appeals, and litigation

At a Congressional hearing held July 18, 2002 to review the status of the pilot projects, Andrea Bedell Loucks of the Pinchot Institute for Conservation noted that while the stewardship authorities are seen as a way to facilitate getting work done on the ground, of the 56 projects

Congress authorized between 1999 and 2001 only 31 (55%) have completed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) assessments and documentation and thirteen (42%) of those have encountered an appeal or litigation. Forest Service employees are said to labor over every aspect of NEPA documents, attempting to make them "bullet-proof," before they are released for public review.

Confusion over authorities

Even without appeals and lawsuits, the contracting process is slow. Contract preparation has taken weeks or even months as contracting officers struggled to interpret the new authorities. Some projects received no bids on their stewardship projects, and in other cases bids came in at several times the cost the agency had expected.

Betty Kuropat from the Paint Emery stewardship demonstration project in Montana reports that "designation by prescription deterred some contractors from submitting a proposal because it leaves a vagueness in the amount of work to be done and volume to be removed." In other cases, contractors were unable to pull together a team of subcontractors who could do all the work included in bundled contracts.

On the other hand, getting timber and service contractors working together and sharing information has been cited as a major benefit of the program, and contracting and bidding will likely improve as both the agency and practitioners become more familiar with the authorities.

Exciting possibilities

Project leaders from the Priest-Pend Orielle project in Idaho said many of the resource improvement projects included under their stewardship contract would likely not have happened under traditional Forest Service contracting, and that designation without description has given them unprecedented flexibility. Furthermore, project leader Liz Johnson says, "the diverse group involved in the project gives the project credibility for environmental groups, private land owners, as well as the Forest Service."

Brian Cottam of the Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership has helped manage two stewardship contracts and also serves on the Southwest Regional Monitoring Team. He acknowledges that the agency and practitioners alike are still learning how to use the new contracting mechanisms, but adds, "I'm a huge advocate of stewardship contracting mechanisms because of the possibilities they offer. They give rural practitioners ways to continue to work in the woods, and they allow the Forest Service to use practitioners as tools to achieve its land management goals."

Patricia Greenburg is an intern at American Forests in Washington, D.C., and Ann Moote is a program coordinator at the Ecological Restoration Institute in Flagstaff, Arizona.

Residents put up a fight

Surveys taken by the Woodberry Land Trust indicated that 95% of neighborhood residents opposed the stadium complex, even after Loyola drafted plans in response to every roadblock residents could think of—including reducing parking, traffic, light pollution, and degradation of high-quality forest.

The proposed development eventually took on meaning far beyond the athletic complex. Loyola's plan is only one of five that have been proposed for the property, and residents fear that one development will open the door to others. Furthermore, they say, the city's decision to support Loyola over the neighborhood has dire implications for local politics. Myles Hoenig, a resident and member of the Woodberry Planning Committee, declared, "to concede an inch is to lose."

"Once in, [Loyola is] in for good and the message goes out that in spite of every reason possible to oppose such a project, institutions rule the City. That should never, can never, happen," Hoenig said.

Last year, the battle over Woodberry's forest grew into a regional debate and even entered the national spotlight. Local talk radio shows had open forums about it, editorial columns in *The Baltimore Sun* went back and forth, and banners hung from highway overpasses. The national conservation group, Scenic America, designated Woodberry Woods one of their 10 "Last Chance Landscapes" for 2002.

A new vision

In the end, the Woodberry Forest's fate was sealed in a city council meeting, when council members voted to 11-9 in favor of Loyola. A divided Woodberry Planning Committee soon after agreed to sign a

memorandum of understanding with Loyola, indicating it would not appeal any further decisions regarding the development.

While some Woodberry residents continue to fight the development, all are working to implement a community master plan that residents developed in response to Loyola's plans. They have been able to protect about 40 acres from development and will use that and other forestland in their neighborhood to protect the



On Memorial Day Weekend 2002, Woodberry residents planted trees to restore a degraded forest site. Photo by Tracey Brown

unique woodland character of the neighborhood and maintain a greenway through the west side of Baltimore.

A working urban forest
Woodberry's community master plan will protect land in the Woodberry Land Trust (a nonprofit developed by residents), foster development in underutilized commercial areas, and develop educational and job opportunities to manage the forest as a working urban forest.

It provides for such projects as a native tree nursery for restoration, school projects for maintenance, and a business to reutilize urban wood waste in the community. This business will explore innovative technologies and artistic opportunities to use Baltimore's wood waste economically.

Partnering for the future

Residents recognize that they cannot achieve this vision alone. Therefore, they are partnering with local community and nonprofit organizations in a citywide project that has been incubated in partnership with American Forests and the Communities Committee as one of two Urban/Rural Initiative pilot projects. (The other is in Seattle—see the Fall, 2001 issue of *Communities and Forests*.) Other partners include the Parks and People Foundation, Civic Works (Baltimore's youth service corps), the Baltimore Ecosystem Study, other neighborhoods, and the Forest Service.

National model

Together, the partners are developing youth education programs that create educational opportunities in urban restoration for elementary school through high school students. The restoration program leads into job training and college opportunities intended to create a workforce with the knowledge, skills, and certifications to address issues unique to Baltimore's post-industrial landscape, such as soil contamination.

Creating a workforce is only half of the equation, though. Partners are also working to increase investments from the public sector, build markets to create job opportunities for residents, and restore ecological health to degraded properties such as the Woodberry Woods.

In the end, the partners all hope to utilize local and national resources to turn Woodberry and Baltimore into a national model of community-based urban forest management that plays a significant role in spurring redevelopment.

Ian Leahy manages the urban-rural program at American Forests in Washington, D.C.

Publications and Web sites

Multiparty Monitoring and Evaluation of the Stewardship Contracting Demonstration Program. The Pinchot Institute for Conservation's web site contains information on stewardship contracting, descriptions of pilot projects, and monitoring reports from each of the pilot projects, the regional teams, and the national team at www.pinchot.org/pic/cbf/mpme.html.

Community Preparedness for Wildfire case studies, USDA Forest Service's North Central Research Station. The first two case studies in this series feature the Gunflint Trail Community in northeastern Minnesota and Bend, Oregon. They are now available online at www.ncrs.fs.fed.us/4803/highlights.htm or from the North Central Research Station at 651-649-5000.

The Sourcebook on Criteria and Indicators of Sustainability, developed by the USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area and the Northeastern Forest Resource Planners Association, reviews sustainability projects in the Northeast and compares indicator monitoring projects with the criteria and indicators of sustainable forests developed through the Montreal Process. Available online at www.na.fs.fed.us/sustainability/sourcebook.htm.

Grants

National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council 2003 Challenge Cost-Share Grants. Pre-applications are now being accepted for urban and community forestry activities that are national or widespread in their impact or application. Grants may be any dollar amount, up to \$1 million, but must be matched at least equally (dollar-for-dollar) with non-Federal source funds. Pre-Proposals are due by December 10, 2002. For more information visit www.treelink.org/nucfac/ or contact Suzy del Villar at 707-642-9201 or email her at sdelvillar@fs.fed.us.

National Forest Foundation's Matching Awards Program. The NFF gives challenge cost-share grants to tribal, state, and local governments and 501(c)3 non-profit organizations for on-the-ground conservation and community capacity-building projects on or adjacent to national forests. Project funding is for one year, with two grant decision cycles per year. Pre-proposals for the next grant cycle are due to the NFF by January 31, 2003. For additional information go to www.natlforests.org/grants.html or contact Alexandra Kenny at 202-298-6740 or akenny@natlforests.org.

— *Media tour, continued from page 2*

The stories speak for themselves: Of the handful already published or written, most highlight on-the-ground processes and the people who are engaged in them. But despite the tour's goal of exposing journalists to the role of communities, much of what local coalitions do and how they do it went unnoticed or under-reported. Although several stories mentioned partnerships among ranchers, loggers, environmentalists and agency officials, none specifically addressed how rural communities are affected by wildfire or how communities are responding to the wildfire threat.

Nonetheless, the tour expanded their awareness of prescribed fires and the disappearing timber industry in the Southwest, journalists said. Even the most fire-seasoned reporters came away humbled.

"Having spent five years working on a fire and silviculture crew. I thought I knew everything when I attended the media tour... but I was wrong," said Mark Matthews, a widely published freelance journalist based in Missoula, Montana.

Like Matthews, AP reporter Robert Weller is a seasoned wildfire writer, but he learned from the tour

that prescribed fires can be conducted with very low tree mortality. In addition to a feature on companies that remove hazardous fuels from private land, the field tour helped Weller produce an in-depth national story about the on-going debate between forest managers and homeowners over fire and forest health.

The journalists took some responsibility for public misconceptions about wildfire and forest health. "We did a lousy job during 1988, when fires 'destroyed' Yellowstone," said Matthews. He emphasized the importance of understanding the specific features of local ecosystems and avoiding generalizations.

The day-and-a-half workshop also humbled its sponsors, the Communities Committee, American Forests, Society of American Foresters, University of Colorado Natural Resources Law Center, Ecological Restoration Institute and Ponderosa Pine Forest Partnership. This was the first media field tour any of them had organized. One lesson they learned was how to better reach journalists.

The organizing committee had produced a beautiful four-color brochure designed to attract journalists nationwide, yet the response was

poor. None of the writers contacted by Carol Daly, Communities Committee chair, remembered ever seeing the invitation. Those who did attend explained that they are bombarded daily with mail, and that glossy event brochures don't stand out. A press release would have gotten more notice, they said.

The tour's organizers also learned the importance of interesting editors, who supervise reporters, in community forestry as more than a 'style' section item, said Daly. She also recommended a plan for follow-up contacts after a future media tour.

The wildfire media tour has already generated seven stories for regional and national publications, and journalists said they will likely touch upon issues raised during the tour when they write about forest management, wildfire, and community development issues in the future. The Communities Committee and other sponsors learned valuable lessons from this experience and made valuable connections that could generate additional coverage of wildfire and Western communities.

Jane Braxton Little, a freelance journalist, lives in Greenville, California.

Communities and Forests

Communities Committee of the

Seventh American Forest Congress

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Events

Forest Owner Cooperation: Balancing Ecology and Economics, November 1-2, 2002, Northampton, Massachusetts. A workshop for landowners and resource managers. For more information call 413-774-5799 x114 or send email to info@cooplife.com.

National Network of Forest Practitioners 2002 Annual Meeting, November 6-9, 2002, Pray, Montana. Preliminary agenda and registration information are available at www.nnfp.org, or for more information contact NNFP at 401-273-6507 or susan@nnfp.org.

Building Forest Restoration Businesses and Practices, December 1-3, 2002, Durango, Colorado. This workshop, sponsored by the Four Corners Sustainable Forests Partnership and the Ecological Restoration Institute, will provide tools and information for restoration foresters and businesses that utilize small-diameter wood in the Southwest. For more information contact Carla Harper at 970-565-6061 or at charper@co.montezum.a.co.us.

Firewise Community Workshops in 2003: February 20-22 in Hilo, Hawaii; April 29-May 1 in Snowbird, Utah; May 29-31 in Spearfish, South Dakota; September 10-12 in Albuquerque, New Mexico; September 24-26 in Bolton Landing, New York; and October 23-25 in Norman, Oklahoma. Planning tools and programs for protecting your community from wildland fire loss. For more information visit www.firewise.org/communities.

Mission statement:

The purpose of the **Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress** 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
- the recognition of the rights and responsibilities of diverse forest landowners.