

FORESTRY

Converting Wildfire Fuel to a Marketable Product

Progress continued on this project to evaluate the economic uses of wildfire fuels. One sub-division was provided assistance with organizing a mulching day to remove excess fuels left from hurricane damage. Three presentations were made to subdivisions about the need for evaluating and implementing a fire wise plan. The Wildfire Mitigation Specialist, with the Virginia Department of Forestry, identified communities at risk and



completed a risk assessment for the communities in the region. With this information, outreach education can be focused on wild land interface hazards. This was done to set the stage in preparation for communities to seek resources to minimize hazards and prepare for emergency response in the event of wildfire.

Charcoal production was identified as a potential use of waste wood products that would otherwise become fuel for wildfires. A pilot project to produce and market charcoal on a small scale was developed in 2005. Cimarron Forestry became the first producer of charcoal after a pilot was initiated in cooperation with Virginia Tech in FY 2006.

Introduction to Wildlife Management

Because Virginia's forests provide many important resources, including wildlife, recreation, wood products, clean water and clean air, this year's short course addressed the basics of wildlife and forest management principles and practices. Nearly 80% of all Virginia forests are owned by non-industrial private forest landowners. The topics were designed to help these landowners to productively manage their forests for better wildlife habitat within the context of sound forest stewardship. Included were management planning and objectives, tools to assess resources, obtaining professional assistance, basic requirements of wildlife, applied habitat ecology, habitat management and structures, forest management practices for wildlife, and riparian forests and corridors.

There were 22 participants who own or manage 2,753 acres of forest land who attended the class. Participants' evaluations indicated a high level of satisfaction. The Northern Electric Cooperative was a project partner by providing a meeting facility. The Virginia Cooperative Extension Forestry Department and the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program provide major assistance for this class by producing a valuable manual of materials for the participants.



Partners in hosting the class include the following cadre of instructors :

- John Barber – Forestry Committee, landowner
- Jennifer Gagon – Va. Tech. Dept. of Forestry
- Charlie Knoeller – Va. Dept. of Forestry, Westmoreland
- Melissa Hooper – Va. Tech Dept. of Wildlife
- Joseph McCauley – US Fish and Wildlife
- Sandy Spencer – US Fish and Wildlife
- Dage Blixt, US Dept. of Ag – APHIS
- Galon Hall – Va. Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries
- John Magruder –Three Rivers Forest

Project Learning Tree

The RC&D Forestry Committee initiated a project in 1994 to increase the knowledge of school children about the value of trees in this region. The first step was to conduct a survey to determine if there was a need for Project Learning Tree workshops and the best time of the year to host the workshops. The response indicated that 79% of the teachers in the ten county region had not taken the workshop and 67% of the teachers would like to attend a workshop. Tidewater RC&D has co-sponsored 9 workshops for 134 teachers with at least one from each of the ten counties in the RC&D area. John Magruder with assistance from David Jackson and David Stone has facilitated each of the 9 workshops. Lisa Deaton, PLT Coordinator for the Virginia Department of Forestry was a major partner.



AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Communication Forum

Tidewater RC&D facilitated a meeting sponsored by the Northern Neck Planning District Commission and the Northern Neck Soil and Water Conservation District for 25 people to increase their knowledge about federal, state and local agencies' involvement in water quality. The purpose of the meeting was to increase the understanding of each agency's role and to establish a stronger network of communications between the agencies to avoid major problems in natural resource management.

Northern Neck Farm Museum

The Northern Neck Farm Museum is dedicated to developing an agricultural center where the community can gather to learn about the influence that agriculture has had and continues to have on the community.

In 2006, the Northern Neck Farm Museum developed their first exhibit on historic tools to use as a traveling display at four events. A plan was organized and initiated for a chartered membership campaign, which ended the year with over 70 charter members. The museum filed for and received their non-profit status which enabled them to begin accepting donations. Another major milestone was initiating an oral history project which began with the first Farm Forum and was moderated by Thea Marshall.



Roller Crimper Demonstration for Pesticide Reduction



Pesticide reduction is a major focus in the Chesapeake Bay area to reduce water quality impacts, reduce impact on wildlife habitat and to reduce the costs to produce a crop. A “roller crimper” is a new tool being introduced on sustainable farms which is used to knock down cover crops in the spring of the year when a new crop is prepared. This reduces and sometimes eliminates the need for herbicide. This project provided Three Rivers Soil and Water Conservation District with a demonstration “roller

crimper” which they loan to farmers to try for two years. NRCS, in cooperation with Extension, hosted several workshops to demonstrate the equipment. Efficacy is being measured, as well as cost of utilization, so that information could be shared with other farmers in the region.

Down on the Farm – Upper Essex County

This one day agricultural education event attracted 300 visitors and 645 site visits. The farms included: Blandfield with forestry and wildlife education, Cloverfield Farm with traditional corn, soybeans and small grain plus cattle, Hasselhof Weingarten with a vine-



yard and wine



sampling from four wineries, Epping Forest with horses, Hundley Seed Company with seed conditioning, and Historyland Nursery wholesale landscaping nursery.

Numerous partners worked together to make this event both an educational and fun day for the visitors. The Virginia Department of Forestry offered tours of the forest



land and the US Fish and Wildlife Service provided tours of the wildlife habitat that was developed on the farms. A portable sawmill demonstrated how logs are made into fine grade lumber.



The Environscape was narrated by Dawn Shank, an RC&D Council member, to provide young and maturing visitors with insight into the complexities of landscape design and stormwater runoff. The muddy water running off of the newly disturbed land that did not have buffers or filters, clearly indicated the need for conservation practices.



Numerous private donors and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation provided funding for this project.