

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service
Eastern Region



US Forest Service, Eastern Region

The Year in Review 2007



Courageous Conservation

*protect ecosystems across boundaries • connect citizens to the land
walk the talk for sustainability • revolutionize effectiveness and efficiency
be an employer of choice*

From the Regional Forester

It is a distinct privilege to serve as the 14th Regional Forester of the Eastern Region. I am convinced we are moving in the right direction on the issues that concern us all. With the help of our many partners and the public, I'm confident that together we can develop mutually acceptable approaches to caring for these lands we cherish.

All of our national forests along with the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie have up-to-date management plans that we are working to implement. Public input shaped the scope of these new plans. This report showcases projects that directly reflect the implementation of our up-to-date plans, to realize our vision of *Courageous Conservation*.

This year, the Eastern Region accelerated sustainable operations to improve the quality of our lands and the living species that make their home here. We are now driving more fuel-efficient hybrid vehicles, and we designed and built new offices in the forests following "green" design principles. We explored new ways to harness energy from woody biomass, and installed our first solar water pump on a forest campground.

In February, Chief Bosworth retired and Gail Kimbell was named the United States' Chief Forester. No stranger to the Eastern Region, Chief Kimbell was born and raised in the Northeast and spent her early years hiking, fishing, and camping in the White Mountain National Forest.

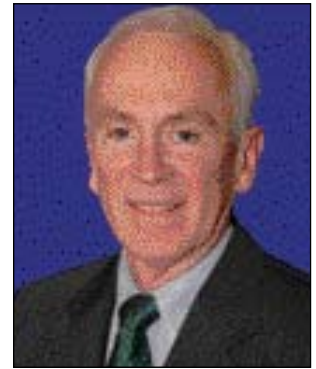
We were honored to host Chief Kimbell during a visit in July, and introduce her to the best of what our Region has to offer.

In 2007, we met our strategic targets despite declining budgets by leveraging resources with partners, revolutionizing business practices, and meeting our fiscal responsibilities. The Eastern Region continues to improve forest health and customer service, both of which help create lifelong memories for each of our visitors.

I invite you to read and see for yourself how we are protecting and caring for these special places that are yours to enjoy.



Kent Connaughton



Kent Connaughton
Regional Forester

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US Department of Agriculture National Forests of the Eastern Region



protect ecosystems across boundaries

We are working toward a shared vision for protecting public lands now and into the future. For the sake of the land, we continue working with partners, other agencies, and private landowners to combat invasive plants and animals encroaching on our forests and prairie. When disasters strike, we meet the challenge of protecting resources together with private citizens and public agencies. Some highlights of our achievements include:

- Providing the means for Eastern Region national forests to establish—or re-establish—native plants through the Native Plant Program;
- Continuing a tradition of watershed restoration; and
- Collaborating with all three branches of the Forest Service on a cohesive approach to detect, contain, and eradicate non-native invasive species.

Two American Icons: No Longer Endangered

The bald eagle and the gray wolf were both removed from the federal threatened and endangered species list (TES) in 2007. The bald eagle had been listed as endangered since 1967, and the gray wolf since 1973. The Eastern Region was a primary contributor to the recovery and de-listing of these two species through habitat improvement and protection. The endangered West Virginia northern flying squirrel is currently a candidate for de-listing by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) due in part to the Monongahela National Forest (W.Va.) providing habitat through management of high elevation spruce and fir forests.



The Fire Next Time: Preparing for Fire

In May, the Ham Lake Fire struck the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness on the Gunflint Ranger District of Minnesota's Superior National Forest. Years of fuel treatments by the Forest to decrease fire risk—combined with efforts of a specially trained Resource Advisory Team—enabled ground crews to use firefighting techniques that helped reduce further impacts to the wilderness ecosystem. The Forest calculated suppression costs in the management of the fire.

Our law enforcement personnel were successful in locating the fire's point of origin, interviewing witnesses, and uncovering crucial evidence that ultimately led to the arrest of a suspect.



ANSWERING THE CALL: EMERGENCY RESPONSE



In April, a freight train loaded with coal jumped the track as it passed through the Mark Twain National Forest (Mo.), resulting in spilled coal, uprooted trees, and gouged soil on Forest land, including an archaeological site. Forest employees responded quickly to assess damage to the site and potential surface and ground water contamination. Filter fences were installed to prevent the fine powdered coal from washing off the site into watersheds, and comprehensive stream monitoring began.

In June, a tornado tore a 40-mile long swath through northern Wisconsin, strewing timber along roads, campsites, and trails on nearly 6,000 acres of the Chequamegon-

Nicolet National Forest. Within hours, the Forest assembled a Rapid Assessment Team to determine resource conditions, using the Healthy Forest Restoration Act as a tool to expedite environmental analysis and salvage the affected acreage. Collaborative efforts between the Forest and other agencies, local governments, tribal representatives, and the public began immediately. In early July, contractors began salvaging timber and removing debris for use as biomass. Timber salvage contracts were awarded in the fall for the remaining areas.

Water World: Improving Fish Habitat & Watersheds

In 2007, an on-going effort between the Green Mountain National Forest (Vt.) and many partners to restore habitat for wild Brook and Brown trout in the Batten Kill watershed received exciting news. Results from the first year of post-project monitoring in the Batten Kill indicated that wild trout populations had increased over 200 percent. Encouraged by these findings, the Forest and their partners will continue to implement more projects in the coming years.

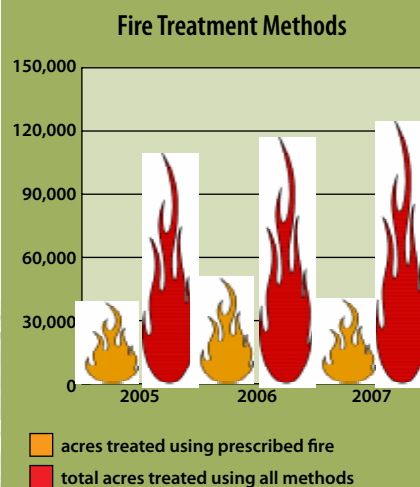
A partnership between the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Hoosier National Forest significantly improved 41 wetland acres on the Forest last year. The process began when IDNR employees identified severe erosion on the emergency water spillways of the Roland Riparian Area and the Otter Creek Wetland due to flooding. With help from IDNR, the spillways and levees were redesigned, with the main spillway fitted with a *stoplog* inlet to control water levels and allow for quick draining.

Prior to last July, the culvert at Preemption Creek on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (Wis.) was dangerously sagging and preventing the upstream migration of native brook trout and other aquatic organisms. The Forest designed a replacement culvert using a technique that extends the width of the stream and constructs a stream bed within the culvert to mimic the stream channel (both up and downstream). With partnership funds, the new culvert was installed by the Forest in cooperation with the local community, and is now providing safe transportation for both people and aquatic organisms.



Using Fire for Good: Hazardous Fuels Reduction

In 2007, the Eastern Region again made significant progress in managing the risk of catastrophic wildfire by reducing hazardous fuels in national forests. Fuel reduction near communities adjacent to forested land is critical in reducing wildfire impact. These treatments also improve forest health and restore fire-adapted ecosystems.



Home Grown: Native Plant Program

The Eastern Region Native Plant Program achieved notable successes in 2007:

Allegheny National Forest—Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraged the introduction of native species in community yards and gardens with support of local nurseries; Planted native wildflower garden in front of the Supervisor's Office.
Chippewa National Forest —Minnesota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contracted with Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe to gather seeds, fruit, and cones from native woody plant species for Forest seed bank.
Huron-Manistee National Forest—Michigan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand-seeded permanent native lupine beds as a seed source for future restoration projects; Planted lupine to restore 4,000 acres of habitat for the federally threatened Karner blue butterfly (10 year project).
Ottawa National Forest—Michigan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed new dwarf bilberry seedlings to support recovery of species on the Eastern Region's sensitive species list and State of Michigan's threatened list.
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie—Illinois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchased 3,500 plants representing 30 species essential to local pollinators; Produced 30,000 more plants through environmental stewardship program; and installed plants in restoration areas.

Into the Wild: New England Wilderness Act

On December 1, 2006, the New England Wilderness Act was signed into law, adding three new wilderness areas to the National Wilderness Preservation System in the Eastern Region, expanding an existing wilderness, and creating a new national recreation area.

Located in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest:

- Glastenbury Wilderness (22,400 acres)
- Joseph Battell Wilderness (12,300 acres)
- Moosalamoo National Recreation Area (15,800 acres)

Located in New Hampshire's White Mountain National Forest:

- Wild River Wilderness (23,700 acres)
- Sandwich Range Wilderness (10,800 acres added)



FAR REACHING URBAN CONNECTIONS

Along with a local **Friends of the Forest** group and the Henry Ford Academy, our Urban Connections (UC) program sponsored an overnight visit to Michigan's Huron-Manistee National Forest for a diverse group of 40 teens from Detroit. For many, this was both their first visit to a national forest and first experience in a wooded area. Our UC Program hired a full-time employee in Minnesota's Twin Cities, where an on-going partnership with Wildlife Forever at the Annual State Fish Art Expo enabled us to provide an overview of progress in fighting invasive species threatening Eastern Region waters and lands. More than 65,000 people attended the Expo, including kids who were encouraged to take an active role in caring for their environment.

PARTNERS HELP US GET THE JOB DONE

Our work with partners rose 13 percent over the last year, with partnership funds increasing from \$8 million in 2002 to more than \$36 million in 2007. We successfully leveraged dollars—almost 2.5 times the original amount—through grants and agreements, using \$6 million in Forest Service funds to obtain over \$15 million in services. In September, we sponsored an inaugural partnership roundtable where more than 50 Forest Service and key representatives from other federal and state agencies met with community and non-profit groups, along with tribal and private organizations. The Roundtable meeting allowed for the development of new partnerships and identification of focus areas for the year ahead.

The eastern U.S. contains many unique geographic features. Yet many urban residents are unfamiliar with the wonders of our national forests and tallgrass prairie. In 2007 we made notable achievements in connecting citizens to the land, including:

- Initiating a partnership with the Betty Brinn Children's Museum to create a Smokey Bear exhibit to share information about national forests;
- Updating our national forest motor vehicle use maps on schedule with the Chief's 2009 deadline, thanks to significant help from the public;
- America's Outdoors—through its Conservation Education interns and partners such as Neighborhood House and Milwaukee Public Schools—made more than 5,000 contacts with urban youth;
- Partnering with the Federal Lands Highway Division on \$44 million worth of improvements to Eastern Region forest highways, making travel easier for visitors;
- Working with over 6,700 volunteers who donated more than 256,000 hours, a cost savings of nearly \$12 million.

Forest Service Goes Hollywood

In March, the Hoosier National Forest premiered a film entitled *Caves: Life Beneath the Forest* in Bloomington, Indiana. The documentary—produced over two years with the assistance of partners—provided an overview of the unique and fragile habitat that exists below ground and the importance of cave conservation.

Centennial Green: The Over and Under Story of the Forest Service in Song was filmed in Milwaukee in April. Performed widely by northern Wisconsin's Big Top Chautauqua

troupe during our Forest Service centennial celebration in 2005, this final concert was attended by more than 800 people and will be shown on Milwaukee Public Television in 2008.



More Kids in the Woods

All of us have a role in ensuring the health and well-being of our nation's children. In an effort to address children's lack of a connection to the natural world, described as "nature deficit disorder" by Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods*, a new Forest Service initiative is funding specific proposals designed to connect youth with the outdoors. Called "More Kids in the Woods," these grants paid for two Eastern Region projects in 2007. One will enable school-age kids in Detroit to conduct outdoor research experiments, while the other funds urban forest adventures on the Finger Lakes National Forest for low-income youngsters in Ithaca, New York. The aim of these programs is to enhance childhood growth and creative development through outdoor experiences.





We demonstrated our commitment to managing our natural resources in a sustainable manner while encouraging the public to establish similar practices through the construction of green facilities, using new tools to reduce our carbon footprint, and providing downed or leftover woody materials as an alternative energy source. Some highlights of our achievements include:

- Continuing to green our fleet with the addition of 26 hybrid and 36 flexible fuel vehicles;
- The Allegheny National Forest (Pa.) and Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (Wis.) participated in a pilot study of National Forest System lands to determine the potential for management practices to be certified under established sustainability standards; and
- Working with a school district and regional health center in Pennsylvania to provide woody biomass—tree limbs, tops, needles, and leaves—as part of two Woody Biomass Utilization Grants awarded to the Region in 2007.

THE FOREST WHISPERERS

Indigenous people from 12 different countries came together in Green Bay, Wisconsin, to participate in the *Sharing Indigenous Wisdom: an international dialogue on sustainable development conference*. Sponsored by the College of Menominee Nation, Forest Service's Eastern Region, International Union of Forest Research Organizations, and Ford Foundation, the Conference provided a forum for sharing traditional wisdom, knowledge, values, problem solving, and research in sustainable development. Members of the Menominee provided insights into their 140 years of sustainable management of their forest land, and conveyed the values, economic system, and social order they believe are necessary in a sustainable world.



75 and Greener than Ever

In honor of the Green Mountain National Forest's 75th Anniversary, the Forest was chosen to provide the 2007 Capitol Christmas Tree. Although the Forest has provided the Capitol tree in previous years, this was the first time they went **green**—minimizing the energy impacts of transporting it from Vermont to Washington D.C.

The Capitol Christmas Tree Committee purchased carbon offsets through the National Forest Foundation's new Carbon Capital Fund to counterbalance the 3,000 gallons of fuel needed to truck the 55-foot balsam fir and companion trees to the Capitol.

The Committee also incorporated other **green** practices in the project, such as wrapping the trees in recycled burlap for the journey and planting new trees in the Forest.



Extreme Makeover: Sustainable Design Edition

The Region incorporated sustainable design elements—such as the use of natural light, recycled material, low-volume water fixtures, and high-performance insulation—in the construction of new administrative buildings. The Mio Ranger Station in the Huron-Manistee (Mich.) and the Kawishiwi Ranger Station on the Superior (Minn.) were completed in 2007.

Existing offices took steps to improve energy efficiency, as seen in the installation of a new solar panel roof on the Wayne National Forest's Supervisor's Office (Ohio). The panels transform light from the sun's rays into useable electrical energy.

The Deer River Ranger District in the Chippewa National Forest (Minn.) participated in an "Extreme Makeover" for sustainable operations. Video footage captured the Forest's efforts to save energy, conserve water, green their fleet, cut back on waste, and become sustainability leaders in their community.

Timber Sales—Managing a Renewable Resource

Our timber sale program made significant contributions to the Nation's need for wood products in 2007, providing 16 percent of all timber volume sold in the Forest Service. In addition to our traditional timber sale program—which improves forest health and wildlife habitat and returns revenue to the U.S. Treasury—we also administered

11 stewardship contracts that allowed for the value of the harvested timber to be off-set by the contractor's work on projects such as de-commissioning roads, building recreation areas, and repairing trails.

07 Accomplishments:

- 668,669 hundred cubic feet (CCF) sold in 2007 for a value of \$22,355,171.97.





Committee Ensures Recreation Fees are Well Spent

The newly formed Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RRAC) met twice in 2007. The eleven-member committee reviewed 20 fee proposals from national forests that charge fees for certain recreation sites and activities. Fee sites include campgrounds, beaches, cabins, and trails used for camping, horseback and off-highway vehicle riding. Fees

are used to provide amenities and services such as visitor information, law enforcement, protection of natural resources, and maintaining specialized trail systems. The Committee recommended all 20 fee proposals be approved by the Regional Forester. Most Eastern Region national forest fees have not increased since 1998.

We are adapting many ways to do more with less in an effort to streamline regional operations. We cut costs by using 50 videoconferences in lieu of face-to-face business meetings and training sessions to free up more money for projects at the forest level. By integrating forest projects, we achieved restoration goals more efficiently. Some highlights of our achievements include:

- The Wayne National Forest (Ohio) exemplified program integration by combining habitat improvement with timber sales, and grouping fuel reduction projects with invasive species management.
- Facilities conveyance enabled the Region to reduce deferred maintenance and generate funding for new, more energy efficient facilities as well as other on-the-ground projects;
- Over 80 percent of our contract dollars—almost \$32 million—went to small business, including Service for Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses who completed trail improvement and construction projects on the Wayne, Hoosier (Ind.), and Shawnee (Ill.) National Forests.

Community Involvement is Key to Effective Stewardship Contracting

Stewardship contracting is still a powerful tool for achieving land management goals in Eastern Region national forests while providing a vital source of income for nearby communities. In contracts with local citizens, related stewardship activities are grouped into projects that restore watersheds and fish and wildlife habitat, and reduce hazardous fuels. In the last year, the number of stewardship contracts awarded in the Region increased by 60 percent, improving forest health on more than 9,000 acres.

The goal of the Middle Mountain Wildlife stewardship project for the Monongahela National Forest (W.Va.) was

to create savannahs—grassy openings that provide remote habitat for wildlife—by removing stumps and resulting debris from the removal of standing trees, and prepping the soil for seeding with grasses.

A stewardship collaboration between the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians (Ojibwe Nation) and the Ottawa National Forest in Michigan included an agreement for the Band to receive logs from the Forest in order to construct a traditional ceremonial roundhouse. In exchange, the Band will complete high priority watershed and forest stand improvement work for the Forest.

NEWS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The issue: how to more effectively share news with employees across our 20-state Eastern Region. In traditional print format, news is already old by the time it hits the streets. Twenty-first century technology meant news could be updated as soon as something happened—no need to wait for the next edition! We needed an interactive format so employees could exchange views, and a platform for the Regional Forester to speak to employees.

The Internet provided the obvious solution: the result was an online news service called *E-News Now*. Easily accessible on the regional website, *E-News Now* provides the latest success stories and current news from the Eastern Region, Washington Office, and the world. Social media tools—such as on-line forums—allow employees to share valuable thoughts and ideas.





Trainees Jumpstart their Career

The Eastern Region Recruitment Initiative used cost savings to fill 22 forester trainee positions in 2006 through the Federal Career Intern Program, a two-year program offering full-time employment. The trainees represent a diverse mix of experience, education, and background. In 2007, we completed a development guide to enhance the trainees' career growth. Specific training courses were prescribed to prepare them for positions in timber management or silviculture. In October, the trainees learned more about the Region during week-long orientation sessions held in Milwaukee.



We are pursuing innovative programs to create a diverse workforce and offer our employees new pathways for professional growth in keeping with our goal of Being an Employer of Choice. Some highlights of our achievements include:

- Assembling diversity dialogue groups in the Regional Office to promote awareness of differences, shared values, and cultural backgrounds in order to improve understanding and encourage respect;
- Working with the Southern Region to expand our relationship with

Forest Service Job Corps Centers in order to place qualified students in full-time positions within the Forest Service;

- Successfully completing a pilot mentoring program matching forest supervisors, district rangers, and Regional Office directors with future leaders, with plans to expand the program in 2008; and
- Graduating eleven Eastern Region employees from the Forest Service Senior Leader Program, a challenging year-long course that prepares participants for positions of increasing responsibility.

TECHIES ATTEND CAREER FAIR

In November, Eastern Region representatives shared information on Forest Service careers at a science and engineering career fair in Detroit attended by more than 15,000 students from Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana. The event was hosted by Michigan Tech and was co-sponsored by our Urban Connections program. By reaching out to diverse groups of young students, we are planting seeds about natural resource careers that we hope will grow into a life-long interest.



Page 3; *The Fire Next Time: Preparing for Fire;* **Caption:** Ham Lake Fire in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness on the Superior National Forest; *Two American Icons: No Longer Endangered;* **Caption:** from top left: the West Virginia northern flying squirrel, American bald eagle, gray wolf, and Hine's emerald dragonfly; *Answering the Call: Emergency Response;* **Caption:** The massive pile-up of train cars and coal spilled on the Mark Twain National Forest due to a train derailment.
Page 4; *Water World: Improving Fish Habitat & Watersheds;* **Caption:** Preemption Creek after culvert replacement
Page 5; *Far Reaching Urban Connections;* **Caption:** Outreach programs connect more urban

residents with nearby forests; *Forest Service Goes Hollywood;* **Caption:** The Big Top Chautauqua's final performance of Centennial Green was filmed by Milwaukee Public Television; *More Kids in the Woods;* **Caption:** as part of the Forest Service's More Kids in the Woods program, youngsters from the Hillside Children's Center visited the Finger Lakes National Forest (N.Y.).
Page 6; *Green Mountain National Forest Turns 75 and Lives up to its Name;* **Caption:** Balsam fir from the Green Mountain National Forest arrives at the U.S. Capitol; *The Forest Whisperers;* **Caption:** Eastern Region Tribal Manager Donna Falcon and her granddaughter attend the Conference's pow wow.
Page 7; *Committee Ensures Recreation Fees are*

Well Spent; **Caption:** RRAC members gather in Milwaukee for the kick-off meeting. *Community Involvement is Key to Effective Stewardship Contracting;* **Caption:** The traditional roundhouse is being constructed from logs provided by the Ottawa National Forest through a stewardship contract.
Page 8; *Trainees Jumpstart Their Career;* **Caption:** Blackwell Job Corps students on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest train to fight wildfires; **Caption:** Forester Trainees work in different capacities on the Eastern Regional national forests. *Techies Attend Career Fair;* **Caption:** EEO Specialist Andrea Payne distributes Forest Service information to Engineering students.
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