



North Dakota Forest Service

the prairie forester

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US FOREST SERVICE REVIEWS STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY PROGRAMS

The United States Forest Service (USFS) and North Dakota Forest Service (NDFS) will be holding a State and Private Forestry (S&PF) Review on July 19-21, 2016, in Minot, North Dakota. The Review will address an array of S&PF programs jointly implemented by the NDFS and the USFS. The USFS reviews the cooperative forestry programs implemented by state partners every five years. The purpose of the Review is to (1) appraise program implementation, (2) recognize achievements, (3) identify issues and opportunities that require additional attention to achieve program objectives, and (4) evaluate S&PF projects.

Formal presentations will be made by representatives from each program. The specific programs include: Community Forestry, Cooperative Fire Protection, Fire Management, Forest Health, Forest Stewardship, and Natural Resource Conservation Education. Technical and financial issues will be discussed, as well as other emerging issues and concerns.

The Review will be led by Larry Kotchman, State Forester, Tom Claeys, Forestry and Fire Management Team Leader, North Dakota Forest Service and Mike Dudley, State and Private Forestry Director, Region 1 & 4 and John



The Review will include stops at various completed forestry projects, such as this one at the Minot Roosevelt Park following the 2011 flood.

Shannon, State and Private Forestry Deputy Director, Region 1 & 4.

The Review will also assess the progress toward implementation of the *North Dakota Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources* and *Forest Resource Strategy*. The reviewers will address grant and fiscal reporting requirements, tribal relations, performance accomplishments, outreach, and Civil Rights

requirements and training. A field review of accomplished or ongoing projects in north central North Dakota will accompany the office review.

At the conclusion of the Review, a report based on the core team's findings and input from participants will be drafted. It will include commendations, findings, unresolved issues, and recommendations for an action plan.

A View from the Top of the Tree

Following weakened farm commodity prices and lower crude oil prices, the North Dakota Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is forecasting a \$1.074 billion shortfall of the state's general fund revenue collections for the 2015-17 Biennium. OMB has determined that an allotment of 4.05% is necessary to balance the budget. The North Dakota University System (NDUS) has issued allotment guidelines for the 4.05% reduction of general funds appropriated to higher education entities. The North Dakota Forest Service (NDFS) will be required to reduce \$202,818 in general funds from the agency's 2015-2017 budget.

The State Forester's office conducted an assessment of the Forest Service budget to prioritize where savings could be found to meet a 4.05% reduction. The goal of this assessment was to identify areas of potential budget savings that will minimally affect the agency's ability to provide essential public services. We recommend utilizing the unobligated 2015-2017 biennial balance in the Forest Restoration Program's operating budget and savings from the vacant fire technician position to meet the required \$202,818 (4.05%) reduction.

We intend to minimize customer service impacts by assisting affected communities and private forest landowners with alternative funding sources for restoring trees and forests damaged by flooding. Since the Forest Restoration Program was initiated in 2013, an additional \$1.8 million in financial assistance has become available through the Trees for North Dakota Trust Fund and the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund. Both programs provide project grant funds to communities and private forest landowners for restoring trees and forests, as well as other needed conservation practices.



Larry A. Kotchman
State Forester

The NDFS will ensure communities and private forest landowners continue to receive technical assistance for project planning and implementation through the agency's Forest Restoration Program.

The NDFS will suspend the recruitment process for the vacant Fire Technician position until 2017. Position duties including assistance to rural fire departments will be assigned to part-time emergency firefighter personnel. This would ensure the Fire Management Program has the necessary capacity to prevent and suppress wildfires that threaten lives and property.

The Chancellor has instructed all entities to carefully examine policies and practices to create efficiencies and cost savings. Areas highlighted include travel, equipment purchases, hiring of new staff, salary adjustments, administrative processes, shared services, and building repairs and maintenance.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry A. Kotchman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Midkota High School Wins 2016 Envirothon

By: Glenda Fauske, Information and Education Coordinator

Midkota High School at Binford, ND, coached by Gilbert Black, received top honors at the 17th annual North Dakota State Envirothon competition held at Crystal Springs Bible Camp May 11-13, 2016. Team members include McKenna Frappier, Jesse Gilbertson, Carson Quam, Joseph Vollmer, and Victoria Vollmer. The

team was sponsored by the Foster County Soil Conservation District. The Envirothon is a problem-solving natural resource competition for high school students.

Second place honors went to Minot High School and third place honors went to Bismarck High School.



1st Place ND State Envirothon
Midkota High School
Binford, ND

Small-Growing Shade Trees for North Dakota Communities

By: Lezlee Johnson, Community Forestry Specialist

Small growing shade trees produce big benefits and are a positive force for quality of life in North Dakota communities. The North Dakota Forest Service has been inventorying city trees in small communities since 2012 and has found a remarkable lack of tree species diversity in community tree populations. Ash trees grow very successfully in our hard conditions so now they dominate many city landscapes. Relying on one major tree species leaves our communities as vulnerable to tree threats now as they were before Dutch elm disease arrived to wipe out our American elm trees.

Many tree pests and diseases target certain species (green ash trees for example), or certain groups of related species (all ash trees, for example). Communities that want to enjoy greening, noise and dust screening,

lower crime rates, reduced stress, and improved storm water management are getting very intentional about planting a variety of tree species. And for even more resiliency, communities are planting as many groups of species (genera) as they can.

There are costs associated with growing trees. Fallen leaves sometimes clog gutters, roots heave sidewalks, and branches litter streets and sidewalks. The good thing is trees produce far more benefits than it costs to establish and maintain them. A comprehensive study in Bismarck in 2004 found that for every dollar spent on maintenance, trees returned over three dollars in benefits. Every community can improve satisfaction with their tree management program by increasing tree benefits while recognizing and controlling costs. One

way to do this is to carefully match trees to their planting sites when planning a tree planting project.

In general, in order to get the most tree canopy for your municipal dollar, it is best to plant the largest-growing tree that is suitable to a planting site. Sometimes the largest suitable tree is a small tree, however, because of narrow planting spaces, nearby structures, or overhead utility lines. Small trees are an opportunity to add spring and fall color to city streets, produce edibles like apples or Juneberries, minimize conflicts with utilities, and increase tree species diversity. Small trees are an important part of a city tree management program when placed for maximum benefits.

Below are five small trees that are under-represented in North Dakota communities and whose benefits far outweigh their costs of establishment.



Photo ND Forest Service

amur maple
Acer ginnala

A small maple with red fall color.



Photo Bruce Marlin via Wikimedia Commons

amur maackia
Maackia amurensis

Small and attractive with showy summer flowers.



Photo ND Forest Service

amur chokecherry
Prunus maackii

White flowers, coppery-curl bark, and may grow too tall for some sites.



Photo NDSU Extension

common apple
Malus pumila

White blossoms, edible fruit. The community forest can also be an orchard.



Photo ND Forest Service

snowbird hawthorn
Crataegus x mordenensis
'snowbird'

Upright, rounded tree, white flowers.

Tree Risk Assessment Qualification Course Offered by ISA

By: *Lezlee Johnson, Community Forestry Specialist*



The Midwestern Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), in partnership with the North Dakota Urban and

Community Forestry Association and the North Dakota Forest Service, is hosting a Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) course on September 22-24, 2016, in Bismarck, ND. The course provides an opportunity for professionals in the arboriculture industry to expand their knowledge through education and training in the fundamentals of tree

risk assessment. This qualification promotes the safety of people and property by providing a standardized and systematic process for assessing tree risk. The results of a tree risk assessment can provide tree owners and risk managers with the information to make informed decisions to enhance tree benefits, health, and longevity.

The TRAQ course is a two-day workshop followed by a half day assessment that includes both a written and field component. The course prepares the participant to take the TRAQ assessment to become ISA

Tree Risk Assessment Qualified. It is required you attend the course and successfully complete the assessment in order to receive the ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification, which is valid for five years from the date the exam is passed.

The deadline to register online at www.mwisa.org is August 22. The fee is \$625 for an ISA member and \$750 for a non ISA member. Participants will receive their course materials two weeks prior to the start of the course. For additional information, contact Lezlee.Johnson@ndsu.edu or call her at (701) 228-3700.

Turtle Mountain State Forest Trail Improvements Include OHV Trails

By: *Tom Nowatzki, State Forests Manager*

The North Dakota Forest Service (NDFS) has been able to make great strides in improving recreational access to the State Forests by cooperating with the ND Parks and Recreation Department (NDPRD). The NDPRD successfully obtained an Outdoor Heritage Fund grant and a Recreational Trails Program grant to develop, improve, and maintain the multiple-use trail system in the Turtle Mountain State Forests. This goal includes making all the trails built and maintained using sustainable trail building methods.

Recent improvements have been focused in two areas. The first focus is on the Turtle Mountain State Forest multiple-use trail system. Improvements this summer include the installation of three new gates to control motorized vehicle access to some trails; the development of three



A dozer is working on a new OHV trail in the Turtle Mountains using sustainable trail building methods.

trail heads; and new trail directional signs that include mileage indicators.

The second focus is the development of an OHV (Off Highway Vehicles) trail on a separate tract of the Turtle Mountain State Forest. The OHV trail project, when completed, will have over 10 miles of trail, as well as

amenities such as a trail head, parking lot, picnic shelter, gathering areas, and facilities. The OHV recreation area is located north of Bottineau on Section 36 of Dalen Township. Other features of the recreation area will include a safety training/overflow parking area, a creative riding area, practice trails, an entry monument, directional signing, barriers, safety fencing, maintenance and storage structures, and a habitat restoration planting.

Construction on all the trail projects is expected to be completed by this fall. NDPR and NDFS staff are planning a grand opening for the Turtle Mountain State Forest OHV Trail System on September 24, 2016, which is Public Lands Day. More details on this event will be released as plans are finalized.

Aerial Forest Health Surveys Planned for 2016

By: Aaron Bergdahl, Forest Health Manager and Cody Clemenson, Resource Forester

The North Dakota Forest Service (NDFS) has contracted the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), Resource Assessment and Inventory group from Grand Rapids, MN, to do aerial surveys of forest resources this summer. The survey areas will be the Turtle Mountains in Bottineau and Rolette Counties and the Pembina Gorge in Pembina and Cavalier Counties. The surveys will be

conducted in June and July, depending on weather and tree phenology.

The purpose is to identify forest health threats visible from the air, such as forest tent caterpillar defoliation and dieback, for later ground truthing. Ground truthing will serve to confirm the presence/absence of forest pests and provide management options to forestland owners/managers.

The Pembina Gorge was selected for re-survey in 2016 because of the large amount of unidentified defoliation identified during the 2015 survey. The Turtle Mountains were last surveyed in 2014.

For more information about the survey, contact Cody Clemenson, North Dakota Forest Service: cody.s.clemenson@ndsu.edu / Office: (701) 228-3700 Ext. #3.

Siberian Larch: An Underutilized Species

By: Michael Kangas, Nursery and State Forest Team Leader and Blaine Martian, Big Sioux Nursery, Watertown, SD

Forestry professionals throughout the plains promote species diversity for tree plantings as a means to reduce susceptibility to invasive and naturally occurring pests and pathogens. This recommendation often prompts the question: “So what trees should I plant?”

One such underutilized tree for the northern plains is Siberian larch (*Larix sibirica*). As the name implies, the species is native to western and central Russia, making the species cold hardy to zone 1a. Unlike North American larch species, Siberian larch is far more tolerant of the higher pH soils found in the Great Plains. Although a conifer (cone bearer), larch is a deciduous tree that sheds its needles every autumn. Because of this attribute, the species will never suffer from winter burn; a common problem of conifers in the northern plains. The species is one of the first trees to break bud in the spring. The soft delicate looking needles are 1- to 2-inches long and turn bright yellow to orange in the fall. The species exhibits medium to



Siberian larch at Towner Nursery.

fast growth and may grow up to 3-feet a year once established on good soils. The species is broadly pyramidal and can reach a height of 40- to 50-feet when mature. Larch has few disease or insect pest problems in our region. Minor defoliation caused by larch casebearer (*Coleophora laricella*) has

been noted in the past, but outbreaks do not seem common. These attributes make the species an excellent choice for windbreaks or as a landscape shade tree.

In addition to cold hardiness, good growth rate, attractive fall color, and few pest issues, the species is very drought tolerant. The drought tolerance of this species was on display during the extreme drought of 2011 and 2012 that affected South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas. In a 13-year old side by side planting in northeast South Dakota, European Larch (*Larix decidua*) and American larch (*Larix laricina*) had virtually 100 percent mortality due to the drought. In contrast, Siberian Larch not only survived but thrived.

The primary objection to the species is it looks like a dead spruce in the winter. Siberian larch should not be overlooked because of one attribute that it uses to cope with the winter environment. The tree is an exceptional choice for our region.

Statewide Windbreak Renovation Initiative Successfully Launched

By: Liz Smith, Forestry Incentives Specialist

Last summer, the North Dakota Forest Service (NDFS) received a grant from the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund for \$1,800,000 to support windbreak renovation projects undertaken by private landowners statewide. This initiative broadens the Forest Stewardship Program as NDFS staff and partners offer technical assistance to interested landowners in the form of an on-site windbreak assessment and a written windbreak renovation plan. Renovation plans utilize a variety of Forestry Best Management Practices to meet the landowner's goals in restoring the functionality of the windbreak. As of this summer, we have provided plans to nearly 300 landowners.

Following the windbreak assessment and written renovation plan, NDFS staff assist landowners with applying for cost-share assistance to implement the windbreak renovation project. There is no deadline to apply and applications are accepted on a continual basis. Landowners have two full years to complete their renovation project and will be reimbursed for 50 percent of the renovation project



With renovation, this declining windbreak of dead elm trees and over mature caragana can be restored to function for many more years into the future.

expenses. So far, the NDFS has awarded grants totaling \$309,306 to 60 landowners and 3 of the projects have been completed.

Interested landowners are encouraged to visit the NDFS website and click the "Windbreak Renovation" quicklink. They will be asked to fill out a short questionnaire and provide their contact information and the location of the windbreak in need of renovation. Questionnaires are grouped into "pools" based on the date they are submitted. The NDFS is currently

accepting questionnaires for the third pool, which will close on August 15, 2016, and assistance will be provided in the fall of 2016. Questionnaires received after August 15 will receive technical assistance in the spring of 2017.

For more information about the Statewide Windbreak Renovation Initiative, contact Liz Smith, North Dakota Forest Service: liz.smith@ndsu.edu or call (701) 400-8330.

Access Archived Tree Ring and Fire History Data

The NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) website provides public access to paleoclimatology data on Earth. It contains the Tree-Ring Data Bank and Fire History Data (which includes tree scar and establishment data). All this environmental data can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/hnx53g3>.

Forestry Datelines

Aug. 5	2016 Tree Awards Nominations Due Contact: Tom Claeys at (701) 328-9945	Sept. 22-24	Tree Risk Assessment Qualification Course ISA Certification is valid for five years Bismarck, ND / www.mwisa.org Contact: Lezlee Johnson at (701) 228-3700
Aug. 24-25	ND Forest Service Staff Meeting Heritage Center, Bismarck, ND Contact: Brenda Johnson at (701) 228-5422	Sept. 24	Public Lands Day – Grand Opening of the Turtle Mountain State Forests Trail System Contact: Tom Nowatzki at (701) 228-3700
Sept. 10	26 th Trees Bowl and Awards Ceremony ND State University and Fargodome Contact: Tom Claeys at (701) 328-9945	Nov. 20-22	NDASCD Annual Conference/Meeting Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck, ND Contact: Kathy Henriksen (701) 223-8575

People in Forestry



Dr. Jerry Migler grants State Forester Larry Kotchman the DCB Conservation Award during Earth Day as a number of local foresters and staff from the North Dakota Forest Service stand around Kotchman celebrating with him in receiving the college's most prestigious natural resource award. (Photo by Scott Wagar, Bottineau Courant)

Larry Kotchman, State Forester for the NDSU-North Dakota Forest Service, received the most prestigious natural resource award granted by Dakota College at Bottineau for his leadership and work in the field of forestry for the state of North Dakota. The award was given on April 20 in the Alumni Center of Thatcher Hall during the school's annual Earth Day Celebration. The DCB Conservation Award is presented by the college to an individual who has demonstrated leadership and made notable contributions to the conservation, preservation and enhancement of our natural resources.

Kotchman is responsible for the administration of the North Dakota Forest Service, a related entity within the North Dakota University System, located on the Dakota College campus, and administratively aligned to North Dakota State University.

The NDSU-North Dakota Forest Service mission is to care for, protect,



Pictured above are the North Dakota Forest Service staff and seasonal workers for the 2016 summer at the Towner State Nursery. We are very grateful to these hard working people who grow, transplant, harvest, package and ship around one million tree seedlings each year. The nursery is a very busy place full of activities all summer. The public is welcome to stop in anytime and view the grounds and greenhouse.

and improve forest resources to enhance the quality of life for future generations.

Aaron Bergdahl, Forest Health Manager for the NDSU-North Dakota Forest Service in Fargo, will begin a new position with the state of Maine in July 2016. We are currently seeking a replacement. Questions in the meantime can be directed to Michael Kangas at michael.kangas@ndsu.edu / Office: (701) 231-5936.

Anthony Schultz, Cooperative Fire Protection Manager for the NDSU-North Dakota Forest Service at Bismarck, took a new position with the state of Wyoming in June 2016. We are currently seeking a replacement. Questions in the meantime can be directed to Tom Claeys at thomas.claeys@ndsu.edu / Office: (701) 328-9945.

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"The mission of the North Dakota Forest Service is to care for, protect and improve forests and natural resources to enhance the quality of life for future generations."

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