



Success Stories

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Aerial Ignition Burn Conducted on the Mark Twain

On April 10 history was made on the Potosi-Fredericktown District of the Mark Twain National Forest when they successfully completed their first large-scale aerial ignition prescribed burn.

The prescribed burn covered 2,754 acres surrounding the Council Bluff Recreation Area and involved more than 40 Mark Twain NF employees, as well as the Midewin hotshot crew—an inter-regional helicopter and helitack crew—and several AmeriCorps volunteers. All of these forces came together that morning, and had successfully and safely completed the prescribed burn by 5 p.m. that evening.

However, such successes are not easily gained without extensive planning and forethought, and this one was no exception. Months of planning and preparation were conducted so that this prescribed burn would go exactly as planned to meet the objectives. Many mitigations and protective measures had to be incorporated into the planning process to ensure that sensitive sites, including a developed campground, several active timber sale units, two Indiana bat hibernacula, cultural resource sites, adjacent private lands, and smoke-sensitive areas, were not adversely impacted by the prescribed burn.



The prescribed burns were aided by golf ball-sized ignitors

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Such contingencies required expert coordination between the fire management officers, recreation and timber staff, archeologists, wildlife biologists, and the local community. On the day of the burn, this tireless coordination was rewarded by the satisfaction of completing a burn that met the objectives of reducing the heavy fuel loads around the recreation area, without sacrificing the value or integrity of these sensitive sites.

"We've all been getting ready for this day for a long time," said Gary Blair, who served as the Type 1 Burn Boss for the prescribed burn. "So it feels good to see it all come together finally."

The prescribed burn also made history by being the first large-scale burn conducted in a forested, oak-hickory landscape on the National Forest and will probably not be the last.

National Forest Managers are becoming more aware of the role fire played in the history of the Missouri Ozarks, and as a result, will likely be using fire more frequently and over larger areas to restore some of the plant and animal communities that are now threatened by the loss of a fire-maintained environment.

As stated by Paul Nelson, ecologist on the Mark Twain National Forest, "Missing the opportunity to prescribed burn Council Bluff would have deprived us of an extremely important opportunity to restore fire-adapted ecosystems."

Not only do such fires reduce the dangerous build-up of heavy fuel loads, but also benefit the many plants and animals associated with the glades, savannahs, seeps, and shortleaf pine and oak woodlands found in Missouri.





Midwin Partners With Chicago Academy on Summer Youth Camp



An up-close-and-personal view of pond life is one of many activities offered to youth during their field trip to Midwin.

A partnership between El Valor, the Chicago Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie has resulted in the Forest Service Science and Technology Summer Camp.

The camp is a four-week summer day camp held at the El Valor community center. Twenty-five to thirty students participate at a camp that stresses basic environmental sciences and computer skills.

Teachers from the CAS provide the instruction. Students spend half the day working in environmental studies and half the day learning computer skills that help them produce web pages, power point presentations and computer animations.

College age bilingual tutors who have been recruited from the neighborhood assist the CAS teachers. Midwin staff also assists with some of the classroom activities.

The camp concludes with an overnight field trip to Midwin NTP.

Using a nearby camp facility, the participants spend parts of two days exploring Midwin, working on a stewardship project and camping out with a campfire, fishing and a night hike. Participants' parents are encouraged to assist with the overnight field trip.

During the summers of 2001 and 2002, El Valor operated two sessions of the Science and Technology Summer Camp. It is anticipated that there will be only one operating session in 2003.

Our goal in participating in this partnership is to expose Latino youth to the idea of careers in natural resources and the sciences, and to build bridges into an urban, traditionally underserved community. This project has led to other ventures between Midwin and El Valor including a job fair for college students. A concept for a school year "Saturday Academy" is being explored.

Wayne NF Bowling Fundraiser Benefits Local Kids

Three strikes and you're out!!!

But in this instance, three strikes gave information receptionist Robyn Wright-Strauss the honor of being high scorer at the "Bowl for Kids Sake" fundraiser held April 27.

Three spouses and eight employees of the Wayne National Forest raised \$564 for the Athens County Big Brothers/Big Sisters organization.

"When it comes to helping out a good cause you can count on TEAM WAYNE," said wildlife biologist Lynda Andrews.

The "Team Wayne" included Connie Roberts, Lynda Andrews, Robyn Wright-Strauss, Pam Stachler, Edie Blake, Erin Larson, Pete Larson, Steve Strauss, Laurie Jay, David Hoxworth, and Bob Gianniny.



Wayne NF employees and spouses raised money for local charities by taking to the bowling alley.





Tracking Canada Lynx on the Superior

Several different techniques are being used by resource agencies in Minnesota and other states to learn more about the presence and the habits of Canada lynx. This native of the northwoods has been scarce in Minnesota since 1984 when hunting and trapping of lynx was closed by the State.

Canada lynx populations never rebounded and it was listed in March 2000 as a federally-protected “threatened species” under the Endangered Species Act.

This winter, the Superior National Forest, the Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI) and the University of Minnesota-Duluth established a study of the habitat lynx frequent and how far and where they range. Biologists have captured two male lynx in the Isabella area and fitted them with radio collars. They will continue to track these animals and hope to put collars on additional lynx throughout the next several years.

“Concurrent with listing lynx as ‘threatened’ comes the need to know a whole lot more about the species,” explained NRRI biologist Chris Burdett. “We want to know: Will they stay? Will they starve? Will they move to Canada, or to Wisconsin or Michigan? We need to know what they’re doing and how they’re doing.”

The use of radio tracking is the most recent addition to ongoing efforts to learn more about lynx in Minnesota. In January 2002, the Superior National Forest began a Canada lynx backtracking study. Cat tracks found on a road were followed into the woods to lynx scat or hair that could be collected for DNA testing. This technique confirmed lynx presence in the Forest, and the need for more intensive lynx studies.

“As we learn more about lynx habitat and ecology, we can better integrate lynx needs into our multiple-use management mission,” said Ed Lindquist, Superior National Forest Wildlife Biologist.

From March to September 2002, the Forest Service has sent samples to the Rocky Mountain Research Station-Carnivore Genetics Laboratory for analysis. Results positively confirm the presence of multiple lynx in northern Minnesota, with most results from our studies on the Superior NF.

A genetics database for the Great Lakes region has been started. During the summer and fall of 2002 and through last winter, the Superior NF coordinated with other Forests, State Agencies, and the National Park Service to obtain additional samples for DNA testing. Tissue samples are better for DNA testing and much easier to process by the lab. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, local trappers, and taxidermists in adjacent areas in Ontario have also contributed tissue samples for analysis by the lab.

The Forest continues to collect DNA samples, primarily on the Superior NF and have many more samples being processed by the lab. We anticipate that lab results will provide us with more proof of unique individual lynx in the area and additional information on sex ratios and relatedness.

The Forest is also participating on efforts to collect tissue samples from lynx trapped in Ontario where they still have regulated hunting and trapping seasons. Samples are more available in Ontario and we feel the lynx are closely related to the lynx in Minnesota. In fact, they likely are part of the same population. We have not tried to estimate the number of lynx occurring in the Forest, but are confident that substantial numbers of lynx were present during the initial study period.

Agencies have received multiple sightings of lynx in these areas and other areas in northern Minnesota including sightings and videos of lynx with kittens. This is good evidence that we have a reproducing population of lynx on the Superior NF.

The information from this research is being used on the Superior National Forest to plan projects to avoid adverse effects to lynx. Habitat needs of lynx are also considered in the analysis for revising the Forest Plans on the Superior and Chippewa National Forests.



The Canada Lynx are protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act.



Timber Sale Aids Blowdown Removal



A vicious summer storm created dangerous fuel loads on the Chequamegon-Nicolet NF.

You might say the winds of change blew across the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in August of 2000. Gale force winds downed or damaged thousands of acres of trees and launched a timber salvage effort on the Medford/Park Falls Ranger District that is just now drawing to a close.

Like the storm, the salvage effort began in the sky. Aerial reconnaissance helped zero in on the most heavily hit areas of the National Forest. Ultimately, field personnel would visit over 3,000 acres to more accurately assess the amount of wind fallen trees.

The result was a proposed action that recommended harvesting 3,100 acres within the storm's path. An Environmental Assessment followed and eventually a Decision Notice was issued in June 2002 and was not appealed. Salvage operations began the following month. Bids on the salvage sales exceeded expectations and lay to rest concerns about the effects of rot, insects, and disease on the value of

the timber.

"We were worried that some of the sales wouldn't be bid on because the wood had been down for a while," said Jim Lalonde, Timber Management Assistant Ranger. "We were pleased to see everything go above minimum-bid levels."

Loggers have wasted little time in removing the estimated 22.5 million board feet offered for sale.

"It looks like most of the timber will be salvaged by sometime this summer," Lalonde added.

This is none too soon. Last fall the winds of change blew once again this time as a tornado that flattened several thousand more acres on the Medford/Park Falls District.

"We learned a lot from the first blowdown, and we are moving much faster on the tornado salvage as a result. But I hope this is the last of it for a while," remarked a weary Lalonde.

A Secret Recipe: The Chippewa's "CMapper"

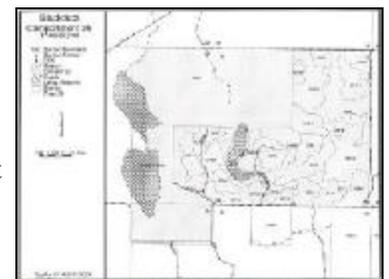
OK....that's an order of 25 maps to go..... five topped with lakes and rare aquatic vegetation; three a combination of lakes, vegetation and even-aged stands; nine topped with timber, lake and wetland resources; and eight extra-large maps with everything.

The Geographic Information Systems (GIS) shop on the Chippewa National Forest is a bit like a fast food pizzeria. To help meet the needs of the Chippewa staff, John Rickers, Forest GIS Coordinator, and Darryl Holman, GIS specialist, wrote a special GIS application called the "Cmapper"—their secret recipe!

The CMapper allows employees to make and customize compartment maps for their specific projects by merely starting the application and typing in the district and compartment of interest. The GIS staff developed the program so it would be quick, easy, user-friendly, and use current data; it put making compartment maps at the finger tips of all employees. It has been used to generate hundreds of maps for timber, sensitive species, and heritage surveys. Training sessions on the use of CMapper were held on Forest to get everyone up and running.

The use of GIS is important in many Forest projects. It allows us to see the Forest from many different views. CMapper puts this capability in the hands of those that need it.

The "CMapper" has added more chefs in the Chippewa's kitchen, but it's the GIS guys with the secret recipe.



Sample of a compartment map created using the CMapper.



Wayne Employee Lends Expertise on Visit to Guatemala Forests

The Operations Group Leader on the Wayne National Forest recently returned after spending three weeks in March working on natural resource projects in Guatemala.

Carleen Yocum and two other Forest Service employees were part of the Maya Biosphere Project (MBP) in Petén, Guatemala. This 13-year project is a partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development/Guatemala Mission. The MBP was originally designed to offer Guatemalans an opportunity to sustainably manage natural forest resources, with the ultimate goal of maintaining a valuable ecological resource.

This was not Yocum's first trip to the region. She has served previously on project teams between 1998-2000.

The objectives of the Forest Service Team were to evaluate 1) forest management activities, 2) business management practices, 3) compliance with USAID environmental requirements, and 4) recommend priority activities for future USAID support in light of diminishing funding levels.

The MBP encompasses more than 500,000 hectares, and is critical to the Guatemalan government's goal of conserving unfragmented natural forest, stopping unregulated colonization and agricultural burning, and improving economic well-being of literally hundreds of residents from revenues generated by forest management activities.

More than half a million hectares of land within the Reserve have been awarded under forest concessions to local groups for their stewardship. Many have now been recognized for good forest management by international third party certifiers. Hundreds of local residents have full- and part-time employment because of sustainable forest management activities within community concessions, ranging from timber harvest and wood processing, to non-timber forest products.

Yocum said team members averaged 10-12 hour days visiting concession harvest areas, interviewing community members, mill operators and forestry specialists, and reviewing project documents. To take advantage of limited time and gain first-hand knowledge for the evaluation, some nights were spent camped out in remote locations. Food and sleeping arrangements were far different than one would expect for a U.S.-based detail, even compared to fire assignments.

She reported the team took advantage of every waking moment to discuss tropical and community forestry issues, and commercialization challenges with Guatemalans who have a vested interest in the success of the MBP. She said her team members were able to bring to the discussion experience in other Latin American countries, as well as the U.S.

Informal professional relationships were established or rekindled during the team's field visits and follow-up. Professional and peer relationships are especially important in Latin American countries, and form the basis for many innovative partnerships that further international activities. For example, on this trip one of the team members was able to broker contacts and introductions between businesses in the U.S. and community forestry and small businesses in the Petén, resulting in valuable sales leads for isolated communities and businesses. Another link made was between small carpenter shops interested in kiln-dried wood and a Bolivian technical assistance group working with Forest Service research scientists on appropriate solar kiln technology.

Yocum said she thoroughly enjoyed her Guatemalan detail and hopes to be able to continue to participate in international forestry.



Carleen Yocum (wearing the orange vest) recently spent three weeks in Guatemala.





White Mountain Stewardship Contract Instrumental in Building Discovery Trail



One part of the White Mountain National Forest's Discovery Trail includes a scenic bridge.

Residents of New Hampshire and Maine have long been accustomed to the idea of working forests. But to millions of others from East Coast urban areas, the sights and sounds of logging operations are contrary to their generation's idea of the "northern forest."

A bridge was needed to close this gap of knowledge and understanding. An interpretive trail through the White Mountain National Forest along the well-traveled Kancamagus Highway seemed like a good place to start. The trail would identify the multiple uses of national forest lands and the multiple values those lands can deliver. The Forest Service

completed planning for the "Discovery Trail" in 1995.

For the next six years, the Forest Service worked with the National Forest Foundation and local forestry organizations to raise funds to augment congressional appropriations. Two years later, the trail was opened to the public. The final components of the site were put in place during the summer of 2003.

Stewardship contracting—goods for services—was tested in the construction of the Discovery Trail. With authority from Congress for trials across the country, the Forest Service selected several projects including the Discovery Trail. A local construction company performed small logging operations and removed trees it could sell in exchange for creating trails, a trailhead, and a parking area that would become part of the interpretive trail system.

Stewardship didn't stop with the completion of construction. The Forest Service established a local team of citizens and organizations to provide for the long-term stewardship of the "educational experience" at the Discovery Trail, including assisting with the development of a set of educational activities including things to do on the "kids trail," interpretive signs, and other potential improvements.

The Discovery Trail is proof that stewardship contracting can benefit local contractors, the Forest Service, and stakeholders of the national forests. It also demonstrates that through "hands-on discovery" at national forest sites, urban visitors to the Northwoods can better understand the role of the "working forest."

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