

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service  
Eastern Region



*US Forest Service, Eastern Region*

# The Year in Review 2008



**Courageous Conservation**  
*A sustainable future, a legacy of restoration*

## From the Regional Forester

For the Eastern Region, 2008 will be remembered as a year of hard work and rewarding accomplishments. With the help of countless volunteers and partners, our public lands in the East are thriving as never before. Millions of visitors experienced firsthand the splendors and natural serenity offered by our national forests and tallgrass prairie.

This year we celebrated notable anniversaries in the East with the Chippewa (100 years), Ottawa (75 years), and Finger Lakes (25 years) National Forests. We also marked the 40th anniversary of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, a landmark achievement that has enabled us to protect water quality, aquatic ecosystems, and recreational values.

We ramped up our efforts to increase sustainable operations that conserve vital resources. We're working with local businesses to recycle and reuse hundreds of tons of broken concrete on the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Solar energy is powering campground water pumps and office buildings, and our overall fuel consumption is declining as we explore more alternative energy sources.

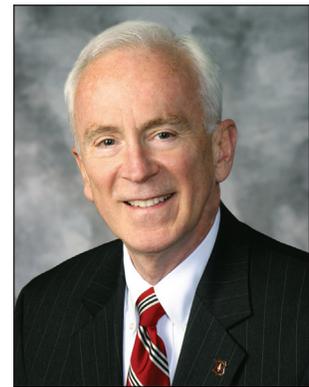
We again demonstrated our commitment to responding to national crises in 2008. During another difficult year for firefighting, Eastern Region employees contributed nearly 10,000 days assisting in fire suppression efforts in the West, and we transferred more than \$17 million in funding. We also provided high-caliber field and technical assistance for hurricane relief in Texas and Louisiana and in response to the spring flooding in five Midwestern states.

The invasive emerald ash borer remains a top concern. We are also closely monitoring the newly discovered white nose syndrome that is killing bats on our national forests and across the East. We are working with other federal and state agencies to craft a comprehensive strategy to address these threats on both public and private land.

I offer my sincere thanks to members of the public who work in partnership with us to sustain and improve our national forests and tallgrass prairie. I invite you to come out and see what we have to offer!



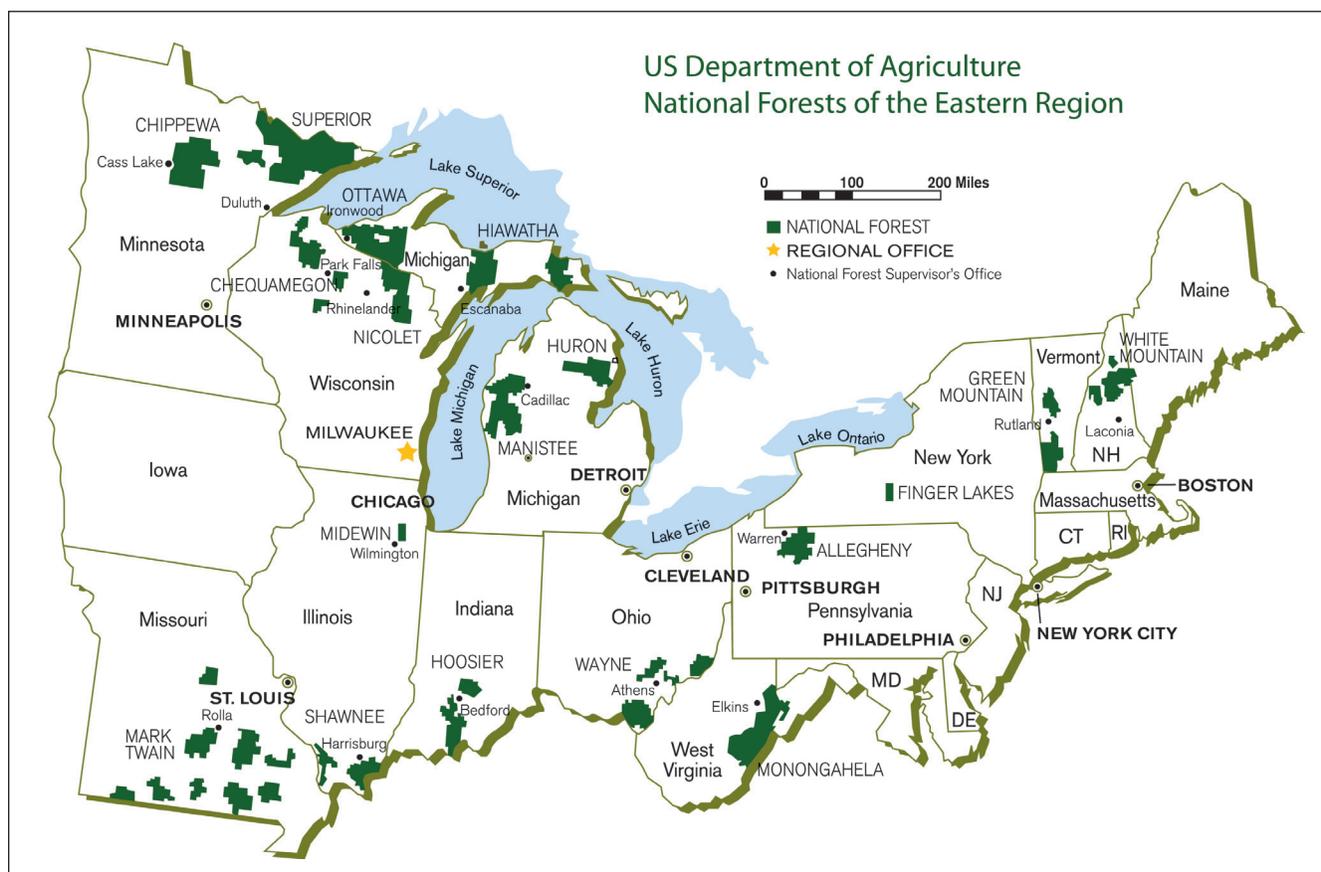
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# Protect Ecosystems Across Boundaries



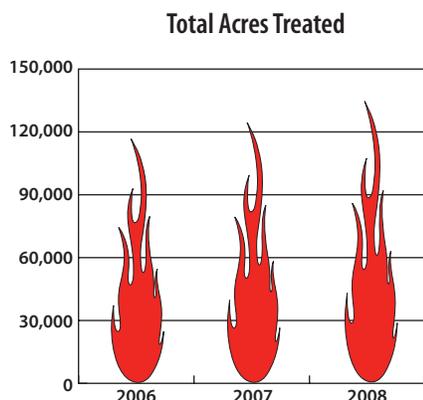
## Monongahela Makes it Official with The Nature Conservancy

This fall, the Monongahela National Forest (W.Va.) and The Nature Conservancy formalized a partnership to control non-native invasive species and restore high-elevation red spruce ecosystems. Non-native invasive species are particularly important as they can negatively impact the Forest's unique and sensitive ecosystems.



## Collaboration Helps Reduce the Risk of Fires

*In 2008, we continued to reduce hazardous fuels, focusing on the wildland-urban interface—communities in and around undeveloped land. Working with partners, we leveraged funds to achieve multiple benefits through coordination, careful planning, and project implementation on public and private lands. Grants were awarded to the Shawnee National Forest (Ill.) and nearby communities to complete community wildfire protection plans. The Superior National Forest partnered with the state of Minnesota and three counties to reduce hazardous fuels on non-federal lands.*



We continued to protect the 12 million acres of public lands in the East by working with partners, other agencies, and private landowners. We collaborated with national partners, such as the Boy Scouts and The Nature Conservancy, on significant projects to ensure these lands are protected for generations to come. During this past year, we:

- Completed six projects to improve road-aquatic system crossings that increase aquatic species survival, enhance water quality, and provide safer travel;
- Crossed international boundaries by hosting Chinese delegates and Ukrainian foresters to share land management expertise and conservation strategies;
- Addressed air quality concerns by monitoring conditions on Minnesota's Superior National Forest, thereby participating in the air quality regulatory process; and
- Worked across boundaries separating forests and regions by assisting on numerous prescribed burns and wildfires in the Southern Region's George Washington & Jefferson National Forests.

## WILD & SCENIC RIVERS ACT CELEBRATES 40 YEARS

The year 2008 marked the 40th anniversary of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. During this time, the Eastern Region collaborated with public and private agencies, the rivers' surrounding communities, and tribal nations to maintain healthy watersheds and clean water. Currently, there are 20 nationally designated Wild & Scenic Rivers and 12 congressionally authorized study rivers in the Region. Continuing this legacy, we celebrated a significant land acquisition this year on the Ottawa National Forest (Mich.) containing a 6.5-mile segment of the wild and scenic Sturgeon River. The 2,000-acre property is within the designated boundary of the Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness, which provides recreation opportunities and protects wetlands.



## Warbler Stages a Comeback in Wisconsin

One of North America's rarest birds, the Kirtland's warbler, was spotted in Wisconsin's Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in July. This marked the first sighting of the bird in the state in more than 70 years. The discovery was due in large part to the rehabilitation of large blocks of young, dense jack pine per the Forest's land management plan. We believe the Kirtland's warbler is breeding on the Forest, and we'll continue our habitat monitoring and improvement work to further encourage the species' recovery.

## Boy Scouts Partner with Forest Service to Restore Glades



This summer, as part of their National ArrowCorps Project, the Boy Scouts of America partnered with the Forest Service to restore 134 acres of glade ecosystem in Missouri's Mark Twain National Forest. More than 500 scouts removed invasive eastern red cedars, which encroach on the open glades. Volunteer labor was valued at more than \$542,000, making it the largest volunteer project to ever take place on the Forest.

## Land Ahoy—Region Makes Significant Land Acquisitions

We acquired significant land parcels this year from The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, and other partners that enable us to provide additional recreation opportunities, protect wildlife, fish, and wetlands, and preserve habitat for at-risk species.

### Specific accomplishments include:

|                          |              |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| Acres Acquired           | 7,355 acres  |
| Purchase Dollars Spent   | \$12,854,777 |
| Number of Land Purchases | 25           |



## RESTORING GREAT LAKES WATERSHEDS

Since 2006, the Great Lakes Watershed Restoration Grant Program has invested nearly \$9 million in 52 projects that address the ecological restoration needs identified by the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration. The Eastern Region is part of the Regional Working Group, which includes the Arcelor Mittal Corp. and other federal agencies. Project activities restore critical wetland, stream, sand dune, and forest habitats for fish and wildlife species, as well as the control of non-native invasive plants.

### Specific accomplishments include:

- 311.5 wetland acres restored;
- 23.3 miles in several streams opened for fish passage;
- 47,200 square feet of river channel and upland buffer restored or improved;
- 3,615 coastal and upland acres restored.

## Monarchs Take Flight

The Eastern Region's Monarch butterfly conservation and monitoring efforts yielded exciting results in 2008. The Hiawatha National Forest (Mich.) received the 2008 Wings Across the America's award for butterfly conservation for their Monarch Research Project that tracks the delicate species' migration through the Forest. To date, 19 monarchs tagged on the Forest have been found over-wintering near El Rosario, Mexico.

Recognizing this important tie between the U.S. and Mexico, the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie (Ill.) participated in a unique student-instructor exchange with Mexico to share conservation strategies and important community connections tied to Monarchs.

Both the Midewin and Hiawatha are part of the newly launched Monarch Live interactive on-line program that gives participants an overview of the monarch's international migratory flight.



## Stories of Restoration & Reintroduction

|  |                            |  |
|--|----------------------------|--|
|  | Allegheny (Pa.)            | Foresters from the Allegheny are working with researchers to restore healthy American beech, in part by collecting twigs from resistant beech and grafting them onto beech seedlings.  |
|  | Chequamegon-Nicolet (Wis.) | Partnering with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, the Forest began a three-year effort to release 30 American martens by the end of November each year.   |
|  | Chippewa (Minn.)           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Chippewa received 700 disease tolerant American elm seedlings for planting in Spring 2009;</li> <li>Working with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, the Forest is contributing to a University of Minnesota ash tree seed collection effort to help preserve ash populations which are being devastated by the invasive emerald ash borer.</li> </ul> |
|  | Wayne (Oh.)                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Wayne planted 376 disease-tolerant American chestnut tree seedlings;</li> <li>Working with the U.S. Fish &amp; Wildlife Service, The Wilds, St. Louis Zoo, and Ohio Division of Wildlife, 250 pairs of American burying beetles—a federally endangered species—were re-introduced on the Forest.</li> </ul>   |

# Connect Citizens to the Land



Our Eastern public lands are ideal settings for reconnecting with nature and enjoying the splendor of the great outdoors. We're developing new recreation facilities to enhance visitor experiences, and reaching out to city residents through our Urban Connections program. In 2008 we made notable achievements in connecting citizens to the land by:

- Sharing conservation education messages with more than 6,000 inner city youth in Milwaukee through our America's Outdoors summer intern program;
- Through Detroit Urban Connections, we expanded our successful partnership with the internationally recognized Greenfield Village at The Henry Ford Museum;
- Joining with Wildlife Forever to reach thousands of outdoor enthusiasts at the 2008 State-Fish Art Expo at the Mall of America in Minneapolis; and
- Hosting the first national Get Outdoors Day at four locations across the Eastern Region.

## Schoolyard Habitats

In 2008 as part of the "More Kids in the Woods" initiative, the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest and the Region's Urban Connections program partnered with the University of Wisconsin Arboretum to launch Schoolyard Habitats Across Wisconsin. This project established wildlife habitats on school grounds that will be managed by 14,000 kindergarten-12th graders.



## PARTNERSHIPS



Partners in the East contributed \$11 million to regional projects, an increase of 20 percent over 2007. Whether it's local partnerships with small conservation groups or a global partnership through the U.S. Agency for International Development in the African nation of Niger, our employees are engaged in meaningful professional endeavors that make a difference.

## Chippewa Centennial

On May 23, Minnesota's Chippewa was the first national forest in the East to celebrate its centennial. The Forest's story began in 1897 when the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs opposed the public sale of forested lands. In 1908, the Minnesota National Forest was established by President Theodore Roosevelt, and was renamed in 1928 to honor its original inhabitants, the Chippewa Indians.

## Motor Vehicle Use Maps



America's Great Outdoors

We began producing new Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUM) in 2006, and each forest is scheduled to have an updated one by 2009. These maps clearly identify forest roads open to off highway vehicles and roads designated for hiking or cycling. Designating roads for particular uses, as shown on the maps, will enhance the recreation experience while protecting sensitive areas.



# Walk the Talk for Sustainability



We are managing our public lands in a sustainable manner to ensure these national treasures are here for generations to come. We accomplished this by:

- Incorporating sustainable design elements in administrative buildings, such as the Superior National Forest's Kawishiwi Ranger Station (Minn.), in order to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification criteria;
- Adding more solar panels to the Wayne National Forest (Ohio) Supervisor's Office roof, which now provides six percent of the building's energy use (see photo below); and
- Producing 189,692 green tons of woody biomass material—to be used for bio-energy and bio-based products—generated through vegetative management treatments.

## Gardening for Pollinators & Native Plants

Pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, play a crucial role in flowering plants, and fruit and vegetable production. Recent evidence suggests that pollinator populations are declining. To sustain this important resource, the Eastern Region created 27 new native plant and pollinator gardens at administrative sites in 2008. The gardens are designed to spur local community interest in native plant gardens.



## Eastern Region Co-Hosts National Sustainable Operations Summit

The Region co-hosted the National Forest Service Sustainable Operations Summit in November at the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin. The objective of the Summit was to explore sustainable policy issues across geographic, organizational, and agency boundaries. Not only did we discuss how to reduce our environmental footprint, we "walked the talk" by incorporating green meeting practices, such as video and web conferencing that allowed people from across the country to participate. A number of regional employees made presentations and contributed to a year-long planning effort in order to make the Summit a huge success.

## Timber—Managing a Renewable Resource

In response to housing market issues, direction in the Forestry Title of the current Farm Bill had a significant impact on the Region's timber program in 2008. Nearly 200 of our timber sale contracts qualified to be re-appraised or modified—the most in the nation. Despite these challenges, we contributed to the country's need for wood products by providing 13 percent of all timber volume sold by the Forest Service nationally. This past year we sold 634,822 cubic feet of timber valued at \$31,616,006.



## Incorporating Environmental Consciousness in Everything We Do

The Forest Service's newly launched Environmental Management System (EMS) is designed to continually improve our environmental performance, and is a tool to monitor and document our progress. In 2008, we reduced our fuel consumption by implementing fuel-saving practices related to how we acquire, maintain, and operate our vehicles. In addition, we continued to cut travel by holding more meetings using video teleconferences.



# Revolutionize Effectiveness and Efficiency



We constantly strive to improve our service delivery, and implement new business practices that save time and money. We are incorporating new techniques and integrating across resource areas to more effectively and efficiently fund on-the-ground projects. In 2008 we demonstrated this by:

- Using 2008 funds for wildlife, watershed, reforestation, and road maintenance to reduce fuels in the wildland-urban interface, improve fire evacuation routes, and maintain, enhance, and restore ecosystems;
- Entering 100 percent of the required elements into the Infra database for all of the qualified federal real property profile assets in the Region; and
- The Chippewa's GIS team building a web-based computer application that all employees can use to easily access forest bridge data and reports.

## Training Sessions Come into the 21st Century

In April, the Eastern Region held the first all-virtual workshop on a natural resource information system computer application. Employees participated from their home offices and gained first-hand experience using databases to collect invasive species inventory and habitat treatment data, and generated reports and summaries. This new training method increased our efficiency by saving approximately \$30,000 in travel costs, reducing the carbon usage that would have occurred if people traveled.

## Regional Forester Speaks to Employees



**Regional Forester TV (RF TV) debuted in 2008 to provide a channel for directly addressing employees on important issues through a video podcast available on the Region's intranet site. RF TV topics included the Regional Forester's thoughts on climate change; the Region's vision of Courageous Conservation; Urban Connections and our partnership with The Henry Ford; and financial implications of 2008's fire season. RF TV has revolutionized the flow of information from the Regional Forester to employees at remote district offices and across the Region.**

## Growing Partnerships for Stewardship

In 2008 we continued to expand our stewardship contracting program in the East by holding workshops where local communities, interest groups, and businesses learned about stewardship contracting. Potential partners had an opportunity to hear directly from contractors who have benefited from the program. Our stewardship contracting efforts allowed us to leverage more resources to restore watersheds, habitat, and reduce hazardous fuels. Over 10,500 acres were enhanced and restored through partnerships in 2008.



## Recreation Facilities Analysis Completed

*All 14 national forests in the Region completed a recreation facility analysis and associated five-year program of work in 2008. This process ensures visitor satisfaction by providing quality recreation facilities that are managed within budget and resource constraints. Public involvement was critical during the analysis and we'll again encourage recommendations from the public as we develop implementation strategies. The analysis documents and programs of work are posted on each forest's website.*

## Region Crafts Efficient Response to Storm Damage

**Ice storms and flooding in 2008 caused significant damage to roads and facilities in our southern tier forests. Heavy rains in June also damaged other forests across the Region, from Wisconsin to New Hampshire. Total damage to roads and facilities was estimated at nearly \$14 million. These unanticipated costs forced us to seek funding through the Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) program, one of many partnership programs of the**



**Federal Highway Administration. ERFO will pay an estimated \$9 million of the \$14 million needed to repair road damage, allowing us to focus regional funds on essential restoration projects on the affected forests.**

# Be an Employer of Choice



In 2008, the Eastern Region continued to expand training and growth opportunities for its employees and increase outreach and recruiting efforts aimed at a diverse pool of college graduates. We strengthened our reputation for being an employer of choice by:

- Hosting an Employer of Choice Champions workshop that positions us to attract and retain a quality workforce reflecting the people we serve, and establishing Champions on every unit in the Region;
- Hiring 18 foresters through the Agency's Career Intern Program;
- Graduating three employees from the Forest Service's Senior Leader Program, and having another employee selected to be an executive coach for the program; and
- Exceeding targets for contracting work with small businesses and disabled veteran-owned companies.

## SCEPs

The Eastern Region continued its commitment to building a skilled and diverse workforce in 2008 through its Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). In SCEP, college students work in Forest Service jobs related to their academic fields of study while gaining valuable hands-on work experience.



**Page 3** Top Left; **Caption:** young loon is examined as part of study to track mercury in aquatic systems on Superior NF; **Collaboration Helps Reduce Risks of Fire;** **Caption:** firefighter monitors prescribed burn on the Monongahela NF; **Warbler Stages a Comeback;** **Caption:** Kirtland's warbler perches on the branch of a jack pine tree; **Boy Scouts Partner With Forest to Combat Invasives;** **Caption:** A Boy Scout working on the Mark Twain NF removes an invasive Eastern Red Cedar Tree.

**Page 5** Top Left; **Caption:** Kids in Detroit help Woody Owl share the message of reuse,

## Job Corps Students Graduate into the Forest Service

We are working with 14 Job Corps Centers (JCC) in the Eastern and Southern Regions to transition qualified JCC graduates into permanent Forest Service positions. In 2008, nine graduates were accepted into an advanced wildland fire program as Student Career Experience Program students. Among the year's highlights was a motivational speech from best-selling author Stedman Graham at the Golconda JCC in Illinois.



reduce, & recycle. **Schoolyard Habitats;** **Caption:** In Wisconsin, school kids are reconnecting with their natural environment. **Chippewa Centennial;** **Caption:** The Chippewa's Centennial Quilt hung outside the Chief's Office in Washington, D.C.

**Page 6** *Increasing Space for Pollinators & Native Plants;* **Caption:** Pollinator/Native Plant Garden at the St. Ignace District Ranger Office on the Hiawatha NF; Top Right; **Caption:** The Wayne Supervisor's Office solar panel roof; Bottom Right; **Caption:** The Kawishiwi Ranger Station on the Superior NF.

**Page 7** *Training Sessions Come into the 21st Century;* **Caption:** Room in the Regional Office used for virtual training sessions; *Region Finds Efficient Way to Address Storm Damage;* **Caption:** Uplifted pavement and washout of Red Bluff Recreation Area on the Mark Twain NF due to flooding.

**Page 8** SCEPs; **Caption:** Students prep plants for projects on the Midewin NTP as part of 2008 SCEP orientation. *Job Corps Center Initiative;* **Caption:** (left): Job Corps students are paving a new road to their future; **Caption:** (right): Golconda Job Corps Center received a special visit from Stedman Graham.

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