

WHAT'S NEW?

THE US FOREST SERVICE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

July 2011

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Fostering Forest Law Enforcement Cooperation Around the World**
- **Making Timber Trade in the Asia and Pacific Region More Transparent**
- **A Hemispheric Event: International Migratory Bird Day**
- **US Forest Service Assists With Devastating Wildland Fires in Israel**
- **United States, Mexico, and Canada Address Conservation of Valuable Forest Genetic Resources**
- **Update on the Destructive Emerald Ash Borer**
- **US Forest Service Assists Haiti With Cholera Epidemic**



For more information on any of these program areas, please visit www.fs.fed.us/global/

For more information:
1-202-273-4695



The Office of International Programs is currently working to improve forest management, to conserve biodiversity and to foster the trade of sustainably harvested forest products around the world.

FOSTERING LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION AROUND THE WORLD

Law enforcement is a crucial part of managing forests sustainably, conserving biodiversity and supporting the trade of legally-harvested forest products around the world. The US Forest Service International Programs is currently working to improve law enforcement in the context of sustainable natural resource management by facilitating cooperation between the Agency's Law Enforcement and Investigation agents with the Department of Justice, Department of Agriculture and US Fish and Wildlife Agency counterparts on implementation of the Lacey Act, the Convention of Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nation's Wildlife Enforcement Network. To date, efforts have been focused on enhanced cooperation to detect and prosecute trade of illegally harvested wood products and illegal wildlife trafficking domestically and internationally.

The work has broad implications—environmental compliance and enforcement are the foundation for the rule of law, good governance, and sustainable development. It is also challenging but important to address enforcement across borders. Developing effective enforcement networks to combat illegal logging and trade, promoting the control and surveillance of fisheries and wildlife, and enhancing cooperation with civil society and the private sector are some of the ways to support this work.

In June, David Ferrell, Director of Law Enforcement and Investigations, attended the 9th Conference of the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement in British Columbia, Canada. Over 150 environmental compliance and enforcement experts from over 50 countries gathered to identify new actions to promote enforcement cooperation to combat environmental crime and support the shift to sustainable development and a green economy. INTERPOL, the International Criminal Police Organization, was in attendance at the meeting to further our collaboration with them.

MAKING TIMBER TRADE IN ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION MORE TRANSPARENT

From consumers to importers and manufacturers, everyone needs better data on wood: timber species, country of harvest and chain of custody. By having worked with other organizations, the US Forest Service International Programs has been involved in ensuring that comprehensive and sound information is available.

This month, International Programs is sponsoring a workshop in Malaysia for governments, non-governmental organizations and industry in Asia to discuss tools that can improve transparency in timber trade, ways to combat illegal logging and associated trade, and data management systems that can be adapted to include varying conditions, data availability, species information and laws. Scientists and private sector

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firms, who have developed or used technologies for tracking timber and wood products, will present at the meeting and stimulate discussions on these tools as well as benefits to the end user. The workshop will also address broader regional issues, such as capacity building and technology development.

The workshop will benefit many and address a wide range of information needs. Many private industries, for example, rely on imported woods. From small businesses, like guitar makers, to large furniture manufacturers, they would be interested in information, such as species of wood or country of harvest. Not surprisingly, these firms are advocating for systems that provide accurate information on log tracking, wood product chain of custody, and wood identification.

Private industry is motivated by the changing landscape of international laws, which are increasingly mandating the need for systems that provide this information. Likewise, countries importing wood are interested in having more accurate information so that they can protect their industries and related jobs. Better information means companies can comply with international standards and laws. On the flip side, forested countries that export wood are interested in protecting their forests as well as their private sector interests. The workshop will provide valuable information for users, product developers and researchers, and help to increase overall transparency in the region's timber trade.

A HEMISPHERIC EVENT: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

International Migratory Bird Day is the largest event in the Western Hemisphere that focuses on increasing public awareness of birds and their conservation. Since its creation in 1993, the event has grown to over 450 parallel celebrations from Canada to Colombia, and each one is hosted by bird observatories, zoos and aquaria, wildlife refuges, parks, recreation centers, schools, bird and nature stores, and more. The US Forest Service participates in this event as part of the Wings Across the Americas, a program that coalesces the efforts of the entire Agency and its partners to conserve migratory birds, bats, butterflies and dragonflies. For years, International Programs has been a partner for this event and has been involved in many of its activities.

US stakeholders have a vested interest in migratory species. The private sector, non-governmental organizations and US government agencies spend millions of dollars annually protecting them and restoring their US habitats. These investments are lost if their winter homes, many of which are in Latin America and the Caribbean, are diminishing from threats, such as fire and illegal logging.



International Migratory Bird Day is usually celebrated to coincide with the arrival of migratory birds. In Latin America and the Caribbean, it is celebrated primarily in the fall, while most events in Canada and the U.S. take place in the spring. International Migratory Bird Day has become a rallying cry for bird conservation, a jumping off point for press releases about environmental issues, such as the recent Gulf oil spill. The success of International Migratory Bird Day is due to enthusiastic public involvement and strong support from its sponsors. For more information, visit www.birdday.org. For more information on Wings Across the Americas, please visit www.fs.fed.us/global/wings.

US FOREST SERVICE ASSISTS WITH DEVASTATING WILDLAND FIRES IN ISRAEL

The US Forest Service and the Jewish National Fund, a nonprofit organization that manages forest land in Israel, have been working together for over 20 years. This close partnership began in 1987 when the Forest Service sent firefighters to help battle wildland fires in the forested corridor between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Since that time, the two organizations have collaborated on several joint projects designed to promote technical exchange on forest issues common to both Israel and the United States. This exchange has assisted both countries to learn from each other's experiences and further develop the management practices of both.

The Mount Carmel forest fire of 2010 was one of the largest and most devastating wildland fires in Israeli history. The pine forests of Mount Carmel, located in northern

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Israel along the Mediterranean coastline, had been increasingly vulnerable to fire during the autumn months of 2010 as a result of warm weather and lack of rainfall throughout that season. The fire began in December 2010 and burned for four days before being extinguished by Israeli firefighters with air and ground support from a coalition of international partners, including the US Agency for International Development and the Forest Service. During that time the fire consumed about 20,000 acres (8,000 hectares) of forest, displaced more than 17,000 residents and killed 44 people.

The environmental consequences of such a destructive event can be enormous. In the short-term, the large-scale loss of vegetation can destabilize hillsides and lead to soil erosion and, in extreme cases, landslides. In the long-term, the death of native and slow-growing tree species allows invasive plants to colonize newly opened forest niches, preventing the native species from returning and resulting in a general decrease in biodiversity. In the case of the Mount Carmel fire, these environmental consequences are especially pertinent given the presence of many endangered or threatened animal species in the nearby Carmel Hai-Bar Nature Reserve. In order to restore sensitive ecosystems such as this one, forest managers need to quickly assess the damage and begin developing both an immediate restoration plan and a long-term forest management plan that addresses strategies for preventing future wildfires.

In response to a request by the Jewish National Fund, the US Forest Service sent a team to Israel in March 2011 to learn about ongoing restoration work and provide recommendations for the development of a long-term forest management plan for the forest. The US Forest Service team, comprised of a soil scientist, a watershed hydrologist and a fire ecologist, visited the burned forest on Mount Carmel and met with Israeli professionals from the Jewish National Fund, the Israeli government and the scientific community. The team also took part in a workshop to explore topics with their Israeli colleagues including ongoing forest restoration, helping to lay the foundation for

the sustainable management of the Carmel Forest. The work continues the longstanding tradition of cooperation and technical exchange between the people of the United States and Israel.

UNITED STATES, MEXICO AND CANADA ADDRESS CONSERVATION OF VALUABLE FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

For over 50 years, the Forest Genetics Resources Working Group of the North American Forest Commission (NAFC)—a regional forestry body of the UN Food and Agricultural Organization—has worked to address the conservation of genetic resources in Canada, Mexico and the United States. Recently, the Working Group—comprised of scientists and forest management experts from each of the country's federal forest agencies, universities and non-governmental organizations—has responded to the challenges of global change and emerging threats to forest resources. The annual meeting of the Working Group was held at the US Forest Service's Coweeta Hydrologic Laboratory in North Carolina to share information and explore ideas for trilateral collaboration to address forestry issues.

The Working Group recently studied the complex biogeographic history of Douglas-fir, a dominant conifer species whose distribution range spans from Mexico to Canada in the western part of the continent. Analyzing DNA markers of trees along the complete range of the species improves our understanding of how Douglas-fir has responded to geological and climatic events of the past. This will pave the way to better predict how this tree species responds to similar events.

The Working Group also found that northern populations of the Douglas-fir, found in British Columbia and north-western states of the US, were characterized by a high level of genetic diversity. The Douglas-fir located in the southwestern states of the US harbour slightly lower levels of genetic diversity, and Mexican populations of Douglas-fir showed the lowest levels and the highest divergence. Low genetic diversity makes for greater vulnerability to environmental change. Greater divergence may imply close adaptation to the local environment, but more often it

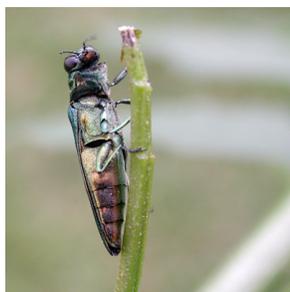


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indicates random chance (called genetic drift) and inbreeding. When inbreeding and drift are the cause of population divergence, active management is necessary to reduce the threat of extinction. As a result of this study, it is advisable to actively conserve the Mexican Douglas-fir, which is most vulnerable to environmental change. To do this, the Working Group advocates both establishing seed banks and conservation plantations, often called assisted colonization, as soon as possible. For more information on the Working Group and its trilateral activities, please visit www.fs.fed.us/global/nafc.

UPDATE ON THE DESTRUCTIVE EMERALD ASH BORER

In May 2011, the Washington Post reported that the Emerald Ash Borer, an invasive species native to China, had infested New York's Hudson Valley, the farthest east that the beetle has been found in North America. Since its introduction into the United States, the borer has killed tens of millions of ash trees. With no natural enemies here, it has the potential to destroy most of this genus on the continent, resulting in billions of dollars of losses to the US economy. It can also destroy forests, decrease biodiversity and change the delicate balance of native species here.



To protect the US economy and our forests, the US Forest Service International Programs works with Chinese counterparts to look for biocontrol mechanisms by studying the Emerald Ash Borer's natural enemies. It is a far more economic and effective means of suppressing the pest. In addition, International Programs is working with the USDA Agricultural Research Service on a three-year project to better understand why the borer is a successful invasive species. This will help predict and prevent potential future outbreaks by related woodboring beetles. The two agencies will conduct taxonomic research on Emerald Ash Borer and related species and further develop information on the biology of the species.

Currently, a Forest Service entomologist is in China to

collect specimens for this study and work with Chinese experts. This information will be used to publish a fully illustrated identification manual and serve as the basis for training workshops and several illustrated books that will further disseminate this valuable information.

US FOREST SERVICE ASSISTS HAITI WITH CHOLERA EPIDEMIC

In the fall of 2010, cholera hit Haiti with a vengeance. According to the UN World Health Organization, it was the first such outbreak in nearly a century. The devastation from the earthquake, which had occurred just ten months earlier, created perfect conditions for the disease to spread. The cholera bacterium thrives among people living in unsanitary and crowded conditions, and consuming contaminated water or food is the principle way to become infected with the disease.

To stem the spread of the outbreak and address those affected with the disease, the Government of Haiti formally requested the U.S. Government for assistance to establish temporary cholera treatment centers. On October 26, 2010, the US Agency for International Development deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team to coordinate USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) emergency response efforts in collaboration with other organizations. The Team also provided technical assistance to Haiti's Ministry of Public Health and Population and supported relief agencies' response activities. In Washington, D.C., USAID organized a Response Management Team to support field efforts in Haiti. The emergency cholera response plan focused on preventing subsequent cholera cases, reducing the number of cases requiring hospitalization, and reducing fatalities.

Due to the US Forest Service's longstanding experience with emergency disaster response and renowned for developing the Incident Command System, the Agency participated in the response efforts by providing key staff support to the effort in Washington, DC. Through the International Program's Disaster Assistance Support Program, specialists planned and facilitated a review for USAID/OFDA, focusing on issues such as managing responses in a single high-risk country. These lessons learned will be valuable as the organization prepares for future disaster response efforts.