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*Serving Lenawee, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland,  
St. Clair, Washtenaw and Wayne Counties*

## 2008 ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

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The Southeast Michigan Resource Conservation and Development Council has been working since 2004 to identify value-added uses for urban wood residues, driven largely by the need for wood disposal options following the state's emerald ash borer outbreak. By helping local communities and businesses to find higher-value uses for removed trees, we can reduce wood disposal costs, conserve resources, and create new economic opportunities for our region. The following are highlights of the projects that we worked on in 2008:



*Views of the Ann Arbor District Library's new Traverwood Branch, which used a \$30,000 grant from the Southeast Michigan RC&D Council to incorporate ash trees from the development site into decorative and functional features of the new building.*

### **Library Becomes Showplace for Ash Wood**

As the recipient of a \$30,000 demonstration grant from the Southeast Michigan RC&D, the Ann Arbor District Library's new Traverwood Branch installed whole timbers, flooring, and wall and ceiling panels made from on-site, dead ash trees throughout the new facility. They estimate that over 9,000 square feet of emerald ash borer-killed trees were used in the process. The new building opened its doors on June 30, 2008, to great public response. As a result, the library was one of seven local sites selected for a 2008 exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit entitled "*Considering Architecture: Sustainable Designs by Detroit Architects.*" Additionally, the library's use of EAB-infested ash wood is the featured topic of an upcoming documentary, "*Up from the Ashes*" by KDN Films that will be released for public television.

### **Local Communities Develop New Partnerships with Sawmills**

Through previous educational events, the RC&D Council had found that many communities have an interest in cooperating with local wood industries, but seem hesitant to actually hire one and unable to secure even a small amount of funds to try out a new idea like milling their dead trees. In 2008, the Council issued three \$1,000 "mini-grants" to communities and local organizations to fund roughly a full day of milling services and encourage them to develop partnerships with local sawmill operations. Grants were awarded to the City of Grosse Pointe Park, the Saginaw Conservation District, and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.



*Mixed pine and hardwood lumber stacked from the Saginaw Conservation District's milling project.*



*Reclaimed ash railing at the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.*



*Workers in the City of Grosse Pointe Park stack elm and ash timbers for the new bocce ball field at a city park.*

The City of Grosse Pointe Park worked with a local contractor, J&W Tree Artisans, to mill sixteen high-quality dead elm and ash street trees from city property. The lumber was used as the edging for their new bocce ball field at a city park, creating another recreational activity for residents and reducing their own wood disposal costs, all while using a more affordable resource than they could have purchased locally at a lumber yard.

The Saginaw Conservation District's forestry program worked with Schultz Farm and Log to mill white pine and hardwood logs that were obtained from a Saginaw County Road Commission road improvement effort, white ash from Consumers Energy's line clearing activities, and ash tree removals from the Regional Michigan Department of Transportation. Over 2,200 board feet of lumber was produced from this effort, with the intent to sell some as custom-order green lumber, to kiln-dry some for further resale, and to use some ash to create baseball bat blanks. A portion of the funds from lumber sales is going into the District's Forestry Endowment Fund for future tree planting and youth projects.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge constructed a rustic stream crossing on its Humbug Marsh Unit. The crossing's railing structure was made from an EAB-affected ash tree from Detroit. Richard Mills, of Logs to Lumber and Beyond, was contracted to mill the wood and assist in the railing design. Larval galleries from the EAB were left exposed on the handrails to serve as an additional educational experience for visitors to the site. At the opening ceremony alone, over 200 visitors used the new stream crossing structure.

### **Local Businesses and Communities Look to Wood Energy**

The Southeast Michigan RC&D worked with many local groups to promote wood energy opportunities in 2008. The City of Monroe just completed a wood energy assessment through a \$20,000 grant from the Council. The grant provided the city with the opportunity to conduct an in-depth analysis of the energy needs of the Department of Public Services complex and to look at the potential for converting the existing heating and mechanical system to a biomass energy system. Unfortunately, although the city found a biomass energy system to be an attractive alternative for dealing with their wood waste, their current financial situation makes it difficult to move forward with an actual installation project at this time.

Through a \$65,000 grant from the Council, the City of Taylor is working to install a wood-fired boiler system at their Heritage Park Petting Farm. The new wood biomass system, which is anticipated to use 500 tons of wood chips per year, will use fuel collected at Taylor's Racho Road compost facility which receives and processes wood residues from throughout Wayne and Monroe Counties. A wood-fueled boiler is estimated to save the city \$11,000 annually when compared with the existing natural gas system.

New \$3,000 grant awards were also just made to Macomb County's J.H. Hart Urban Forestry and Lenawee County's Vergote and Sons Greenhouses to explore how these businesses might be able to use locally-generated wood waste to fuel their business operations. The Council hopes to award at least two more of these small grants for engineering assessments in 2009.

## Local Businesses Have New Marketing Assistance

The Southeast Michigan RC&D and Recycle Ann Arbor are proud to announce the launch of *Urbanwood.org - Southeast Michigan's Reclaimed Wood Marketplace*. This website, <http://urbanwood.org>, provides an exciting opportunity for wood users to learn more about local sawmills, view photos of lumber and flooring inventories from participating mills, and learn about the urban wood products available from Recycle Ann Arbor's retail site.



The website is just one step in the RC&D's effort to help local businesses to network together to better market their products and attract customers. With the Council's help several Urbanwood partners also participated in the National Network of Forest Practitioners' People and Land Photography Fellowship this year. This project provided the Urbanwood Project with a skilled photojournalist to help tell the story of how urban trees become finished wood products. The RC&D and Recycle Ann Arbor also helped the mills to create a new marketing logo, develop educational brochures, jointly attend tradeshow, attend training workshops, and place their products in several high-profile local demonstration sites.

## Educational Programs Made Available on Using Local Wood

The Southeast Michigan RC&D Council also worked on a number of educational and outreach programs to show more opportunities for using removed urban trees. The Council helped sponsor two conferences this year – *Green: 2008 and Beyond* (a meeting to educate local wood industry on new marketing strategies, held jointly with the Great Lakes Section of the Forest Products Society) and the *Sustainable Energy Project Development Workshop for Public Institutions* (hosted by Oakland University). Additionally, the Council funded a research study at Michigan State University through Dr. Pascal Nzokou to develop heat-sanitization treatments for EAB-infested ash logs. Finally, the Council gave presentations for a wide variety of local events and maintained the following educational websites:

- *Ash Utilization Options Project* – <http://www.semircd.org/ash> – a clearinghouse for information on using ash trees killed by the emerald ash borer. The site also includes a comprehensive resource library with links to helpful how-to guides on a variety of wood-use topics.
- *Michigan Wood Energy Project* – <http://michiganwoodenergy.org> – a resource site for businesses and institutions that are considering using wood energy. The site features results from a comprehensive statewide study of wood boiler opportunities and also has an interactive wood energy calculator to allow users to calculate their own cost-benefit scenarios for switching to wood fuel.
- *Urbanwood.org* – <http://urbanwood.org> – a marketing site for local wood industries. The site features a directory of local sawmills and an online store of reclaimed urban wood products.

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