



Ash Utilization Options Project News 2006 Annual Report

Funded through support from the USDA Forest Service Wood Education and Resource Center and the USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area Rural Development through Forestry Program

**October
2006**

Greetings from the Southeast Michigan RC&D!

We've been busy this year! We've announced a new round of grant recipients, held nine municipal networking meetings throughout the entire RC&D area, and been pushing this idea of smarter urban wood use at many, many events.

We've got several great new projects lined up to take us through 2007 -- local wood biomass energy initiatives, an urban wood use conference, and the launch of a local network of urban wood producers and users. We'll also be following the work of our new demo projects over the course of this year. As the emerald ash borer spreads (have you heard about the Chicago find yet?) and as local urban forestry budgets tighten our work becomes more and more relevant... so be sure to stay tuned!

Major Projects...

- **Four New Demonstration Grants Awarded**
- **Council Receives New USFS Grant**
- **Education, Outreach, and Chainsaw Art...
Learn about recent news and events**
- **Recycle A2 Helps Lead SE Michigan WoodNet & Installs New Ash Floor Demo**

Four New Demonstration Grants Awarded

The Southeast Michigan RC&D Council has announced its 2006 grant awards for projects demonstrating ways to find value in removed urban trees. The Council is awarding four grants this year:

- A grant of \$30,000 will be made to the **Ann Arbor District Library** to demonstrate how products made from locally-removed trees can benefit the general public. The Ann Arbor District Library will be using removed ash trees as part of the architecture in their new Branch Library in northeast Ann Arbor. They plan to install whole ash timbers, flooring, and wall and ceiling panels made from trees removed directly from the development site throughout the new facility. They also plan to include educational materials documenting the EAB infestation throughout the interior spaces of the library.
- A grant of \$19,249 will be made to **LaMont Brothers Tree Service** to support the purchase of two Nyle dehumidification kilns for their Whitmore Lake facility. These kilns will be added to their resource recovery facility where they mill lumber and other wood products from removed urban trees. LaMont Brothers expects that this kiln operation will enable them to add five to six new living wage skilled production jobs to their company. In addition, as a part of their grant proposal, they will host a kiln drying and lumber grading training workshop at their wood yard that will be open to other members of industry.

- A \$5,000 grant will be made to David Gendler, a woodworker from Ypsilanti, MI. Gendler, an experienced woodworker with a long commitment to use of salvaged and undervalued timber, will organize and promote a five-week art/wood product show to showcase wooden objects made from salvaged wood and local urban timber. This event is tentatively scheduled to occur at the Riverside Art Center Gallery in Ypsilanti.

Council Receives New USFS Grant

The USDA Forest Service's Wood Education and Resource Center has announced that the Southeast MI RC&D has been approved for a new grant of \$99,000 to support development of woody biomass energy projects and wood industry training programs.

This grant will allow the Council to continue its tradition of providing quality training workshops to local wood industry members. This funding will also allow the RC&D to provide funding to assist a local institution in making the transition to using wood fuel. This energy project and others planned by the Council (including a boiler survey and site engineering assessments) are modeled closely on the Fuels for Schools projects that the Forest Service has supported in Montana and other states. Fuels for Schools in Montana works to use lower value wood from wildfire-prevention forest management to heat local schools at a fuel savings of up to \$100,000 per year.

Education, Outreach, and Chainsaw Art... Learn about recent news and events

More and more people are becoming interested in hearing about how wood utilization can help our cities and homeowners to reduce their wood disposal costs. By finding valuable uses for removed trees, we can not only lower the cost of fighting invasive species like the emerald ash borer, but we can also help provide a boost to our local economy.

We've been working hard to provide information about our experiences in the last couple of years so that others can learn from the successes we've had and the challenges we continue to face. While our primary focus remains on Southeast Michigan, it is exciting to see how the lessons we've learned here can now help others in their own battles with the beetle.

The Council has presented information many recent events and meetings, including:

- Michigan Renewable Energy Program Biomass Energy Subcommittee Meeting - Lansing, MI
- National Association of Conservation Districts Great Lakes Conference - Detroit, MI
- International Great Lakes Chainsaw Carving Competition - Charlotte, MI
- Monroe Community College EAB Symposium - Temperance, MI
- Isabella County EAB Public Education Meeting - Mt. Pleasant, MI
- Community Arts Symposium - EAB & Native Basketry - Plainwell, MI
- Indiana Arborists EAB Meeting - Indianapolis, IN
- International Society of Arborists Annual Conference - Minneapolis, MN
- Forest Products Society's SmallWood Conference - Richmond, VA

As EAB and other invasives spread, other regions are paying close attention to how we're finding good uses for all of the removed trees. We've recently had a visit from Marcia Patton-Mallory, the US Forest Service's Biomass Energy Coordinator and with an EAB Task Force made up of many of the folks who are leading the fight against this invasive insect in Ohio.

More news outlets are picking up on the importance of this issue as well. The Great Lakes Radio Consortium, the Monroe News, the Ann Arbor News, and WEMU radio's "Issues on the Environment" have all provided recent coverage of how removed ash trees can still have value. We've also submitted articles that will be placed in future issues of Independent Sawmill & Woodlot Magazine and the International Society of Arboriculture's Arborist News.

Recycle A2 Helps Lead SE Michigan WoodNet & Installs New Ash Floor Demo

Recycle Ann Arbor has become a leading partner in our efforts to increase demand for reclaimed urban wood products. This cooperative relationship is a natural fit; as stated on their website: "Recycle Ann Arbor is committed to developing innovative recycling programs that will limit the abundance of reusable materials from ending up in landfills every year while supporting initiatives to improve the environmental quality of our community through recovery, reuse, recycling and effective energy use."

To demonstrate the potential uses of locally removed ash trees, Recycle Ann Arbor recently worked with LaMont Brothers Tree Service to install new ash hardwood flooring in their conference room. This new floor is one of the many "green building" demonstrations in their Environmental House. Jason Bing, coordinator of the Environmental House and the organization's green building programs, said, "Recycle Ann Arbor is proud to be a leader in demonstrating the fantastic potential of urban reclaimed wood. Investing in local, value-added products contributes to the sustainability of our communities." The new floor in this room is striking; its texture, color and character makes for a wonderful, contemporary look that is appropriate for many different types of spaces. If you're in the neighborhood, be sure to stop and check it out!

Recycle Ann Arbor and the Southeast Michigan RC&D, along with partners in the Michigan DNR, Michigan DEQ, and Michigan State University, are working to create a new networking and marketing organization, the **Southeast Michigan WoodNet**. This group will bring together producers of urban wood residues (cities, homeowners, and tree service companies), wood processors, product manufacturers, retailers, builders, and other partners to support the local economy through innovative manufacturing, marketing, and wood-use efficiency of reclaimed urban and suburban wood.

We hosted a series of focus group meetings in September and October to learn more about the perspectives of municipalities, tree services, sawmills, builders, retailers, architects, and consumers. The participants were overwhelmingly supportive of the idea of a local wood cooperative. In the coming months, we will continue to develop the relationships with these contacts and will work to recruit additional partners for a pilot launch of this program.

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