



Leaves OF Change



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Partnership Highlight

Partnership Spurs Diversity Outreach Projects in Texas

YEARS AGO, **John Warner**, an urban district forester with the Texas A&M Forest Service and a longtime InterfaceSouth partner, recognized that landownership patterns in the southeastern part of the state around Houston were changing rapidly. Latino, Chinese, and Vietnamese families from Houston were moving to the interface and buying 5–20 acre tracts of forestland within his rapidly growing multi-county district. He realized that the agency was going to have to change its communication approach to reach many of these new forest landowners. “As an agency, we know how to communicate with traditional landowners,” says Warner. “However, outreach to different ethnic groups is something new for us.”

In 2007, an opportunity to reach these new landowners presented itself when Warner met **Tamberly Conway**, a graduate student in the College of Forestry and Agriculture at Stephen F. Austin State University. Conway was working with Latino Legacy, a program established by the university and funded by the USDA Forest Service’s (USFS). More Kids in the Woods program to connect Latino communities with the public lands and forestlands in the Houston area through bilingual conservation education programming. (Conway has since been hired by the USFS as a conservation education specialist working remotely in Texas for the USFS’s office in Washington, D.C.).

Latino Legacy established the Amigos del Bosque (Friends of the Forest) conservation education and community outreach team, a group of bilingual youth and Latino community leaders who focused on outreach to traditionally underserved Latino communities. The team developed the Bosque Móvil, or Mobile Forest, a mobile information and activity trailer filled with bilingual conservation and management outreach materials, hands-on educational activities, and exhibits and programs designed to engage youth and their families in conservation through environmental education immersion and interpretive experiences. “The Bosque Móvil was developed to take the

forest to the people,” says Conway. “It has become a tremendous asset in outreach.”

Conway realized that the program could have an even greater effect by holding outreach events on forestlands frequented by urban Latino visitors. She contacted Warner, whose office is located at the W. G. Jones State Forest in Conroe, Texas, a suburb within the

Photo courtesy of: Texas A&M Forest Service



Tamberly Conway, USFS conservation education specialist, works with members of the Texas A&M Forest Service diversity and community outreach team to deliver bilingual programs to Latino youth.

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Connecting Kids to the Hogtown Creek Watershed in Gainesville, Florida

INTERFACESOUTH and local partners, including the University of Florida's School of Forest Resources and Conservation, Alachua County School District, the Gainesville Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs, and Alachua County Environmental Protection Department, received funding through this year's Forest Service More Kids in the Woods (MKIW) cost share funding opportunity. The MKIW program supports activities and programs designed to spark curiosity about nature and promote learning through applications of science, technology, engineering and mathematics principles.

Project partners will collaborate with Westwood middle school science teachers to conduct outdoor science learning activities and service learning projects within the nearby Hogtown Creek Watershed in Gainesville, FL. Partners will also organize a school camp out, participate in career day events and science fairs, and conduct a train-the-teacher workshop in outdoor learning concepts and techniques. Project successes, materials and information will be shared locally, regionally and nationally through our combined partner networks.

To learn more about the Forest Service's More Kids in the Woods program and 2013 cost share funding recipients visit:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/conservationeducation/about/education-themes/kids-in-woods>

<http://www.fs.fed.us/news/2013/releases/05/more-kids-outdoors.shtml>

greater Houston metropolitan area. When she expressed her interest in reaching the Latino community, Warner mentioned that he had a great deal of materials in Spanish but no real way to distribute these products because of a lack of bilingual staff and a lack of access to the Latino public.

Thus, a partnership was born and the two have been collaborating ever since, along with support from the Friends of the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas, a 501.c.3 nonprofit that works to foster partnerships that enhance public lands in Texas. The partnership has concentrated on building capacity to reach the Latino public with conservation messages, wildland-urban interface issues, and stewardship opportunities on forestlands and in communities.

The group of partners began with a set of projects working with inner city kids from the Houston area. Warner says that Texas A&M Forest Service had been working with the Houston Independent School District for close to 20 years to bring inner city kids to the W. G. Jones State Forest for place-based environmental science programs. The program had achieved great success in connecting students

to forests, but Conway brought an added dimension. "Tamberly Conway brought Spanish-speaking conservation outreach specialists to the program and a cultural connection to the kids that we were really missing," says Warner.

The partnership has resulted in unexpected benefits as well. "The program created career pathways for Latino students in natural resources and conservation," says

Conway. "Some of the conservation outreach specialists entered natural resource-related degree programs, and others were hired for permanent positions in outreach."

When the Texas A&M Forest Service created a diversity and community outreach team in 2010, many of the people hired were recruited directly from the Latino Legacy program. They have also created their own Mobil Forest information and activity trailer, similar to the Bosque Móvil developed by Amigos del Bosque.

In 2011, the Texas A&M Forest Service and the Florida Forest Service applied for and received a USFS Redesign grant to establish the Diversity Network. In addition to strengthening the diversity and community outreach team, this network is promoting the development of bilingual staffing, educational resources, cultural sensitivity training, and programing that enables each state's outreach programs to incorporate the involvement of diverse audiences into their efforts.

One recent network activity was a workshop titled "Managing Your Land...No Matter the Size" that focused on boundary marking, forest management, water issues, timber tax appraisals, and other urban interface issues with the new and ethnically diverse landowners that have moved into this area near Houston. The team did away with the traditional lecture style of presentation and instead asked workshop participants to write down questions that were then answered by a panel of experts. Participants were able to have one-on-one discussions with panelists after the workshop with help from Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese translators. The first workshop was a success with over 60 new landowners participating.

The partnership between the Texas A&M Forest Service, Latino Legacy, and the Friends of the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas helped to create a successful joint outreach venture based on the relationships among the traditional and nontraditional partners. Each organization brings different strengths and capabilities to the partnership. The outreach specialists with the Latino Legacy project act as moderators linking communities to forests, the Texas A&M Forest Service provides the



Many of the Texas A&M Forest Service diversity and community outreach team members were recruited directly from the Latino Legacy program.

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partners with opportunities to work with private landowners and long-standing successful programs, and the Friends of the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas provides staff to support outreach events and programming.

“We can’t accomplish our goals alone,” says Warner. “Working through our partners allows each organization to reach different audiences that would be difficult to reach alone. It is mutually beneficial.” Tamberly Conway agrees.

“We have nurtured this partnership and it has allowed each of us to extend our programs much further than we could individually. Everything we do to reach new audiences is based upon the power of partnerships!”

For more information about this partnership contact John Warner, jwarner@tfs.tamu.edu or Tamberly Conway, tkconway@fs.fed.us.

Training and Outreach Activities

Urban Tree Risk Index Webinar Series

Urban Forestry South participated in a series of webinars in partnership with Rachel Barker, formally with the Central Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission (CARPDC), December 2012 through January 2013. This webinar series focused on the Urban Tree Risk Index, a GIS tool that models tree risk zones, prioritizes tree risk assessments, assists decision makers in identifying debris staging areas, and develops a worksheet for use in the field for verification of necessary mitigation action. To view the archived webinars and access other project deliverables visit: www.urbanforestrysouth.org/resources/library/ttresources/vrmp-and-utri-links-for-documents-archived-webinars.

Community Forest Storm Mitigation Planning for Georgia Communities

During March and April, Urban Forestry South participated in the Georgia Forestry Commission workshop series titled “Community Forest Storm Mitigation Planning for Georgia Communities.” Connie Head, consultant with Technical Forestry Services in Commerce, Georgia, developed an accompanying workbook and plan template that communities can use to better plan and prepare for natural disasters. The workshops focused on urban tree risk management and use of the template and urban forestry BMPs during recovery and mitigation to reduce a community’s vulnerability to tree damage. Urban Forestry South’s **Dudley Hartel** presented an overview of storm mitigation mapping, the Urban Tree Risk Index, and lessons learned from Urban Forest Strike Team disaster responses since 2008. The workbook, template, and workshop presentations are posted at: www.gatrees.org/community-forests/management/trees-storm-safety/.

Recommended Resource

Leaves of Change Weekly

The Leaves of Change Weekly is our newest form of communication. This Wordpress site includes informational posts about upcoming conferences, Center activities, links to related articles, job announcements, and much more. You can sign up for the e-newsletter on the site at: www.leavesofchangeweekly.org.

Green Schools National Conference 2013

InterfaceSouth’s **Annie Hermansen-Báez** and Littlewood Elementary (Gainesville, FL) multi-age teacher, Ashley Whitehead, attended the 2013 Green Schools National Conference in West Palm Beach, FL in February. Over 1200 participants representing most of the 50 states and several countries were in attendance, including teachers, principals, food service directors students, parents, natural resource professionals, and others who represented or work with public, private, and charter schools. The conference focused on the greening of the nation’s schools to save money, improve student health and achievement and increase environmental literacy. To learn more about the Green Schools National Conference visit: www.greenschoolsnationalconference.org.

Urban Ecosystem Services Research Agenda

Ed Macie participated in a Forest Service sponsored workshop that was hosted by the National Academies of Science titled “Urban Forestry: Toward an Ecosystem Services Research Agenda.” Some of the main objectives of this workshop were to: (1) explore the role of trees within the greater urban ecosystem and the linkages/trade-offs among different types of ecosystems; (2) review current understanding of the different types of ecosystems services provided by urban forestry, and discuss research needs for improving this understanding; and (3) identify effective management strategies and key challenges in implementing successful urban forestry programs. Over 100 scientist, urban forestry leaders, and experts participated in the workshop. The workshop videos and slide presentations are available at: <http://dels.nas.edu/global/basc/uf-presentations>.

In Our Next Issue

We will highlight a recent research project designed to map social vulnerability to climate change. While climate change will eventually affect everyone to some degree, lower income African-Americans and other vulnerable groups such as the elderly, recent immigrants, and lower income Hispanics are especially vulnerable to the health effects of a changing climate, including heat waves and air pollution.

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Upcoming Events

Date	Description	Location	Contact
September 10— October 29, 2013	Creating a Schoolyard Habitat— Outdoor Classroom (OUT8164) Training	Portland, Oregon	Susan De Stephanis, 304-876-7494, susan_destephanis@fws.gov, http://nctc.fws.gov/nctcweb/catalog/CourseDetail.aspx?CourseCodeLong=FWS-OUT8164
November 5, 2013	2013 Society of Municipal Arborists Conference	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	www.urban-forestry.com/
November 6-7, 2013	2013 Partners in Community Forestry National Conference	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	www.arboday.org/shopping/conferences/ brochures/pcf/2012/review/



This issue and past issues can be found online at:
www.interfacesouth.org/products/leaves

Note: InterfaceSouth and Urban Forestry South are the science delivery centers associated with the USFS Southern Research Station work unit, SRS-4952: Integrating Human and Natural Systems in Urban and Urbanizing Environments (www.humanandnaturalsystems.org), and the USFS Southern Region. They are collectively called the Centers for Urban and Interface Forestry. InterfaceSouth focuses on interface forestry issues while Urban Forestry South focuses on urban forestry issues.