Delaware Forest Service News

Summer 2009 | http://dda.delaware.gov/forestry | Volume II No. 2

Smokey on parade!

Smokey Bear and Nate Cooper wave to the crowd at the Ellendale Volunteer Fire Company's parade as Nate's dad, Delaware Forest Service's Guy Cooper, drives Redden State Forest's fire truck. Smokey was there to spread the message: **"Only you can prevent wildfires!"**

In This Issue

DFS Staff Spotlight	p. 1
New U.S. Forest Chief	p. 1
Olson Retires from DFS	p. 2
Fire Season 2009	p. 3
Tree City USA	p. 4

Guy Cooper Honored for Outstanding Work

Veteran DFS staff member Guy Cooper has been recognized with the "Employee of the Quarter Award" for his work in maintaining the Delaware Forest Service's reputation as an important resource to the national forest fire community. In mid-March, Cooper and firefighter Jim Dowd were dispatched to Ohio with one of the DFS's Type 6 engines (Redden's brush truck) to assist with the Brady Fire. Driving approximately 500 miles to Wayne National Forest, the two spent almost two weeks helping to complete operations on a 200-acre fire, returning on March 26.

Standing out on the fireline

Guy Cooper (above) and Jim Dowd transported a Type 6 engine (brush truck) from Redden State Forest in Georgetown to fight a blaze in Ohio's Wayne National Forest in March. Cooper has been with the Delaware Forest Service for almost 10 years.

Guy Cooper (above) is shown here on a 2002 trip with the DFS fire crew.

Cooper began his career with the State of Delaware at DNREC in May of 1994, and joined the Delaware Forest Service in August, 1999. Since then, he's traveled on many out-of-state assignments with the Delaware Wildland Fire Crew, in addition to his regular duties at Redden State Forest.

Two DFS staff served on a fire at the Wayne National Forest in March, 2009.

Tom Tidwell Selected New Chief of the U.S. Forest Service

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced that Tom Tidwell will serve as the new Chief for the U.S. Forest Service. He replaces Gail Kimbell, the first woman to lead the U.S. Forest Service.

"Tom Tidwell's 32 years of experience in our forests and impressive track record of collaboration and problem-solving will help us tackle the great challenges ahead," said Vilsack.

Tidwell has spent 32 years with the Forest Service. He began his Forest Service career on the Boise National Forest, and has worked in eight different national forests. His field experience includes working from the rural areas of Nevada and Idaho all the way to the urban forests in California and the Wasatch-Cache National Forest in Utah, where he served as Forest Supervisor during the 2002 Winter Olympics. A firefighter himself, he served 19 years as an administrator responsible for fire suppression.

"We thank Gail Kimbell for her leadership and deep commitment to protecting our nation's forests," Vilsack added.

Olson Retires After 20 Years with the Delaware Forest Service

Forester Jim Olson is headed back home to Michigan's Upper Peninsula after spending 20 years with the Delaware Forest Service – highlighted by his work with the Delaware State Forest Stewardship Committee. On June 11, friends and colleagues gathered at the Delaware Department of Agriculture to send Jim and his wife Marge off with good wishes for a happy retirement. On hand were members of the Delaware Forestry Association, the Delaware Tree Farm Commmittee, as well as DFS staff.

Based out of his office at Redden State Forest, Olson worked with the Delaware Tree Farm Committee for many years—ensuring that Delaware's Tree Farms met the standards necessary to achieve national certification by the American Tree Farm System. His work on landowner assistance programs helped exemplify Delaware's commitment to balancing a healthy and thriving forest products industry with a need to practice sustainable forestry.

In that regard, much of his time was devoted to developing materials for outreach to the state's private forest landowners. Olson was responsible for helping to enforce the laws related to erosion and sedimentation from timber harvests, and ensuring that these areas were properly reforested. These important regulations help protect not only watersheds, but also the state's base of forestland.

In the past year, he has helped start the process of developing a statewide resource assessment plan. Proposed by last year's Farm Bill, the plan will serve as a cornerstone of efforts to gain funding for Delaware's public forestry programs, while also serving as a road map to help prioritize future initiatives. Beginning in 2010, federal dollars will be allocated through competitive grants based on the resource decisions outlined in the state's plan.

Jim and Marge Olson share cake and fond memories at his retirement party at the Dept. of Agriculture on June 11.

Delaware Forestry Association member Leslie Merriken thanked Jim Olson for his work with the Tree Farm Program.

(from left) Mike McGrath, Jim Dobson, Mike Brown, Marge Olson, Gail Ingram-Smith, Jim Olson and Austin Short reminisce over an old scrapbook at Jim Olson's retirement reception on June 11, 2009.

Last year, Delaware sent two wildland fire crews on separate trips to battle blazes in Northern California near Shasta-Trinity National Forest

IRON COMPLEX FIRE - 2008

Delaware's wilfire crews are assigned by EACC – the Eastern Area Coordinating Center in Minneapolis – which is part of the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.

Out in the western United States, prolonged summer heat and a relative lack of humidity can combine with high winds to produce the ideal conditions for forest fires to ignite and spread rapidly. The relatively flat terrain and high humidity in Delaware don't often lead to these type of wildfires, but crews of firefighters here undergo extensive training to help other states battle the dangerous fires that can break out in the summer months.

In January, volunteers begin the process of earning a "red card" from the National Wildfire Coordinating Group by attending classes sponsored by the Delaware Forest Service at the Delaware State Fire School. Successful completion of these core courses lays a foundation for hands-on training at the annual "Fire Camp," held this past May at Blackbird State Forest.

The final step toward certification is a fitness exam, the "work-capacity test," in which candidates must complete a 3-mile trek with a 45-pound pack in less than 45 minutes. Passing this test means that crew members are eligible for a 14-day assignment on a wildfire crew when Delaware teams are called up for duty over the summer.

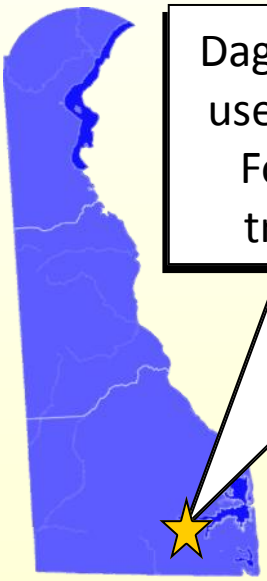
(at right) Crew member John Cirafici of Milford was interviewed by WBOC-TV during this year's fire camp. Cirafici was part of both Delaware teams that were dispatched to the Northern California fires last summer.

(above) EMT Nikki Testa and Wildland Fire Program Director Mike Valenti take the arduous 3-mile work capacity test at Kent County's Brecknock Park.

Dagsboro's Urban and Community Forestry Success Story

"As a small town, we're grateful for the funding from the urban and community forestry grant program."

- Wayne Baker, Dagsboro Mayor



Dagsboro is a Tree City USA that used an Urban and Community Forestry grant to establish a tree-filled community park.

When town officials in Dagsboro, Sussex County decided to take a tangle of overgrown woods near the town hall and convert it to a tree-filled community park, they sought funding from the Delaware Community Forestry Council's annual grant program. By offering municipalities and homeowner groups up to 50 percent of the cost of a tree planting or management project on public land, the program helps communities throughout the state get a jumpstart on worthwhile tree initiatives that can benefit their residents.

And that's exactly what took place in Dagsboro. As a Delaware Tree City USA, elected officials already had a keen focus on preserving and protecting the town's tree canopy. Like other Sussex County towns, they hoped to balance a wave of new residential development with tree-filled community spaces that could serve as a gathering point for town activities. Thanks to their efforts, residents and visitors alike can enjoy the new Katie Helm Park.

With help from Department of Correction crews, town officials cleared away the brush and trimmed trees to create a peaceful, park-like setting. At left, a newly-planted row of American hollies (Delaware's state tree) will form a future wall of green splendor.