New Regional Fire Science Consortium: The Southern Fire Exchange

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In 2010, Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) created a nationwide network of regional knowledge exchange consortia to strengthen on-the-ground application of fire science. Representing 11 southern states, the Southern Fire Exchange (SFE) is working to build on the long history of fire science delivery and outreach that already exists in the South. Specifically, SFE’s mission is to increase the availability and application of fire science information for natural resource management and to serve as a conduit for fire managers to share new research needs with the research community.

Based on results from focus groups and an online survey conducted with fire managers across the southern region, SFE activities will focus on four areas.

1. Online Resource Center: Southern fire information will be consolidated in the SFE Resource Center, which also provides links to existing fire science resources such as the Tall Timbers Fire Ecology database, FRAMES Southern Fire Portal, and Encyclopedia of Southern Fire Science. Key features of the Resource Center include:
   - A user-friendly search engine to identify relevant and up-to-date fire science information;
   - A searchable map and directory of existing fire research sites in the South;
   - A searchable calendar of workshops, trainings, field trips, demonstrations, and other opportunities; and
   - An interactive forum to enhance communication between researchers, fire experts, and practitioners.

2. Experiential Learning and Networking: The SFE will plan, coordinate, and assist with field days, workshops, demonstrations, and webinars to bring researchers and fire managers together.

3. Product Development: Fire research results and summaries will be disseminated to end users through newsletters, research syntheses, fact sheets, and PowerPoint® presentations.

4. Public Education: SFE will provide new fact sheets and presentations for target audiences that the fire community can use in a variety of settings.

The consortium is led by the University of Florida (PI: Leda Kobziar), North Carolina State University, Tall Timbers Research Station, and US Forest Service InterfaceSouth, with multiple partners from non-profit organizations, federal and state agencies, and other fire-related programs. A Steering Committee and Advisory Board provide leadership, strategic direction, and approval for activities and priorities.

Within the next few weeks, the SFE Online Resource Center will go live and we will be distributing our first newsletter. To stay updated on SFE activities and to receive our newsletters and updates, join the SFE listserv by emailing sfe@ifas.ufl.edu.
Recent Research

Woody energy crop in the southeastern United States: Two centuries of practitioner experience


Forest industry experts were consulted on the potential for hardwood tree species to serve as feedstock for bioenergy in the southeastern United States. Hardwoods are of interest for bioenergy because of desirable physical qualities, genetic research advances, and growth potential. Yet little data is available regarding potential productivity and costs. This paper describes required operations and provides a realistic estimate of the costs of producing bioenergy feedstock based on commercial experiences. Forestry practitioners reported that high productivity rates in southeastern hardwood plantations are confined to narrow site conditions or require costly inputs. Eastern cottonwood and American sycamore grow quickly on rich bottomlands, but are also prone to pests and disease. Sweetgum is frost hardy, has few pest or disease problems, and grows across a broad range of sites, yet growth rates are relatively low. Eucalypts require fewer inputs than do other species and offer high potential productivity but are limited by frost to the lower Coastal Plain and Florida. Further research is required to study naturally regenerated hardwood biomass resources. Loblolly pine has robust site requirements, growth rates rivaling hardwoods, and lower costs of production. More time and investment in silviculture, selection, and breeding will be needed to develop hardwoods as competitive biofuel feedstock species. Because of existing stands and fully developed operations, the forestry community considers loblolly pine to be a prime candidate for plantation bioenergy in the Southeast.

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Upcoming Events

• Forest Stewardship Workshop: Invasive Exotic Plants and Their Control, January 12, 2011; 9 am - 3 pm ET, Trout Lake Nature Center, Eustis, FL. Lunch, materials, FDOACS pesticide applicator CEUs and SAF CFEs will be provided. For details and registration on-line go to: http://fspworkshop011211.eventbrite.com/


CFEOR Tour of
Green Circle Bio-Energy Plant,
Thursday, January 20th, 2011.
Free tour is from 10am – 12pm CT in Cottondale, FL and sponsored by Northwest Florida Water Management District. For details and registration go to: http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/CFEOR/Upcoming Events.html#green
Upcoming Events

- **Forest Bioenergy Conference, February 4, 2010**
  from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm ET at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth, GA. The southeast has plentiful forest biomass and a competitive wood supply system - how will the addition of new markets affect our forest economy for landowners and other wood users? Fee: $175; lunch included. Contact Judy Couch at (478) 992-8110 or judy@gfagrow.org. Visit [http://www.gfagrow.org/bioenergy.asp](http://www.gfagrow.org/bioenergy.asp) to learn more.

- **Forest Stewardship Workshop: Longleaf Pine Forest Restoration & Management, February 24, 2011; 8:30 am-3:00 pm ET at the Austin Cary Memorial Forest, Gainesville, FL.** The program will provide the current state of knowledge and practice for regenerating and managing longleaf pine forests, including groundcover restoration and management. Cost is $10 per person, lunch and materials included. Please register on-line at [http://fsp-workshop022411.eventbrite.com/](http://fsp-workshop022411.eventbrite.com/) or contact Chris Demers at (352) 846-2375.

- **Forest Stewardship Workshop: Longleaf Pine Forest Restoration & Management, March 3, 2011; 8:30 am-3:00 pm ET at the Blackwater River State Forest.** The program will provide the current state of knowledge and practice for regenerating and managing longleaf pine forests, including groundcover restoration and management. Cost is $10 per person, lunch and materials included. Please register on-line at [http://fsp-workshop030311.eventbrite.com/](http://fsp-workshop030311.eventbrite.com/) or contact Chris Demers at (352) 846-2375.

- **Natural Areas Training Academy: Vegetation Monitoring in a Management Context, March 7-12, 2011 at Archbold Biological Conference Center, Lake Placid, FL.** This workshop is a practical step-by-step guide to establish and manage monitoring protocols for plant community work. For more information and on-line registration please visit the Natural Areas Training Academy web site at: [http://nata.snre.ufl.edu/](http://nata.snre.ufl.edu/).