



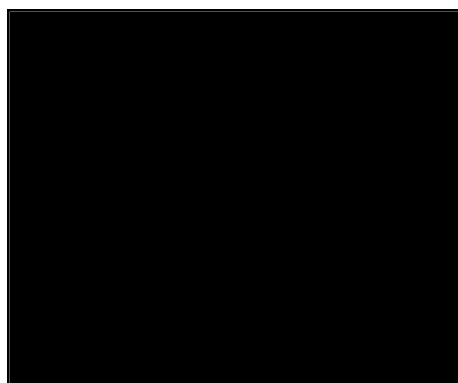
# Inside Agroforestry

Forest Service  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Summer, 1999

## Have You Been Effective in Getting Landowners To Plant Working Trees?

by Kim Isaacson, Technology Transfer Specialist, NAC, Lincoln, Nebraska



**Interpersonal communication with landowners at a "working tree" demonstration site is the most effective way to encourage adoption of agroforestry practices.**

It's a good idea... working trees, that is. The right trees, planted in the right place, for a specific purpose. But, why is it so hard to convince landowners or community planners that the benefits of trees are worth their investment?

With economic and production research to back up their benefits, it seems like working trees should "sell themselves." But, another kind of research says that getting conservation plantings on the ground requires not only an understanding of the technical data, but also of social data. A model called the Adoption-Diffusion model is what social scientists use to describe, explain, and predict human behavior relative to the adoption and diffusion of technologies. When using this model, several terms must be defined:

**Adoption** is the decision to accept new ideas, practices, or products.

**Diffusion** is the process by which the adoption of a new idea, practice, or product spreads throughout a group, community, or society.

**Innovation** is an idea, practice, or product that is perceived as new by an individual or group.

Diffusion scholars have long recognized that an individual's decision about an innovation is not an instantaneous act. Rather, it is a *process* that occurs over time, consisting of a series of actions and decisions. The innovation-decision process that an individual goes through consists of five stages:

**Knowledge:** an individual (or some other decision-making unit, like a community board) is exposed to an innovation's existence and gains some understanding of how it functions.

**Persuasion:** an individual forms a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the innovation.

**Decision:** an individual engages in activities that lead to a choice to adopt or reject the innovation.

**Implementation:** an individual puts an innovation to use.

**Confirmation:** an individual seeks reinforcement of an innovation-decision already made, or reverses a previous decision to adopt or reject the innovation if exposed to conflicting messages.

Throughout the various stages, information, in many forms and from many sources, provides a producer the knowledge used in deciding whether or not to adopt a particular practice or system.

(See Landowners on page 6)

## You are a Link in the Transfer of Good Ideas

"Technology transfer" is a fancy term for the process of passing on good ideas. The work you, as a natural resource professional, do is an essential link in getting these ideas to the people who need them.

Obviously, most of the value of good research lies in putting the new knowledge to use to solve a real problem.

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Unfortunately, as research has become more complicated and more specialized, communication systems haven't always kept pace, resulting in an information gap. Consequently, many valuable research findings, as well as new technology, simply does not reach potential users.

The gap lies between information neatly catalogued and archived, and a large number of would-be users who are not aware of its existence or who find it written in technical language that is difficult to understand. Because this information gap exists, there is a need for people who can help bridge the gap between research findings and those who can benefit from them.

(See Technology Transfer on page 2)

## Inside This Issue

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# NAC Director's Corner

*A commentary on the status of agroforestry  
by Center Director, Dr. Greg Ruark*

## Improving Communication With Landowners ...Say What?

When a landowner seeks assistance from a natural resource professional their needs often revolve around addressing a problem, like animal waste management or water quality, or meeting an objective, like diversifying production systems. Landowners' information needs are usually technical in nature, but at times may extend into areas like product marketing.

Although a resource professional may find it difficult to identify time and funding to acquire training to increase their breadth of technical expertise, a landowner is best served when he/she is presented with a wide variety of technical solutions from which to select. As the old saying goes, "If the only tool you have in your toolbox is a hammer, everything begins to look like a nail." In this regard, agroforestry technologies are relevant to many issues now facing farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. These technologies offer ways to improve both economic and environmental performance.

Moving from scientific results to the development of science-based technology does not in and of itself result in the adoption of new technology. By the time a producer adopts a new practice he/she will have gone through a series of steps. First among these is acquiring an awareness that a production or conservation technology is available. To this end, NAC's focus


is on the development and distribution of informational and technical materials on agroforestry for natural resource professionals. Printed copies of our publications are available upon request at no cost, as is the free usage of videos and displays. In addition, our materials are now available on the internet at [www.unl.edu/nac](http://www.unl.edu/nac), where they can be printed in their original form.

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*"You are not alone when it comes to  
communicating agroforestry to landowners...  
Consider NAC your partner."*

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This issue of *Inside Agroforestry* contains articles that are intended to help you devise ways to better communicate the potential value of agroforestry to landowners. It provides advice on how to prepare effective publications, how to work with media outlets, and illustrates what is involved in setting up markets for agroforestry products.

You are not alone when it comes to communicating agroforestry to landowners... Consider NAC your partner. 


*(Technology Transfer from page 1)*

People involved in the technology transfer process must be skilled communicators, able to convey technical information easily to potential users. Human understanding is essential for good technology transfer. For most operations to be effective, a person involved in technology transfer must be part diplomat, part psychologist, part educator, as well as be familiar with the materials and their applications. They must have the ability to "sell" the technology and to identify user groups.

A good technology transfer process will usually consider seven basic marketing steps. These include: 1) *A message*. Identify the technology available for transfer. 2) *The audience*. Zero in on target user groups to whom the information is necessary. 3) *The objective*. Develop an objective and a plan of application. 4) *The*

*team*. Package the technology for appeal and ease of comprehension -- directly involve scientists, specialists, and innovators. 5) *The media*. Select the methods for transfer (seminars, workshops, technical assistance). 6) *Cost*. Determine initial and follow-up costs. and 7) *Evaluation*. Evaluate the entire process and its results.

The initial plan for a successful technology transfer program should be established at the outset, early in the development stage. It need not be complicated. In fact, the plan should be simple and flexible, allowing for change as needed.

With a good technology transfer plan as a "map," and a sharp, optimistic eye to the future, the road to successful technology transfer should be a smooth, fulfilling and rewarding journey. 

## Working Trees Brochures Are Available

Take advantage of the materials that NAC has developed for you to use when discussing agroforestry with landowners.

The *Working Trees* brochures illustrate how agroforestry practices can be designed to specifically enhance agriculture, communities, livestock, and wildlife habitat. To obtain any of the brochures, e-mail Nancy at: [nhammond/rmrs\\_lincoln@fs.fed.us](mailto:nhammond/rmrs_lincoln@fs.fed.us).

*Working Trees* displays are also available. Call Clover at 402-437-5178 ext. 14 to reserve any of the displays.

# Helping Landowners Find Markets for Agroforestry Products

by Stacy Vollmers, Assistant Professor of Marketing, Morehead State University, Morehead, Kentucky, and Clyde Vollmers, Professor of Marketing, Moorhead State University, Moorhead, Minnesota

As a resource professional, you deal with agroforestry producers who are striving to increase their income by enhancing production practices. But, profits can be enhanced by looking beyond the forest or the field to improve marketing avenues.

Once a market(s) is found, marketing channels can be used to reach final consumers. A marketing channel can contain two types of partners: processors and resellers. Resellers can be subdivided into two more categories: 1) merchant resellers who actually buy your products and 2) agents, representatives, and brokers who do not buy your product, but rather sell it for you on commission.

These representatives are known as “middlemen.”

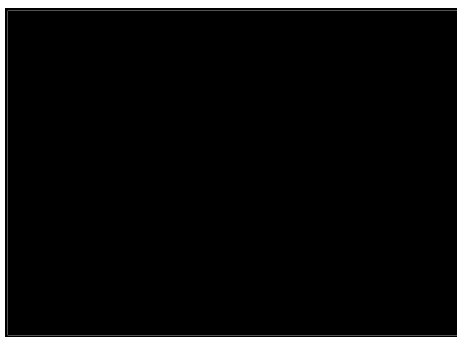
Recognize the usefulness of middlemen. Many agroforestry producers need middlemen because they are often the lowest cost way to reach consumers. Without them either the producer or the end consumer would have to perform the functions they carry out. Direct marketing, such as roadside stands and farmers markets is a great alternative, but only a very small percentage of all agroforestry production can be sold through these channels.

It is important to note that not all agroforestry producers have the same market opportunity. Producers with *low-value added* commodities such as pulpwood or pharmaceuticals are forced to use traditional channels, such as building relationships with local retailers. On-the-other-hand, if you are helping to sell *value-added* products, like nuts, jams, and Christmas boughs and wreaths, you can substantially increase sales by managing a marketing channel more effectively.

If a landowner chooses to have a middleman assist with the processing or selling of their product, there are steps to manage these marketing channels.

## **Have reasonable expectations.**

Generally, middlemen, such as food stores, see themselves as purchasing agents for their customers rather than sellers of your product. Furthermore, they carry many different products and do not tend to push specific items. Although they are generally order takers, not order get-



***A Carthage, North Carolina grower delivers pine needles to be used for bedding and mulch to a retail market. Finding a market is an essential step to a successful business plan.***

ters, they can be still be helpful to your marketing process.

**Write a job description for your middleman.** Before middlemen are selected, you need to clearly identify what they are to do. Some of the tasks performed by middlemen include: buying products and assuming all risk thereafter; carrying inventory (thereby reducing a landowners inventory); assembly, like installing bows on Christmas wreaths; promoting and selling products; providing credit to accounts; handling product warranty issues or recalls; and many others specific to individual products.

**Design a channel.** The best sales person is often times the owner of the business, especially during initial stages of growth. Therefore, a landowner may want to consider serving as his or her own representative and drive from retailer to retailer delivering products and inspecting in-store displays. As the business and the number of outlets grow, they eventually may need to start delivering products to a warehouse and let the middleman serve the retailers. At this point, an effective marketing program is needed because the wholesaler will not promote a product without price promotions or discounts. The producer may need to consider adding representatives to promote the product to retailers and wholesalers.


**Finding channel members.** The absolute worst channel members are often friends or neighbors. Even if they are already representatives or retailers, they most likely do not fit the job description developed above because they do not call

on the right accounts. While they may try to help, they generally do not give the effort required. The second worst source may be middlemen that come and ask to represent you. Good representatives are so busy that they do not need new customers, while poor ones are always looking for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

An excellent tactic is to ask customers about middlemen. If you are looking for a representative to call on gift shops, ask several gift shop owners who is the best representative for your type of product. Another source is other agroforestry producers. Find out which channel members are doing a good job for them. Trade associations or industry experts should also be able to provide suggestions. Another way to find middlemen is to attend trade shows. If you see one doing a great job, ask for a meeting after the show.

## **Securing your channel member.**

Channel members want three things: A profitable product, promotional support, and a fair and honest relationship. A profitable product must have a price with margins that are attractive to the channel. This means starting with the final selling price and working backwards. Begin by asking channel members what they think the price should be and what margin they traditionally receive. For margins, gift shops often keystone, which means they double the price. Food stores work on narrower margins, but they often ask for 30 to 40 percent of the selling price to cover their costs. Health food stores have lower volumes and higher margins. Wholesalers generally need about 30 to 35 percent of their selling price, while representatives and brokers generally work for 7 to 10 percent of a producers selling price (they carry no inventory, have no building, and have lower costs). However, each industry is different, and you need to carefully determine what is needed to attract a quality middleman.

In conclusion, be sure to evaluate your own situation before jumping into a marketing channel. Some products need only simple road-side stands to sell, while others cannot reach their full profit potential without the help of middlemen. 

# Lots of Communication Makes For Trees On The Ground

by Clover Shelton, Technology Transfer Assistant, NAC, Lincoln, Nebraska

Tim King has a big job to do. He takes information discovered in scientific research and he funnels it into usable advice. This is technology transfer in its traditional definition.

As coordinator for the Upper Columbia RC&D in eastern Washington, Tim is encouraging landowners to adopt agroforestry practices. In the Pacific Northwest, landowners are planting hybrid poplars to manage wastewater, turning cropland into forested land using alley cropping systems, and harvesting specialty forest products. The biggest selling point has been convincing landowners that these conservation practices also produce income.

Through a variety of techniques, Tim is showing landowners that agroforestry can work on their land. Workshops, tours, demonstrations, displays, poster sessions, and tree-planting brochures are some of the methods Tim uses to inform landowners. Additionally, this RC&D's newsletter containing informative articles is sent to its eight districts within five counties. In turn, these districts reprint articles that are sent to local landowners.


Tim is finding that the RC&D's homepage is becoming popular. "I'm beginning to hear, 'What's your e-mail and do you have a homepage?' from landowners quite often," Tim said.

In his area, interpersonal communication is also very important. Groups of landowners will get together to talk about the lat-

est hybrid poplar research. Tim even encouraged them to set up a coffee shop meeting where many landowners attended, claiming they had friends who were also interested in hearing more.

Tim doesn't do it all by himself, though. In cooperation with universities and other conservation organizations, the Upper Columbia RC&D saves money by pooling resources while gaining knowledge from other sources. The Society of American Foresters assisted in the promotion of agroforestry practices by sponsoring a conference on poplars for landowners in the Pacific Northwest.

Due to his expertise on the subject of poplars, Tim is part of the National Agroforestry Center's latest project: the *Working Trees for Treating Waste* brochure and display. He is anxious to use this brochure when dealing with landowners. "Often times it's hard for landowners to visualize what we are talking about. That is the benefit of the display and brochures," King said. The *Working Trees for Treating Waste* brochure and display are expected to be available in fall, 1999.

All the agroforestry research in the world will do no good if the landowner never plants a tree. Tim King has taken on the enormous task of making sure that research is not in vain. He is a great example of the natural resources professional doing a great job at getting trees planted. 



## Let us tell your success stories!

We are planning to devote a future issue of *Inside Agroforestry* (distributed to over 7500 locations) to progressive natural resources professionals just like you and innovative landowners that you work with. We want to know about successful agroforestry practices you have planted, designed, coordinated, and/or maintain. Please write a short description (one page) of your success story. Include:

- WHO: Who was involved? Whose land? Who funded it?
- WHAT: What practice(s) were planted? What resulted? What stage is it in now?
- WHEN: When was the practice planted? When was it initiated?
- WHERE: County or city and state? Proximity to a river, livestock, etc.?
- HOW: How was the practice(s) designed? How is it maintained? How does it function?
- WHY: Why was it planted? What need does it fill?

Send your story, along with a contact name and telephone number (and photograph or slide if possible) to: EDITOR- IA, National Agroforestry Center, UNL-East Campus, Lincoln, NE 68583-0822. Or, e-mail Kim Isaacson at: [kisaacson/rmrs\\_lincoln@fs.fed.us](mailto:kisaacson/rmrs_lincoln@fs.fed.us)

# Take Advantage of the Mass Media

by Kim Isaacson, Technology Transfer Specialist, NAC, Lincoln, Nebraska

The mass media (newspaper, radio, and television) could be one of the most important communication tools that you have available. It is the most significant way, second only to one-on-one communication, to make people aware of agroforestry technologies. When it comes to actually convincing a landowner about the benefits of working trees, you'll probably need to do a personal "sell" job, but using the media effectively can help you get them in your door.

*Using the media isn't as hard as you might think.* There are several ways you can take advantage of the media's ability to reach a large audience, with a minimum amount of work on your part.

The most common, and easiest, medium to use is the newspaper. Most small-town newspapers are *looking* for information. Send them timely news releases and you might be busy answering phone calls from landowners wanting more information. Think about putting something together for this summer -- "think about working trees..." And then another news release this fall reminding them to order trees for spring planting. If you're uncomfortable writing new releases, maybe the news editor can help you put something together.

A newsletter would be considered a form of news media too. Have you thought about developing a mailing list and putting together your own newsletter? You could do a bi-annual newsletter, which would be easy to fit into a busy schedule. Don't feel comfortable writing? Use articles from *Inside Agroforestry* (just give us credit, please). Your computer probably has a simple desktop publishing program on it that would allow you to design a two-page newsletter that could be photocopied front/back and sent out to landowners and community planners that you work with. "Keeping in touch" with your clients and providing useful information establishes credibility and keeps agroforestry in their mind. Don't feel comfortable using this kind of software? Check into classes at a nearby community college.

Now, radio and television are a little more intimidating, but both could help

you reach lots of people. Take advantage of your local farm radio talk show or television "noon report." Call up the station and explain the importance of agroforestry or the specific practice you'd like to discuss or work with and why it's important for this information to be featured. Once you're scheduled, they'll give you tips for appearing on the show and do

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their best to make you feel comfortable.

If you're hosting a local tour or having an open information night, don't forget about putting posters up in the cafe or other local spots that many landowners frequent. NAC has a slide show and script available for loan that could be used to help explain agroforestry.

If you aren't already doing so, use the Internet. Use it to educate yourself and develop a web site of your own to educate your clients. The Internet is a lot more user-friendly and a lot less expensive than it was just a short time ago. Again, if you're uncomfortable, check into nearby community college for navigating classes. (See article on page 7 for more information about the Internet).


For more information on writing, creative designing, and using the media, check your local library, bookstore, or the web. The media is there for you to use, take advantage of it... it's a great way to get general information about agroforestry out to the public. 

## Web Site Address Correction

In the last issue of *Inside Agroforestry* a new website, Vegetative Practice Design Application (VegSpec), was highlighted. Several people had trouble accessing this site. The correct address is <http://plants.usda.gov/>. Sorry for the inconvenience.

## International Links

by Sarah Workman,  
NAC International Coordinator

The idea of putting trees to work on farms and ranches for both conservation and profit has appeal for people all over the globe. International Centers in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research have prioritized efforts focused on benefitting household livelihood strategies. Numerous publications about what is being learned in other countries addressing policy, conservation adoption, and marketing issues are available. Local communities, especially in areas developing or diversifying their economic livelihoods, are increasingly turning toward remnant woodlands, fallow lands and agroforestry farming systems to produce usable and marketable goods. You can read "Middleman Boosts Producer Income," "Add Value on the Farm," and "Great Product Warrants Great Marketing" not only in a SARE/ACE publication but also in Network Canada-United States Association (CUSA) of the Smartwood Network literature on buyers groups and sustainability for small timber owners. Workable ideas on how it can be done translate into land manager decisions that favor agroforestry when presented in a way that convinces them of the advantages. The Landcare movement in Australia is an excellent example. The 1994 National Association of Conservation Districts Workbook for Marketing Conservation Services suggests you identify the critical issues you wish to address, develop alliances, define customers and identify their needs, set a strategy and goals defining success, and adequately develop and evaluate your marketing plan. The principles are the same whether you are marketing strategies for composted agricultural waste in Wichita or Ouagadougou. As stewardship promoters and natural resource professionals we can help create interest and demand for sustainable land use. 

# Tips For Easy-To-Read, Eye-Catching Outreach Materials

The way a message reads, as well as the way it looks, is critical. Anything you as an author can do to make your work more readable, more easily understood, and less visually cumbersome helps complete the communication process.

The following guidelines promote clearer writing:

**Keep sentences short.** Sentence lengths should vary to avoid redundancy, but sentence length should usually not exceed 20 words.

**Keep to one idea per sentence.** That doesn't mean one fact or figure, but one idea.

**Avoid the use of technical words and acronyms,** but know your audience. The use of specialized language is sensible when you have a specialized audience.

**Use single, active verbs instead of several weak words.** Example: *They made a decision* should be *They decided*.

**Choose concrete terms over abstract.** For example, *indicate* should be *show*, *crisis situation* should be simply *crisis*.

**Avoid vague qualifiers and choose the precise word.** Here are some vague qualifiers that fuss up our writing: *very*, *rather*, *somewhat*, *quite*, *really*, and *basically*.

**Try to communicate with, rather than impress, your readers.** Abstract language obscures good ideas.

**Ask yourself how you would say it if you were saying it out loud** and use that graceful conversational style for your writing, too.

Finally, **cut redundancy.**


Once you've chosen how to get your message out and have your text written, the use of design, graphics, text, and color help to easily and cost-effectively enhance your materials to grab peoples attention. Here are some guidelines:

**Design.** When designing outreach materials, use restraint. There are lots of creative ideas out there, but select only two or three elements to use on a piece. The use of white space will greatly enhance the overall look. Type fonts are increasingly used as design elements in addition to text. Fonts can be stretched, wrapped, reversed, enlarged, turned side-

ways, or repeated to create visually appealing materials.

**Graphics.** Graphics should be used whenever possible to highlight concepts, break up blocks of text, and create areas of white space. Make your graphics large enough to have impact. When using graphics be sure that they photocopy well. Line drawings work best. Be careful about using several different graphics of the same size on a page. This diminishes the overall impact of all of the graphics on the page. Photographs can be incorporated into outreach materials, but make sure that each photograph will reproduce well and is relevant to the piece.

**Text.** Many people spend a great deal of time preparing graphics and producing an award-winning layout only to plop in text that is wordy and uninteresting. Spend time making your text come alive to your readers. Once the text is written, take the time to shorten it.


**Color.** Use color. At the very least use colored paper for your fact sheets and flyers. You are competing with lots of printed information out there, and color gets you noticed. Be sure to choose paper that photocopies well. Avoid colors that are difficult to look at for long periods of time, for example, neons. 

(Landowners from page 1)

Producers need timely, accurate, inexpensive and easily obtainable information.

Mass media channels (i.e. newspaper, radio, television) are most important at the knowledge stage when an individual wants to know what an innovation is and how and why it works. But as an individual progresses to the persuasion stage, and especially at the decision stage, interpersonal networks with near-peers become more important, especially for discussing advantages and disadvantages.

Recent research conducted by NAC found that when mass media and interpersonal communication were used together in a communications plan, resource professionals, were highly effective in getting landowners to implement windbreak technologies. Conducting a workshop with a group of landowners can be more effective and reach more people when feature articles about the workshop appear in the local newspaper.

Another principle of human communication is that the transfer of ideas occurs most frequently between two individuals who have a high degree of similar attributes: beliefs, education, social status, and the like. When this is not the case, it is important that the resource professional have the ability to project him or herself into the role of a landowner. 



## Ideas to Help Market Working Trees

- Organize *Working Tree* workshops and field tours with landowners.
- Seek speaking opportunities at local civic group meetings and schools.
- Send a news release to the local newspaper or have them do a feature story.
- Sponsor a trivia contest on the radio. The winners can receive trees.
- Distribute some of NAC's *Working Trees* brochures to landowners.
- Compile a bi-annual newsletter. Use articles from *Inside Agroforestry*.
- Develop a photo album of before and after pictures and success stories.
- Perform on-farm visits and one-on-one consultation with interested landowners.
- Develop a model demonstration to use at fairs, field days, or other activities.
- Ask your local FFA chapter to demonstrate and promote *Working Trees*.

# Marketing Agroforestry

Using marketing techniques to promote the adoption of agroforestry practices is an essential step that is often overlooked when trying to get practices on the ground. Though many natural resources professionals would prefer to be out in the field helping landowners design the practice and plant the trees, without some sort of marketing, landowners may never learn about the practices or adopt them.

A few hours of planning can not only save time in the long run but will also be more convincing, making landowners more likely to adopt an agroforestry practice.

There are many ways to promote agroforestry to landowners, including organizing demonstrations, conducting workshops, or using traditional media such as local newspapers or radio shows. Even a simple poster in the local coffee shop can spark interest.

Developing a marketing plan consisting of one or more of the following tips can keep you organized and make marketing programs run smoothly.

**1. Develop a local team of interested agencies and organizations.** Select representatives from the planning area who have similar interests in resource conservation.


**2. Establish goals and objectives.** Know exactly what you want to do. Set a goal. Keep it realistic and achievable within a reasonable time.

**3. Identify target clientele.** Identify who needs to do something for you to meet your goal (for example, a certain landowner, a community, landowners in a specific watershed, etc.).

**4. Define clientele needs and characteristics.** Get to know your target audience. At minimum, you must learn: their primary problems, needs, or concerns; where they get resource management information; who they trust; and how they make decisions.

**5. Evaluate the agroforestry practice(s) you are promoting to make sure that the target audience desires it. Does it have:**

- *Relative advantage* – The land user must perceive the practice to be better than what they are presently doing to achieve the same end.
- *Compatibility* – Practices must be compatible with the land user's problems or needs, existing values, past experiences, and management ability.
- *Complexity* – The value of agroforestry must be clear and the land user must perceive the practice as easy to master.
- *Trialability* – The agroforestry practice should be demonstrated as a practice that can be experimented with on a limited basis. This reduces the risk associated with trying many new or innovative conservation practices.
- *Observability* – Being able to see agroforestry and its benefits greatly enhances the ability to persuade land users to plant and maintain the practices. On-the-ground demonstrations have proven effective. Success is also possible using videos with image processed technology to show future benefits.

**6. Develop a marketing plan for action.** To assure the success of your marketing plan be sure to provide prompt technical assistance. Timelines are a key to getting agroforestry practices on the ground once the land user indicates a willingness to apply. Partnerships and alliances with Federal agencies, agri-business, associations of state conservation and agricultural agencies, environmental groups, and professional societies, are effective ways to leverage resources and provide assistance. 

# Using the Internet

by Josh Wimmer, Web Assistant, NAC, Lincoln, Nebraska

You might think the Internet is too difficult or expensive to do you much good. Think again. If you're willing to spend a minimal amount of time and effort, the 'Net can become one of your best sources of information, and one of your most valuable tools to help transfer information to your clients. If you are not on-line, call your local phone company. They can either service you or direct you to the appropriate vendor.


**It's not difficult.** Even if you are not computer-literate, you can learn how to surf the World Wide Web within a week, assuming you have a computer with Internet access. Your best bet is to open up your Web browser (probably Netscape or Internet Explorer) and just start clicking.

There are a lot of ways to search the 'Net, and you might be confused about which search engine to use. Many times, your best bet is to get away from the search engines and surf on the links provided by other sites. For example, if you're looking for information on agroforestry, you could do a search on the engines. Or you could just visit the "Links" section of NAC's site, where you can jump to dozens of other related sites, most of which feature their own "Links" sections.

**It's cheap.** Because companies - especially media like magazines and newspapers - just want to get potential customers using their Web sites, many of those sites provide at no charge the information they are selling in the hard copies of their publications. Many publications have sites (whose addresses are easily found via quick searches), and those sites feature useful articles you can print and save to disk at no cost. Federal, State and non-profit agencies also provide materials on their sites.

It's worth going to Adobe's site ([www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html](http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html)) to pick up the free Acrobat Reader software, if your computer doesn't have it installed already. This will let you read information saved in the *Portable Document Format (PDF)*, which more and more sites are using because it keeps a document's original layout intact when you print it.

**The next step...** Once you've become familiar with the basics of Web-surfing, you'll probably want to learn more. The best way to do that is to keep playing around, trying new things; but you can always sign up for some quick classes at your local university or community college. Besides the Web, the Internet also offers mailing lists and newsgroups, to name a couple, as useful ways to share information.

Design your own Web site. Many Internet service providers offer cheap Web space as part of a basic connection account. And some companies ([www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com), [www.tripod.com](http://www.tripod.com), etc.) offer free space. Learning how to write HTML, the code used for Web page design, is actually surprisingly easy. You probably have the necessary software installed on your computer right now. Your best bet is to purchase a small (100 pages or less) beginner's guide to HTML. These publications should present the basics in a very simple, straightforward manner. Within a week, you could have your own simple site up and running, sharing valuable information with colleagues and landowners all over the world. It might seem like you can't afford the time to do this, but today, you really can't afford *not* to. 

## Upcoming Events

### September 9-11, 1999

*Northeast Regional Agroforestry Conference*, Portland, ME. Contact, Susan Lee, 207-622-7847 or e-mail: [timetide@me.nrcs.usda.gov](mailto:timetide@me.nrcs.usda.gov).

### September 11-15, 1999

*Society of American Foresters National Convention*, Portland, OR. For more information: [www.safnet.org](http://www.safnet.org)

### July 8-11, 2000

*Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual Conference*. "Gateway to the Future - Conserving Private Land." St Louis, MO. Contact, Pat Mulligan, 515-289-2331, ext. 17 ([patm@swcs.org](mailto:patm@swcs.org))

## From the Editor

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