

APPALACHIAN
REGIONAL
REFORESTATION
INITIATIVE

ARRI News



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Kentucky Hosts Conference and Leaves Good Impression

Story by Elizabeth Fees
Photos by Linda Keene

The 2009 Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) Mined Land Reforestation Conference was held in Prestonsburg, Kentucky, August 4 - 6 at Jenny Wiley State Resort Park. The day of speakers was book ended by two days of field trips.

The conference began Monday, August 3 for members of the ARRI Science and Core teams, who had their annual face-to-face meetings. Information discussed included: future plans for ARRI, the focus for the next Forest Reclamation Advisory, new research being conducted, research that should be conducted and additional topics.

Registration Tuesday morning was followed by the loading of buses for a day of site visits, starting with the tour of University of Kentucky's Guy Cove Stream Reconstruction Project, Eastern Kentucky University's Bee Yard Research Area, and a presentation, question and answer session by David Ledford, Initiative Director of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Conference attendees were separated into three groups that rotated between these projects. Refreshments were provided by ICG, Inc. The weather held off until the last sessions were concluding, but this created problems at the next site.

Upon arriving at ICG's Hazard Rowdy Gap Mine for a demonstration of the Forestry Reclamation Approach loose dumping with minimal compaction grading techniques, the rain would not allow for attendees to leave the buses, but ICG employees and conference planners were as prepared as possible. A presenter boarded each bus and explained the process while



(From left) Mike Hiscar, OSM and ARRI representative, Tom Shope, OSM Regional Director, presented Marcie Moore representing Oxford Mining Company, LLC with the 2008 ARRI Regional Award for excellence in reforestation while John Husted, Chief, Division of Mineral Resources looked on.

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equipment outside demonstrated the procedure. The copious amounts of rain produced extremely hazardous road conditions and one bus slid into a ditch when leaving the site. Thankfully the large equipment on site was able to pull the bus to safety and a few elk were spotted soon after!

The last site for the day was Big Elk "Starfire" Mine where box lunches were provided by Big Elk Mining Company, LLC. During lunch attendees listened to speakers and then were then given a tour of University of Kentucky's reforestation research plots. Tour guides included: Dr. Don Graves, and Dr. Christopher Barton. Attendees were impressed with the growth, diversity, and survival rates of the trees on the research plots, they seemed engaged and asked many questions.

An outdoor cookout on the patio was planned for Tuesday evening, but because of the rain the "cookout" was held indoors. Many attendees were able to network with those they did not interact with on the field trips and lots of good conversation was had by all.

Wednesday, August 5, included speakers, panels, presentation of ARRI awards and other events. According to survey results Tom Biebighauser's presentation on wetlands was the best received with least interest shown in basic Forest Reclamation Approach description and some supplementary reforestation efforts being tried/studied. The Industry Panel was better received than the Regulatory Panel, and comments included with returned surveys showed interest in including an Environmental Panel in the future. (It should be noted, while attendance was down by 67 participants from 2008, the response rate with surveys increased from 9% to 45%. This could indicate a group willing and able to participate next year, as they seem to have a vested interest in improving next year's conference!)

Speakers included in Wednesday's events: Dr. Daniel Mongiardo, Tom Shope, Dr. Jennifer Franklin, Lois Uranowski, Steve Gardner, Biebighauser, Dr. Rick Sweigard, Dr. Richard Warner, Carrie Lona, T. Allan Comp, and Dr. Petra Wood. Representatives on the Regulatory Panel included: Linda Fischer, Becky Hatmaker, Richard Davis, Kevin Quick, and Doug Saylor. The regulatory panel was moderated by Dr. Richard Wahrer. Representatives on the Industry Panel included: Don Gibson, Bob Zik, Dan Geiger, and Robert Ray. The industry panel was moderated by Paul Rothman.

The conference ended Thursday after returning from another field trip to Appalachian Fuels, LLC's Bent Mountain Mine. Topics at Bent Mountain included: American chestnut plantings, water chemistry research, and University of Kentucky research cells.

Many thanks to the hosts and sponsors: Kentucky Department for Natural Resources; University of Kentucky; U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement; Appalachian Fuels, LLC; Aquatic Resources Management, LLC; Coal Operators and Associates, Inc.; Engineering Consulting Services, Inc.; Environmental Resources Management Consulting Company, LLC; International Coal Group, Inc.; Kentucky Coal Association; Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources; Kentucky Division of Forestry; Lexington Coal Company, LLC; Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; TECO Coal; The American Chestnut Foundation; Trinity Coal Corporation; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and U.S. Forest Service.



Dr. Christopher Barton discussed his University of Kentucky's Guy Cove Stream Reconstruction Project while conference participants explored the area.



Allen Meyers talks about bee harvesting in Kentucky while Don Gibson from ICG investigates the portable bee hive.

Acres of Virginia's Abandoned Mine Land Receive an Extreme Makeover

Story by Jon Lawson

Thanks to dozens of OSM/VISTA volunteers, watershed groups, and the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy's Division of Mine Land Reclamation (VADMLR), two overly compacted abandoned mine sites have been given a fresh start.

The pre-law sites, left idle for decades, had hard ground that only supported a sparse mix of agricultural grasses and invasive shrub species. Remnants of past unregulated mining practices, contributing to water quality problems, and little hope of supporting an ecosystem for wildlife, the sites were eyesores in the beautiful Appalachian hillside. That all changed in 2009, when volunteers planted over 3,000 hardwood seedlings on sites near Coeburn and Haysi, Virginia.

At the site near Haysi, following closely with the steps of the Forestry Reclamation Approach and ARRI guidance, the compacted pre-SMCRA bench was loosened with the help of a Komatsu PC-200-LC-7 Excavator.

Gene Counts, Director of the Friends of the Russell Fork watershed group, contracted JWT Well Service for the excavator and labor.

Officials from the Virginia Department of Forestry, OSMRE, and VADMLR assisted in the site preparation, which consisted of the operator burying the bucket of the excavator to a depth of four feet then lifting the bucket and "flipping" the soil in its place. This created a suitable growth medium for the 1,800 hardwood seedlings that were planted on-site by 100 high school students from Dickenson County under the supervision of OSM/VISTA volunteers.

Learning stations were set up as well that included educational material about The American Chestnut Foundation's work, among other topics. To cap off the event, 25 chestnut seedlings were planted at the site.

A follow-up field survey was performed in October to gauge the success of the tree planting and initial indicators show a high survival and growth rate on the seedlings.

The site near Coeburn, called the AML Enhancement - Cranesnest Gob Pile Removal, also features a restored stream channel complete with riparian buffer. Today, visitors to the site would never know that the stream and recently renovated area had in previous years been inundated by over 15 vertical feet of gob from past mining.

The AML contractor, Walt Crickmer's Gobco LLC, had removed the gob, replaced the natural stream channel, and prepared the soil at its original contour. Then OSM/VISTA volunteers organized a tree planting to cover the site with hardwoods and proper riparian species near the restored stream. The event and reclamation work was such a success it won Virginia's Title IV ARRI award for 2009.

As with the Haysi site, a follow-up field survey provided data showing great survival and tremendous growth for the first year.

On top of these volunteer tree planting events, Virginia's AML program planted over 20,000 hardwood seedlings on other abandoned lands throughout Southwest Virginia's coalfields.



Volunteers plant on the site.

Newly Hired Employees Tour Mine Sites

Story and Photo by Peter Hartman

A group of newly hired Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) employees toured mine sites in Western Maryland. The annual tour exposes employees from all branches of OSM to field operations at both Title IV and V sites.

In addition to surface mine sites and ARRI and FRA activities, employees were able to tour a co-generation plant, a newly constructed acid mine drainage passive treatment system, an underground mine, and listen to a presentation by a retired miner.

The training is part of a weeklong orientation program which begins and ends in Washington, DC and is put on by the OSM Training Branch.



Mark Carney, ARRI State team member from Maryland, explained ARRI and FRA to new OSM employees at the Vindex Energy 393 surface mine site on October 22, 2009.

Governor Presents Award to Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team/ Americorps*VISTA

Story by Elizabeth Fees

Photo by Natalie Jensen, KY Energy and Environment Cabinet

Sam Adams, KY OSM/VISTA, accepted the Governor's Environmental Leadership Award from Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear at an awards ceremony held September 30, 2009, at the Lexington Convention Center in Lexington, Kentucky. Larry Arnett, Deputy Commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Natural Resources (DNR) and Joe Blackburn, Field Office Director for the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM), also attended.

The Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team, (ACCWT) and Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) partnered for the first time to successfully sponsor and organize eight tree planting events on previously mined lands throughout the Appalachian coal region, two of which were in KY.

The ACCWT and ARRI share the successes of the amazing 104 citizens and industry volunteers that planted 9,200 trees on 15 acres of abandoned or bond-released mine lands at Williamsburg and Carcassonne, as demonstration projects. Together, these organizations are re-establishing the former eastern hardwood forest cover and creating future economic opportunity.

The events drew the attention of the United Nations Environment Programme, Regional Office for North America, and the agency's deputy director attended the Carcassonne event to distribute pen-pal letters from Colombian high school students to students from Letcher County.

The ACCWT is a unique and innovative partnership between OSM concerned with environmental reclamation and safety, and AmeriCorps*VISTA, concerned with poverty. The Team was founded in response to requests from small, community volunteer-based watershed groups throughout coal country, and targets problems associated with the legacy of pre-regulatory coal mining in Appalachian watersheds. The ACCWT places determined, college graduate OSM/VISTAs into Appalachian communities in need of the skills and commitment those volunteers can bring to a year or two of full-time national service. OSM/VISTAs address not only immediate and pressing water quality problems; they support their local communities in the longer, more hard-



(From Left) Sam Adams, KY OSM/VISTA, accepted the Governor's Environmental Leadership Award from Kentucky Governor, Steve Beshear while Larry Arnett, DNR and Joe Blackburn, Lexington Field Office Director for OSM, look on.

fought struggles of community sustainability, job stability, and successful futures for citizens in rural America. For more information about the ACCWT, please visit: www.accwt.org.

Elizabeth Fees, ARRI's OSM/VISTA, nominated the two ARRI tree planting events associated with the ACCWT completed this past spring.

The effort included partners ranging from environmental groups to coal industry executives, and a slate of state, federal and local government agencies and nonprofits.

Partners included the ACCWT ARRI, Headwaters Inc., Eastern Coal Regional Roundtable, DNR, Kentucky Division of Forestry, Kentucky Division of Abandoned Mine Lands, Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, OSM, James River Coal, ArborGen, The American Chestnut Foundation, University of Kentucky, Letcher County Sheriff's Department, Letcher County Public Schools, Letcher County Conservation District, Southern and Eastern Kentucky Tourism Development Association, Mary Miller of Nicholasville, Sandra Niemiec, volunteers from Sierra Club, local community volunteers, Carcassonne Community Center, The United Nations Environment Programme, and "Flying Rooster Farm" Owners: Eugene Siler Jr., Kenneth Nighbert, David Williams, Lester Shelley, Lee Bryant, Mike Bordies, Howard O. Mann, Larry West, and Gary Barton.

ARRI Draws Extended Interest with Local Community

Story and Photo by Linda Keene

Members of the Kentucky Riverkeeper organization were enlightened to the art form of ripping a previously surface mined area in Kentucky late in October. This group of poetry writers, artists and video media folks enjoyed viewing the demonstration, then hearing presentations about foresting Appalachia.

Dr. Patrick Angel, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM), discussed the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative approach (ARRI) to reclaiming surface mines using the forestry reclamation and ARRI's willingness to partner with groups such as the Riverkeepers.

Dr. Richard Wahrer, Kentucky Department for Natural Resources, presented information about that particular mine's history.

Elizabeth Fee's talked about the OSM/Vista partnership, and Dr. Tammy Horn discussed the importance of establishing bee colonies on previously mined sites.



A local videographer captures ground ripping in progress.

Social Networking Sites Gain Validity and Are Used by ARRI

Story by Elizabeth Fees

There is increasing evidence regarding the legitimacy of social networking sites for businesses and non-profits. It is an easy way to create massive exposure for organizations and their missions. Network for Good (www.networkforgood.org), an online tool for non-profits, recently hosted a webinar with tips on creating a Facebook page for non-profits.

Most social networking sites do not create a good medium for expanding a volunteer base, say, but they are able to educate and inform readers, as well as provide a tool for online donations. Facebook and Twitter are a great way to amplify the power of the media that ARRI is already using, like: newspapers, blogs, etc. Links to these articles and posts can be added to Facebook and Twitter accounts, guaranteeing more readerships.

Facebook began as a tool for college students to stay connected, after opening its "doors" to everyone it has grown exponentially. Group pages allow organizations, non-profits, businesses, etc. to create accounts in which other Facebook users can become fans. These accounts allow fans to interact with the organization by responding to events, updates, and photos. Please visit ARRI's Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Appalachian-Regional-Reforestation-Initiative-ARRI/198141668032?ref=ts>. (Or just do a search for [Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative](#)).

Twitter is similar to Facebook, but more limited in its scope. Twitter allows users to update their followers through a mobile phone texting application, but the account can also be updated on the computer. Twitter can be accessed from government computers, so check out ARRI's account and become a follower (<http://twitter.com/AppRegRefini>)! Make sure to update the ARRI OSM/VISTA with anything you would like added to either the Facebook or Twitter account (arrivolunteer@gmail.com).

Last but not least, the ARRI OSM/VISTA is working on an ARRI wiki. Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia where anyone can add and edit information. Entries are flagged if they do not contain sources, so readers are aware of the potential for false information. Wikipedia is also reachable from government computers, so when ARRI's wiki is complete (there will be an update) go and edit and add information you think it is important people know about *your* Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative!

Please keep in mind all these pages are works in progress. Please contact arrivolunteer@gmail.com with any information that needs to be removed or updated. Thanks!

Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative



The Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative was started in 2004 with the goal of encouraging the planting of high-value hardwood trees on reclaimed coal mine sites using the Forestry Reclamation Approach. The initiative is a coalition of the States of the Appalachian, the Office of Surface Mining and their partners in industry, environmental organizations, academia, local, State and Federal government agencies and local citizens who have come together to support this valuable initiative.

For more information on ARRI see our website at: <http://arri.osmre.gov/>

GOALS OF ARRI

- Plant more high-value hardwood trees on reclaimed coal mined lands in Appalachia.
- Increase the survival rates and growth rates of planted trees.
- Expedite the establishment of forest habitat through natural succession

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