



The Voice for Illinois Forests

To act on issues that impact rural and community forests and to promote forestry in Illinois

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and more...

It's here on the World Wide Web...

IFA Web site
www.ilforestry.org

President's Message

Ray Herman, IFA President

Spring is finally taking shape. Trees south are likely budding, but still tight up north. It hasn't been a good year for planting trees by machine, with all of the wetness and flooding, but I have planted close to 3,000 seedlings in the woods by hand.

I hope most of you who needed a forest management plan have signed up for the EQIP opportunity and are now earning EQIP cost-share monies to implement your plan. If you haven't gotten your plan developed, make that call to your consulting forester to get it done. There is still time to sign up, but time is running out!

April 9th was IFA's first Lobby Day in Springfield. I am sorry you missed it! It was a great day...but only five of our Association membership participated. I was disappointed with the low numbers; however, we feel it was definitely worth our efforts. Our group of Glen Massie, Lee Rife, Rollie Spaniol, Kurt Bobsin, and myself were accompanied and guided by our lobbyists, Paula and Jennifer Purdue. We spent about five hours in the Capitol and Stratton Building meeting and talking with quite a few representatives and senators. We also dropped off to each office a packet that contained fact sheets about the bill we are supporting and fact sheets about our two major issues. (You can read them at our Web site: www.ilforestry.org.) Our lobbyists kept us on the go, and we all made some very good contacts. Maybe next year more of you will be able to come--it's very informative and rewarding.

I still urge you to call or write your representative and senator to support our (your) issues. The Web site can help you identify your legislators. Jay Hayek, IFA's Technical Action Committee Chair, has been getting our Web site upgraded. Look at it at least once a month to keep up with Association activities. THANKS TO JAY!

Your president, along with others, is trying to build partnerships with other groups who are most likely to support our current lobbying issues. We invited the Walnut Council, Tree Farm Committee, and Northwest Illinois Forestry Association to join our lobby efforts in any way possible. I also attended an Illinois Arborist Association meeting to ask for their support. While each group has priorities, many issues are strongly related. Your leadership will continue to build alliances during the rest of this year. We will make a difference eventually. However, our association urgently needs more of you to take an active role. We need you! IFA is offering a day of free leadership training in two locations this spring and fall. See more information about the training later in this newsletter. Then volunteer to attend!

Additionally, we will need candidates for various board positions that will be voted on at our fall annual meeting. Please consider taking a more active role. If any of you want to volunteer in any capacity, we want and need you. Call me or your region director!

Calendar of Events 2008

May 3, 2008

Arnold Farm Field Day
815/858-2407

May 13-15, 2008

Smallwood 2008 and Bioenergy
& Wood Products Conference
Monona Terrace Convention
Center, Madison, WI
conferences@forestprod.org.

May 20-23, 2008

3rd Fire in Eastern Oak Forests
Conference
SIUC Student Center,
Carbondale, IL
[http://www.dce.siu.edu/
conferences/071001easternoak.
htm](http://www.dce.siu.edu/conferences/071001easternoak.htm) or 618-536-7751

August 3-6, 2008

2008 National Walnut Council
Meeting
Columbia, MO.
(765) 583-3501 or
jackson@purdue.edu

September 20, 2008

Forestry Field Day
Etheridge Farm
near Taylorville, IL.
goatdoc@cititech.com

October 11-12, 2008

Illinois Walnut Council Annual
Meeting
Schmoker Tree Farm
near Eldred, IL.
(217) 416-1587 or
schmoker3@aol.com

SAWDUST from the V.P.

J. B. Gates, Vice President

We think in terms we are comfortable with, but perhaps sometimes we need to expand our thinking a little bit and consider some alternatives for timber byproducts.

For example, an enterprising young family in Southern Illinois is taking the "left-overs" from timber sales and converting these odd pieces into saleable product. Two things are accomplished, 1) the scraps are used for something beneficial, and 2) it helps clean up the mess created when a tree is cut and not burned when we do a controlled burn to promote regenerative timber growth.

Another thing that is outside the box for most of us is something I read about in the *Prairie Farmer* (pg 18, April 2008, www.PrairieFarmer.com) concerning "cellulosic ethanol plant using wood waste". A Rapid City, S.D., company has developed a process that uses enzymes to convert wood waste into ethanol. This could be a market for those trees that are cut in a TSI program and left to rot. Today, we must be forward thinking and ready to take steps forward to accept and use new technologies. This process when fully refined and developed will help meet the energy needs of this world with a renewable fuel source.

If you have not looked into the carbon credit program for your farm, you may be missing a good source of additional income. Several sources of information are available if you go to the Internet and key in the terms carbon credit or carbon credit program, including the Delta Institute in Chicago, <http://www.delta-institute.org>; Chicago Climate Exchange, <http://www.chicagoclimatex.com>; and the National Farmers Union, <http://nfu.org>.

On an Association note...Thanks for renewing your membership. We, the officers, value your input. If you have praise or concerns for the Association, talk to us. We are only as strong as the weakest link. Financially, we are sound and looking forward to a busy year and a lot to report at the next annual meeting. **If you have an e-mail address, PLEASE let the Secretary know.** Postage is going up again in May, and each emailed newsletter equals savings in postage and paper expense. Also, if you have friends or neighbors who have timber, ask them to become an IFA member. This is not one of those organizations where they have to ask you first. And finally, your association also needs your support by attending programs in the region and at Springfield. Let your officers know what issues interest you. You may not be the only one interested in a particular subject, and we can develop a workshop or conference on that issue.

Secretary's Report

Dave Gillespie, IFA Secretary

So far this year, from my perspective, things are going great with the IFA! As I write this report, our membership total is 677, and I have not been to the Post Office yet today. Since IFA agreed to help IDNR stuff envelopes mailed to Illinois Forestry Development Act participants regarding their annual certification, our membership has steadily grown by about two to four forest landowners, forestry professionals, forest industry, etc., per day. As I have said before, a great deal of thanks goes to the people in the Association of Illinois Soil & Water Conservation Districts state office who do the mailings for IDNR. Of course, thanks for the growth also goes to those IFA members who see the value in their participation in good forestry for Illinois and who have kept their membership current.

Check out the IFA Web site at www.ilforestry.org. Some new features have been added, and other pieces have been updated.

If I can be of assistance to any of you, please contact me. Thanks for your support of forestry in Illinois!

Technical Committee Report

Jay Hayek, Technical Advisor

Urban Timber Harvesting Workshop

On March 12-13, 2008, the Illinois Emerald Ash Borer Wood Utilization Committee hosted the second Urban Timber Harvesting and Hardwood Lumber Utilization and Recovery (UTI_{H2LzR}) training workshop at Salt Creek Nursery in Cook County. This program, instructed by Ken Lallemond of Lallemond Timber Services, focused on training urban tree care specialists (private and public arborists) to view and utilize urban trees as potential sources of high value lumber in light of the Emerald Ash Borer infestation. This novel workshop series has graduated 25 attendees since its inception in November 2007.



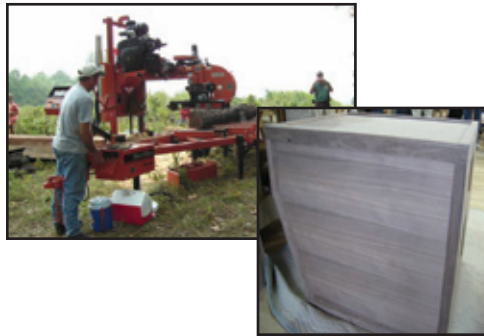
Forest Management Planning Practicum

On March 28, 2008, the Lincoln Heritage, Post Oak Flats, and Wabash Valley RC&D Councils, with assistance from IDNR, UofI Extension, NRCS, and the Illinois Natural History Survey, sponsored an interactive Forest Management Planning Practicum at Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve in Champaign County. Eight UI Forestry & Natural Resources students along with 30 forest landowners received hands-on, in-the-field instruction regarding intermediate stand management techniques; forest inventory; invasive and exotic species; and woodland wildlife. Topics also included the Forestry Development Act, the Conservation Stewardship Program, and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. All participants received a three ring binder filled with educational materials as well as a tree identification guide, a tree scale stick, a sample forest management plan; and a 41-page color brochure entitled *Backyard Woods: Bring your Vision to Life*. Overall, the workshop, funded in part by a Forest Land Enhancement Program grant, was very well received.

Illinois Custom Sawmill & Secondary Forest Products Directory

As part of an initiative funded through the Illinois Emerald Ash Borer Wood Utilization Committee, a service directory and Web site showcasing Illinois custom sawmill operators and secondary forest products manufacturers is in the making. Two support staff have been hired to survey and assemble this novel service directory and Web site.

If you are interested in participating in the brief survey and if you are interested in posting your custom sawmill and secondary forest products business and services on this Web site, please contact Michele Beaulieux at info@illinoisurbanwood.org



Legislative Report

Dave Gillespie, Legislative Committee

Our lobbyist, Paula Purdue, and her daughter Jenni, have been quite busy so far this legislative session. Early in the session, the IFA Legislative Committee determined a list of pending bills of interest to the Association. Paula monitored these bills and kept the Legislative Committee informed of their status. Of particular interest were HB 4158 that increases certain appropriations to the IDNR, HB 4467 that creates the Illegally Logged Wood Act, HB 4549 that amends the Forestry Development Act, HB 5775 that creates the Tree Expert Licensing Act, and SB 2120 that amends the Public Utility Act regarding planting trees under electric power lines. Of these, HB 4467, HB 5775, and SB 2120 have been referred to their respective Rules Committee, which means they are probably dead for this session. HB 4549 passed out of the House and is now in the Senate. (To track the status of bills, go to www.ilga.gov/legislation)

Legislative Report - Continues on page 5

Do you have a passion for trees and forestry?

Are you interested in serving on a regional committee?

Contact an IFA officer today to find out how you can help!

Region 2 Report

Susan Romano and Lee Rife, Region 2 Directors

The IFA Region 2 Workshop was held Saturday, Feb. 16, 2008, from 10am to 3pm at the Route 66 Hotel & Conference Center in Springfield. Our guest speakers included Dick Breckenridge, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, who presented "Carbon Credit Income for Illinois Forest Landowners." Our second speaker, Dick Little, Illinois

Forestry Development Council, shared information about Illinois Forest Cost-Share Opportunities. We had a small interactive crowd, and it was a lot of fun. We are planning another workshop for later this year at Dan Schmoker's tree farm. Hope you can join us!

Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.

- Abraham Lincoln

Members Voice

IFA- A Grassroots Organization

Lee M. Rife, Region 2 Director

To paraphrase a well known politician, "All problems are local." This would include many, if not most, of the problems regarding forests and forestry. As forest landowners and friends of the forest, we see problems daily which may be unique to the area or may be unique to the county or region. Sometimes these matters spill over local boundaries and become more statewide or have a potential to be a statewide problem.

The Illinois Forestry Association was chartered as a 501(c)(3) corporation. This means that our primary purpose is educational, including member education and education of the public about various issues confronting rural and urban forestry. Members receive information and training at our regional workshops and meetings, held three to four times each year and at our annual meeting which will be in Region 3 this year. Public education comes in several forms: exhibits at public events; speaking to various groups, such as schools, civic groups, and church organizations; pamphlets and brochures; and so forth. We are allowed to lobby on a limited basis and we do. Our state officials need to know who we are and who we represent, and they need to look to us as a primary source of information when it comes to forestry issues.

The IFA was created because there was not any one group which spoke for the forest at the state level. At that time, I worked for a group which spoke for sawmills and secondary wood product manufacturers. They, however, gave only a part of the picture. The same can be said for a number of other groups representing trees, the "green" industry, or the forestry profession. All of these are good organizations and do an excellent job of representing their interests. We want to partner with all of them when we hold similar interests. However, IFA will always be the "voice for Illinois forests" when it comes to forestry matters.

The backbone of our Association is its four regions. In order for the state Association to survive and thrive, we must have input from the regions. At the same time, the regions are the primary means for members to receive information and education about various issues affecting the forest and about whether these problems are local or should be addressed at the state level. Has a new exotic pest been found in the region? What about an insect infestation? Are local governmental policies favorable or hostile to the forest? Bringing these concerns to the regional meetings will allow regional directors to bring them to board meetings and turn them over to our technical committee for evaluation.

It is up to individual members to initiate this action by attending your regional meetings and voicing your concerns. Those concerns should then be taken by your regional directors to the state Association board. Those of us privileged to sit on the Board of Directors need input from the local level to make this organization work. If we do not have grassroots input and support, we cannot identify and act upon those issues which can and should be handled at the state level.

In many instances, problems will be best addressed at the regional level by directors working with the Regional State Foresters or other appropriate individuals. Directors are probably in the best position to make that determination. What happens is that the regional directors bring concerns to the Technical Action Committee, which then researches the issue and drafts a position paper on it. Based upon their research, the Board of Directors will then decide on a course of action, which may include working with IDNR, other state agencies, or working with other forest groups, such as the Illinois Forestry Development Council, Illinois Tree Farm Committee, or Walnut Council, to agree upon a solution and/or propose some legislation. The issue may also be turned back to the regions for more local action with suggestions about whom to contact for a workable solution.

Members Voice - Continues on page 5

Meet Your Board of Directors!

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Legislative Report

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The Legislative Committee developed fact sheets outlining our position on funding IDNR District Foresters, sweeping the Forestry Development Fund, and the passage of HB 4549. The committee stuffed copies of the fact sheets, IFA lapel pins, and IFA screen cleaners into IFA litter bags and distributed them to the General Assembly on April 9, 2008, the first IFA Lobby Day. While not many IFA members were on hand to help distribute the litter bags and meet with their legislators, the day was a success. We look forward to next year's IFA Lobby Day.

On Wednesday April 16, Paula and I attended a joint House/Senate committee hearing regarding the release of funds appropriated by the General Assembly to various agriculture groups that are being held by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Governor's Office. Testimony was given by Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and U of I Extension, to mention just a few of the individuals and organizations who testified for the release of these funds. This testimony was followed by the

Director of the OMB and a representative of the Governor's Office who defended their position not to release these funds. The bottom line seems to be that until additional funds can be found to balance the budget (passage of the "sweeps bill"), the Governor's Office will not release the funds.

A special thanks to Paula and Jenni who have worked very hard on behalf of the IFA, particularly in getting HB 4549 out of the House and into the Senate.

Members Voice

Continued from page 4

In summary, the Illinois Forestry Association must work at the local level to be effective. While our Directors come from many backgrounds and are evenly divided among the four regions, we look to the rank and file membership to provide us with their concerns and needs. Unless this information is forthcoming, we will not be effective as an organization. What we are looking for involves the following:

- Local issues and concerns which may spill over into other regions or become statewide matters.
- Feedback on the needs of each region. How can IFA officers and directors better serve each region?

- Local leadership--people who are willing to step forth, serve on committees and take a larger, more active role in the organization locally, regionally, and statewide.

The strength of the Illinois Forestry Association lies within each region, and IFA will only be as strong as its weakest local organization. Become involved, attend regional meetings, speak up, and volunteer when asked. Do not be afraid to ask your directors for resources. It takes some effort on the part of each and every member to make "The Voice for Illinois Forests" a reality.

Using Small Diameter Trees for Crane Mats

Joe Newcomb, Region 4 Director

When placed on a wooden "mat", large cranes or other heavy machinery can be used safely on bare soil construction sites without tilting over or sinking in the mud. Crane mats are made from logs harvested and sawed on site. A logger will bring a portable sawmill to the woods to cut the logs into boards of 7.5 inches to 14 inches wide by 13 feet to 20 feet long. These are called "cants". The logger sells the cants to a mat assembler who picks them up on site and transports them to his shop. To make the mat large enough to stabilize large cranes or heavy equipment, the cants are positioned side



Crane mats are made from logs harvested and sawed on site.

by side and bolted together into 4-foot-by-8-foot mats or whatever size is needed for the equipment.

Cants are made from trees with diameters of 12 or more inches. Any species of hardwood tree can be used, but pin oak is preferred, because it is tough, heavy, and remains strong under adverse conditions. Even cottonwood is used, but its use is restricted to one cottonwood cant per mat. Since the smallest saw logs accepted by the traditional sawmill come from trees with an 18-inch diameter, cutting trees for crane mats offers the opportunity to remove smaller diameter trees

Illinois Forestry Association

A non-profit, tax-exempt organization under IRS 501(c)3

commercially from a forest that needs to be thinned. This is a savings of Timber Stand Improvement costs.

...and a Word about Timber Sales

Careful consideration is needed when entering into a verbal contract with a timber buyer. Sometimes the logger "buyer" will want to "cut on the shares". This means he proposes to share the income he gets from selling the logs to the sawmill, usually on a 50/50 basis. After he cuts your trees and sells the logs to the sawmill, he will bring the sawmill check back to show you. Then he will pay you one-half the price he got for the logs.

Think about this!! If you have 40 acres of corn that needs to be harvested and you are unable to harvest it, what do you do? You hire a farmer to harvest your corn. Does he harvest it on a 50/50 basis? Hardly. He will ask a fair wage or more likely he will trade work with you. However he does it, it won't cost you one-half of the value of your 40 acres of corn. Timber is like any other product from your land; it has its own market value.

The better way to sell timber is to know the value of it before you agree to sell. Consulting foresters can give you this information for a reasonable fee. Use a written contract, and expect the buyer to pay you the total price before he cuts that first tree. Most reputable timber buyers are accustomed to doing business this way.



Any species of hardwood tree can be used, but pin oak is preferred, because it is tough, heavy, and remains strong under adverse conditions.

Unique Training Opportunity Focuses on Understanding People

Stephanie Brown, Region 4 Director

IFA is planning the first in a series of one-day workshops designed to bring members closer and strengthen their capacity for working together to face the many challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for both rural and urban forestry in Illinois. The first Illinois Forest Leaders Institute will take place on Tuesday, June 3, 2008, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center (DSAC) in Pope County. A northern Institute covering the same agenda is also in the works for early fall, with a date and location to be announced in the coming weeks.

The first round of Institutes will focus on understanding people. Participants will gain valuable insight into personality styles and how to communicate and work more effectively with different types of people. The Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a thoroughly researched and commonly used tool for exploring personality styles and preferences, will form the basis for the workshop. It will be similar to the program offered as part of the Society of American Foresters National Leadership Academy.

Participants will take the MBTI on-line assessment in advance of the Institute so that results can be interpreted during the day's program. For that reason, it is important to PRE-REGISTER so that you will have time to receive instructions and take the assessment in advance.

The deadline for pre-registration for the June workshop is **Friday, May 16**. Low-cost overnight lodging is available at DSAC for those who drive in the night before the workshop. To reserve a room, contact the Ag Center directly at 618/695-2441 and indicate you are attending the IFA Institute. All other inquiries should be directed to Stephanie Brown at 618/949-3698 or via e-mail at sbrown63@shawneelink.net.

The program will consist of fun activities designed to reveal personality style differences--how to recognize them, overcome them, and leverage them for success. Each participant will take

Unique Training - Continued on page 7

Unique Training

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home an interpretive report about their particular style and how they can excel as a member and leader in any given organization. The program is designed for every style and personality preference--no one will be put on the spot or made uncomfortable by these activities. Instead, you will feel validated about your own unique style and better positioned to deal with any "difficult" people in your life.

IFA members who are current, emerging, or potential future leaders are encouraged to participate. Each Institute will be limited to 35 attendees. All IFA board members and technical advisors are urged to attend at the location of their choice. For IFA members who have an interest in getting more involved, this will be an excellent way to learn more about the organization and get acquainted with its leaders and fellow members. Those who have indicated interest in joining a committee will receive a special invitation from the Board.

The Illinois Forestry Development Council has provided a grant to underwrite many of the expenses for these workshops, making this a GREAT DEAL for the members who take advantage of the training. A nominal fee of \$10 per person will be charged to cover lunch and breaks, while the Council will be picking up the expenses for testing and material fees, meeting room fees, and speaker travel expenses.

Whether you want to be a better leader, parent, partner, employee, volunteer, church member, mentor, or student, knowing yourself and why other people "are the way they are" can unlock the potential to read, lead, serve, tolerate, and influence people more effectively. The Institute will create a cadre of IFA members who will be able to use the dialog and framework of this workshop to plan activities and programs that appeal to and motivate IFA members from all walks of life. The main goal of the Institutes is to help our members have fun getting to know one another better and to build stronger bonds and working relationships among our diverse

membership. If you can participate in the Dixon Springs program, please take a few moments to pre-register for this valuable learning experience. If not, watch for the announcement for the northern Institute, and we'll see you there!

For more information, contact Stephanie Brown at:

sbrown63@shawneelink.net.

Registration information will also be posted on the IFA Web site at:

www.ilforestry.org.

Send fee and completed registration form to Stephanie Brown at R.R. 2, Box 129A, Golconda, IL 62938, on or before May 16. Forms can be submitted electronically, but fees should be mailed in advance, with checks made payable to IFA, so that lunch arrangements can be finalized prior to the workshop. If you do not have an email address, you will need to complete the assessment at a library or on another computer with Internet access. Further instructions will be emailed to you upon receipt of the completed form.

Pre-Registration Form Illinois Forest Leaders Institute June 3, 2008 – 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. University of Illinois Dixon Springs Agricultural Center

Name: _____ E-mail address: _____

Spouse/Partner: _____

Daytime phone: _____ Evening phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

IFA member? yes no *If no, you will receive materials to join prior to or during the course.*

Have you received similar training in the past? yes no *If yes, you are still encouraged to attend this course as a refresher and as a way to contribute your knowledge to IFA.*

Do you need DSAC lodging on June 2? yes no

Lodging can be paid on-site at DSAC, but make your reservation in advance at 618/695-2441

Registration Fee: \$10 per person X _____ persons = _____ Total enclosed

Please mail fee and completed form to Stephanie Brown, R.R. 2, Box 129A, Golconda, IL 62938. Form can be e-mailed to sbrown63@shawneelink.net by the May 16 deadline and check, made payable to IFA, can be sent at least a week in advance to secure lunch. Questions? Call 618/949-3698.

Has the NRCS Gone Batty?

Gene Barickman, NRCS Biologist

The U. S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has offered cost sharing to develop Forest Management Plans through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). With 680 plans finalized, out of 1,634 contracts still in need of written plans since 2006, NRCS now offers cost-share funds to implement the practices prescribed in these plans. So far in Fiscal Year 2008, Illinois NRCS has accepted 213 applications for cost-share assistance to implement approved Forest Management Plans on private lands. Typical practices include forest stand improvement, which encompasses the control of invasive species, tree/shrub establishment, and prescribed burning.

Since NRCS uses federal funds to cost share on activities that will manipulate forest habitat, the agency was required to consult with the U. S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the effects EQIP might have on any federal endangered or threatened species as required by the Endangered Species Act. According to the USFWS, the Indiana bat, an endangered species, is possibly located in every county in Illinois during the summer months. Therefore, NRCS had to determine the effect EQIP activities would have on the bat.

Through informal discussions with USFWS, NRCS determined that if landowners receiving EQIP cost-share payments to implement forest stand improvement, prescribed burning and followed specific conservation measures, or restrictions, these practices could be performed without having an adverse effect on the bat. This decision allowed the program to go forward without additional review or consultation for individual projects.

Last fall and winter, NRCS could not approve many practices until the consultation process was completed. For this reason, some projects around the state were put on hold or were allowed only tree girdling. Now, however, most activities found in a Forest Management Plan related to forest stand improvement

or prescribed burning are allowed-- provided the conservation measures for the Indiana bat are followed.

The Illinois NRCS Indiana bat conservation measures require that trees and snags used by the bat for summer roosting sites are kept in sufficient numbers for current and future needs. Also, the measures restrict activities that may injure the bats, such as felling trees with trunks larger than nine inches in diameter only during seasons of the year when the bats are not present, usually September 30 through April 1. Many other practices can be performed year round that do not bother the bat. For projects located within five miles of a known cave or mine where the Indiana bat hibernates, the season for activities is restricted by another six weeks. Activities within one mile of one of these caves or mines have additional restrictions.

A list of bat conservation measures will be given to program participants doing forest stand improvement or prescribed burning so that their forester and contactor follow these measures as they implement the project.

Many people have asked if they are bound by the conservation measures when they apply other forestry practices on their own. The measures were developed only for the implementation of forest stand improvement and prescribed burning using NRCS programs. After the EQIP project is done, and if in following years the landowner wishes to have a harvest cut or apply other forestry practices without the use of NRCS programs, these measures do not apply since they were not written for that purpose. However, private landowners must still comply with the Endangered Species Act, so that endangered animals are not harmed. Several methods can be used to avoid harming endangered plants and animals. Foresters and wildlife biologists can help with recommendations for specific projects.

Maybe the NRCS has gone a little batty this year. Being a federal agency with specific requirements to comply with the Endangered Species Act, the agency must ensure that its programs conserve

and improve habitat for endangered species. To find out more about the Indiana bat conservation measures or about EQIP, visit your local USDA Service Center and talk to the NRCS District Conservationist.

Jo-Carroll Energy Plans Biomass Power Plant

Russ Simpson, Vice President of Economic Development and Member Services, Jo-Carroll Energy

Jo-Carroll Energy, an electric and natural gas distribution cooperative headquartered in Elizabeth, IL, is planning to begin construction of an 80-megawatt biomass-fueled power plant near Thomson, IL, in 2009.

The plant will burn primarily clean wood waste, but it can also be fueled by up to 20% corn stover and switchgrass. Most of the 800,000 tons per year of fuel supply will arrive by rail and barge from distant sources. But in true cooperative tradition, Jo-Carroll Energy is working with local farmers and foresters to acquire as much fuel as possible from within the cooperative's service territory.

Through a grant program, the Blackhawk Hills Resource Conservation and Development Council is shouldering most of the local coordination efforts. Many informational and planning meetings have already been held with farmers and members of the Northwest IL Forestry Association. The local Farm Bureau, Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other groups are also involved.

Current estimates are that 12 to 15 percent of the fuel supply can come from local sources. "It's a huge win-win for local economic development," commented Russ Simpson, Jo-Carroll Energy's Vice President of Economic Development and Member Services. "The power plant brings 250 construction jobs, 30 permanent jobs, long-term incremental revenue potential to our farmers and foresters, and an environmentally responsible opportunity to control rising electricity rates." The power plant is expected to begin operation in 2012.