

Western Coordinating Committee (1003) virtual meeting

Project/Activity Number: WCC 1003

Project/Activity Title: Western Coordinating Committee of Extension Foresters

Period Covered: 7/19-12/21

Date of This Report: 12/21

Annual Meeting Date(s): December 3, 2021

(An annual meeting planned was for July 2020 in Sandpoint, Idaho. The meeting was cancelled due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and was not rescheduled due to continuing pandemic-related disruptions. A transition in Administrative Advisor also occurred in 2021.)

Participants:

Jones, Chris, University of Arizona

Ober, Holly, Oregon State University

Zamora, Diomy, USDA NIFA

Cram, Doug, New Mexico State University

McAvoy, Darren, Utah State University

Perleberg, Andy, Washington State University

Cheng, Tony, Colorado State University

Friday, J.B., University of Hawaii

Kolb, Peter, Montana State University

Tompkins, Ryan, University of California

Warren, Bill, University of Idaho

Shults, Patrick, Washington State University

Alexander, Sean, Washington State University

Christiansen, Alicia, Oregon State University

Powell, Jacob, Oregon State University

Kline, Norma, Oregon State University

Berger, Carrie, Oregon State University

Groth, Aaron, Oregon State University

Kraemer, Lauren, Oregon State University

Rosenberg, Andrew, Oregon State University

Bennett, Max, Oregon State University

Hoshiko, Sumi, California Dept of Public Health

Hayashi, Thomas, California Dept of Public Health

Clements, Katherine, South Carolina

Brief summary of minutes of annual meeting: After a welcome by Chair Chris Jones, participants made introductions and shared their projects and experiences since 2020. Common themes included: Wildfires and smoke from wildfires, various aspects of prescribed fire, including legal issues on private land; landscape restoration; nursery stock pathogens that escape into the wild; biochar opportunities; educational videos and podcasts, chainsaw safety, FRTEP/1994 relationships; and rangelands.

Our invited speaker was Sumi Hoshiko, an epidemiologist and research scientist with the California Department of Public Health. Her presentation was titled: Wildfire Smoke – Health Effects Research and Looking Ahead. The talk covered current knowledge and trends in wildfire smoke and particulate matter and what is known about health effects, including populations with increased vulnerability. She also addressed research gaps and the question of how to address the increasing wildfire threat. The presentation was well received by the participants and generated an engaged discussion during the Q&A session.

Accomplishments

Cross boundary partnerships resulted from the WCC. Specifically, WCC Chair Chris Jones initiated an online event titled: Biochar Opportunities in the Southwest: Extension Workshop: <https://extension.arizona.edu/events/2021-04-07/biochar-opportunities-southwest-extension-workshop>. It was held on April 7-9, 2021. Planning was conducted by University Arizona's Chris Jones, Utah State University's Darren McAvoy, Colorado State University's Tony Cheng and New Mexico State University's Doug Cram. Key partners included Colorado State Forestry, USDA Forest Service and Research Stations, US Biochar Initiative, Quivira Coalition, and several private biochar entrepreneurs.

The workshop goals were to: Raise awareness about biochar ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration; forest management and forest health concerns; wildfire/WUI risk and smoke impacts on public health; Raise awareness for entrepreneurs regarding economies of scale, including micro-scale opportunities; entrepreneurial clusters; markets and supply chains, and; Collect and refine stakeholder input on barriers and opportunities to develop biochar as an economically viable forest product.

The targeted audience were: Biomass entrepreneurs: Active and potential; Landowners and managers from: Mining companies, ranches, non-industrial forest lands, state, county, tribal and federal lands, turf industry, landfill/waste management industry, sawmills, horticulture, agriculture; Potential markets: Wildland restoration, mining restoration, cattle industry, landfill/waste management, soil amendment for turf, saline soils, horticulture and farming. Between 192 and 208 people participated.

Presentations included:

- **Keynote Presentation:** Thomas R. Miles, United States Biochar Initiative, Executive Director. Biochar markets continue to grow in North America creating new opportunities to convert wood and agricultural residues to sustainable carbon while restoring soil health and improving water quality. More than 135 US companies supply an estimated 50,000 tons of biochar per year. Tom described new efforts to use biochar to: improve soil health; restore degraded urban soils and abandoned mine lands; reduce water pollution from pharmaceuticals and fertilizers; remove nutrients, metals and bacteria from stormwater; and develop market platforms which value biochar for sequestering carbon.
- **Why biochar?** USDA Forest Service Research Station scientists Dr. Deborah Page-Dumroese and Dr. Nathaniel Anderson discussed Soil health, sustainability, and ecosystem services; and The economics of biochar enterprise with a focus on scale, industrial ecology, markets, carbon, feedstock and competitive advantages in the Southwest, respectively. USDA Forest Service Program Specialist Laura Wolf discussed USFS funding opportunities and assistance on biochar and other wood utilization opportunities.
- **Technical Presentations:** Land Grant University Professors Darren McAvoy, USU, and Dr Katie Brewer, NMSU, discussed how to make biochar and scales of production; and matching properties of biochar quality to applications, respectively.
- **Entrepreneur panel and virtual fieldtrip:** Emerging and established entrepreneurs shared their experiences and lessons learned through a panel session and virtual fieldtrip. They included: Eva Stricker, Director of Quivira Coalition's Carbon Ranch Initiative; Tyson Nicoll, Arizona Log & TimberWorks, CEO; Heather Nobert, Forest Product Marketing Coordinator, Nebraska Forest Service; Gordon West, CEO and Product Development Director, Trollworks, New Mexico; Kelpie Wilson, Wilson Biochar Associates; and John Webster, Owner, GO Biochar.

Doug Cram, Extension Forestry and Fire Specialist, New Mexico State University, is chair-elect. He will host the next WCC 1003 meeting in New Mexico, tentatively in August 2022. Elections will be held at this meeting.