Second Annual Graduate Symposium a Success

Graduate students hosted the Second Annual Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation Graduate Research Symposium on March 3, 2010, at the Graduate Life Center to showcase graduate research in the department. Graduate School Dean Karen DePauw, Dean Paul Winistorfer, and Dr. Janaki Alavalapati provided opening remarks, which were followed by a full day of oral and poster presentations on a diverse array of topics including urban forestry, biometrics, ecophysiology, genetics, and social dimensions.

Approximately 25 graduate students presented their work and the event was well attended throughout the day with faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates dropping in to view the events as well as to enjoy coffee and lunch. The morning session included oral presentations from Master’s students. The afternoon started off with oral presentations from Ph.D. students and finished up with a formal poster session.

Dr. Alavalapati closed the symposium by presenting the awards: Best M.S. Oral Presentation—Tyler Wright; Best Ph.D. Oral Presentation—Charles Sabatia; and Best Poster—Priscilla Bocskor.
From The Department Head

Welcome to the Spring issue of “Forestry” from Virginia Tech! On behalf of the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation, I am pleased to inform you that 2009-2010 is another very productive and successful academic year. You may have noticed, from my earlier messages, that the department changed its name to Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation to better reflect the breadth of our teaching and research programs. In addition, in order to make our programs more flexible and accessible, we have added a new Environmental Resource Management major to our undergraduate programs, developed new guidelines to facilitate transfers from 2-year forestry technical schools from Virginia Commonwealth and Academic Common Market, and revised our Master of Forestry program from 33 credit hours to 30.

I am very proud to inform you that our extension programs are stronger than ever. Our dedicated and talented extension experts are leading several important and innovative programs at state, regional, and national level. Let me share some of them with you.

Mr. Scott Barrett leads the Virginia SHARP logger program, which provides training to loggers, foresters, and others throughout the Commonwealth. The program focuses on the principles of sustainable forestry, environmental protection, and workplace safety. In 2009, this program provided 6394 continuing education contact hours. For more information, visit www.sharplogger.vt.edu or contact Scott Barrett at 540-231-6494 or E-mail sharplogger@vt.edu.

Dr. John McGee leads the Virginia Geospatial Extension Program (VGEP). The VGEP serves to directly support the role of Virginia’s communities and other stakeholders, by engaging professionals and organizations through geospatial technical training and assistance, through the development of educational resources, and through the identification and development of geospatial applications. Currently, John is working on a statewide professional development initiative. Additional information about the VGEP can be found at http://www.geg.frec.vt.edu or from the Virginia Geospatial Extension Program 540-231-2428.

Dr. John Munsell’s work on woody bioenergy is national in scope. Projects under his direction have provided over 5,000 stakeholder contact hours from Virginia to Oregon. Impacts include direct influence on the Governor's energy policy-making, guiding the American Forest Foundation's public position on woody bioenergy, and determining the feasibility of woody bioenergy initiatives in Oregon, Utah, and California for the Department of Energy. He can be reached at jfmunsell@vt.edu.

Ms. Jennifer Gagnon leads the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program (VFLEP). VFLEP provides short courses, workshops, field tours and on-line classes for forest landowners in Virginia. Additionally, VFLEP publishes the Virginia Forest Landowner Update, a quarterly newsletter with practical information for landowners and natural resource professionals, and a companion website. All programs focus on the principles of sustainable forest management. For more information please visit www.cnre.vt.edu/foresupdate or contact Jennifer Gagnon at 540-231-6391, jgagnon@vt.edu.

Dr. Eric Wiseman, Assistant Professor, provides award winning outreach and engagement in urban forestry throughout Virginia and the Mid-Atlantic region. With technical background in arboriculture and research activities in urban forest ecophysiology, Dr. Wiseman has assisted professionals, citizens, and government agencies on a range of topics including landscape tree preservation, urban forest assessment and planning, and tree risk management. For more information on Dr. Wiseman’s extension activities, visit http://www.cnrvt.edu/urbanforestry, or contact him at 540-231-5148 or arborist@vt.edu.

Ms. Michelle Prysby coordinates the Virginia Master Naturalist program, a statewide natural resource volunteer training and service program. In 2009, 850 Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers from 27 chapters across the Commonwealth provided nearly 45,000 hours of service on natural resource education, citizen science, and stewardship project. This service is valued at more than $920,000. The program is sponsored jointly by Virginia Cooperative Extension, several Virginia state government departments and Virginia Tech. In addition, the 27 program chapters across the state work with more than 300 local partners, including schools, nature centers, nonprofits, and local governments. For more information, visit www.virginiamasternaturalist.org or contact Michelle Prysby at 434-872-4580 or masternaturalist@vt.edu.

(Top – bottom): Scott Barrett, Jennifer Gagnon, Michelle Prysby, John McGee, John Munsell, and Eric Wiseman
HIGHLIGHTS Teaching-Research-Extension

Students Contribute to Whole-farm Agroforestry Planning in Catawba and North Fork Valleys

For a second year, Dr. John Munsell’s agroforestry students worked on a collaborative service-learning program with landowners in the Catawba and North Fork Valleys and the university's Catawba Sustainability Center as a component of the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation's agroforestry course. The program’s primary objective is to facilitate shared whole-farm agroforestry learning — the combination of agricultural and forestry technologies to create more diverse, productive, profitable, healthy, and sustainable land-use systems — by pairing students with landowners throughout the semester. The agroforestry program demonstrates the remarkable relevance of service scholarship at Virginia Tech. Students and participating landowners gathered at the conclusion of the semester to celebrate this collaborative learning experience and present their plans for productive, sustainable, and preferred management options.

Virginia Tech XCaliber Award

Bruce Hull, Courtney Kimmel (Ph.D. candidate), and Jennifer Sparrow (Learning Technology) have won the Virginia Tech XCaliber Award from the Center for Innovation in Learning for Enhancing Student Engagement through Web 2.0 Education Technologies.” They successfully integrated Web 2.0 education technologies into an established class (FOR/LAR 2554-Nature and American Values) with six key objectives - increasing student interaction with, and understanding of, course content; facilitating interaction among classmates in a large-enrollment course; sharpening critical thinking and communications skills; reaching and affecting a wider audience than professor and classmates; providing students with modern media skills through active and engaged learning; and increasing course enrollment.

Dr. Carolyn Copenheaver Examines Gender Bias in Citation Rates

Dr. Carolyn Copenheaver ventured outside of her normal forest ecology research area with a paper that will be published in Tree-Ring Research in June 2010 that examines gender bias in citation rates. A number of studies have shown that technical papers authored by women receive fewer citations than papers authored by men, and since authorship and recognition of technical papers is important for faculty promotion, this difference in recognition of scholarship can be an impediment for female faculty. Copenheaver partnered with the College of Natural Resources and Environment Librarian, Kiri Goldbeck, and a researcher from the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow, and Landscape Research, Dr. Paolo Cherubini, to examine whether gender bias exists within the field of dendrochronology. They found that gender has no influence on a paper’s likelihood of being cited by other researchers and that the only factor (out of several examined) that increased the number of citations a paper received was the seniority of the researcher. Senior researchers who have been working in dendrochronology for many years are more likely to have their publications cited than junior researchers.

Exhibits at the EXPO Richmond 2010

The 32nd East Coast Sawmill and Logging Equipment Exposition -EXPO Richmond” was held at the Richmond Raceway Complex on May 21 and 22. The EXPO showcases the newest and most advanced machinery, equipment, and technology in the forest products industry, and thousands of participants from the East Coast travel to the event. The Virginia Tech Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation shared a display area with others in the College of Natural Resources and Environment, including the Wood Science and Forest Products Department and the Center for Unit Load Design. The Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation and Virginia Tech Forestry Extension displays included the FREC departmental display, the Virginia SHARP Logger program, and the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program and were staffed by Dr. Janaki Alavalapati, Scott Barrett, Jennifer Gagnon, Neil Clark, and Bill Worrell. Governor Bob McDonnell visited on Friday and received a Virginia Tech Forestry Extension hard hat presented by Jennifer Gagnon.

68,000 Youth Learn to Plant Trees

Virginia Cooperative Extension agents helped youth plant over 70,000 seedlings this spring as part of a 4-H environmental project. Youth selected from 11 native species of hardwood and pine to plant at their home or on public land. The program was funded by the Virginia Forestry Educational Foundation and local chapters of the Virginia Native Plant Society. Plans are underway to continue the program in 2011. To participate, contact your local Extension Agent.
Emerald Ash Borer Online Course Created

Urban forestry assistant professor Eric Wiseman has worked with an interdisciplinary team at Virginia Tech to create an online course entitled “Emerald Ash Borer: Monitoring and Management.” The course introduces learners to the ecology, impacts, and management of emerald ash borer, an exotic pest of native ash trees. The course is targeted to urban foresters, arborists, and green space enthusiasts interested in learning how to identify and manage the pest. The course will be hosted this summer by the National Plant Diagnostic Network (www.npdn.org). Wiseman’s collaborators included David Close and Sarah Dickinson in the Virginia Tech Department of Horticulture and Heather Boyd in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education.

Urban Forestry Capstone Course Completed

Students in the Urban Forestry capstone course completed a three-year assessment of street trees in Radford Virginia, this past spring. Over three years, students collected data from about 1,500 street trees and used computer modeling to determine that there are nearly 13,000 street trees in the city, providing over $800,000 annually in environmental benefits such as energy conservation, air pollution mitigation, and stormwater abatement.

A Program for New Woodland Owners

A partnership between the Virginia Tree Farm Committee and the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program (VFLEP) will provide new woodland owners with “Welcome to the Woods!” packets. These packets will contain information on the importance of the woodlands they just purchased and on active land management, state and private agencies which provide services to woodland owners, a listing of useful resources, including books and websites, and information on becoming a Tree Farmer. Packets will be distributed to new landowners by realtors, land brokers, and closing agents.

A series of continuing education classes will be provided to realtors to teach them the basics and importance of active forest management. A portion of the classes will be dedicated to discussing ways in which a basic understanding of forestry could help them make a sale (i.e., being able to identify tree species, and awareness of cost share and tax reduction programs).

The PI’s on this program are Jennifer Gagnon, VFLEP Coordinator, and District Forestry & Natural Resource Agents Matt Yancey and Jason Fisher. The Virginia Tree Farm Committee contributed $5600 to VFLEP for this project. An application for a grant from the National Tree Farm Committee Outreach Grant Program is being developed to help fund the continuation of this program.

Virginia Geospatial Extension Program Hosts Workshops

The Virginia Geospatial Extension Program (VGEP) is hosting 20 community college faculty and 5 dual enrollment high school faculty on the campus of Virginia Tech this summer for the VCCS Geospatial Institute. The intensive 7-day institute is funded through the National Science Foundation and is being held in partnership with the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), the Virginia Space Grant Consortium (VSGC), Virginia Western Community College (VWCC), Tidewater Community College (TCC), and John Tyler Community College (JTCC). The institute has been designed to support the needs of Virginia’s geospatial industry by providing targeted geospatial professional development to community college faculty and dual enrollment educators across Virginia. Participants will stay on campus during the workshop. Instruction will be provided in the Center for the Environmental Applications of Remote Sensing (CEARS) and in the Microcomputer Teaching Laboratory in Cheatham hall.

Virginia Trees Well Represented At the National Level

Virginia is once again well represented in the National Register of Big Trees, published every two years by American Forests. The program's purpose is to increase public awareness and appreciation of trees. According to Jeff Kirwan, professor emeritus of forestry and extension specialist, Virginia ranks in the top five nationally, with 68 trees recognized as national champs. Virginia's biggest tree, a 12.5 ft. diameter water tupelo in Greensville County, is a new national champ, replacing a smaller one in Isle of Wight County. Virginia's smallest national champ is a four-inch stewartia growing in Chesapeake.
Dr. Andres Susaeta joined the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation in January 2010 as a Postdoctoral Research Associate in Natural Resource Economics and Policy.

Dr. Susaeta’s interests are related to economics of forest biomass based-bioenergy. His current work is focused on modeling the impact of bioenergy markets on sustainability of nonindustrial private forest management, assessing public preferences for woody biomass based biofuels, and determining the effects of emerging forest bioenergy markets on traditional forest products.

Dr. Susaeta received his B.S. in forestry from the University of Chile and his MSc in forest economics from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. He also obtained a Ph.D. in forest economics and policy from the University of Florida.

Student Club Information

The Urban Forestry Club officially dedicated a 4-16 Memorial Tree planted by the club on the six-month anniversary of the tragedy by placing a plaque at the tree on April 16, 2010. They led the university student body in a tree planting event (about 50 trees planted near President’s House) on April 20, 2010 to celebrate Earth Week. The semester ended with the election of new officers for the 2010-11 academic year.

The Virginia Tech Forestry Club competed in the 53rd annual ASFC Southern Forestry Conclave in Monticello, Arkansas, March 25-27. Highlights included several top-three finishes in technical and physical events, the Stihl Collegiate Timbersports competition, excellent fun, food and camaraderie, and gorgeous weather (note the sun-burn on most faces). Many students worked hard to send the team to Conclave, even though not all club members could attend. Other highlights of the club’s semester were the new member possum pledge, mini-conclave and Timberbeast dance, fund-raising, Log a Load for Kids, and elections. Congratulations to Adam Christie and Dustin Reamey, who will be next year’s president and vice-president.

The Natural Resource Recreation Society had a busy spring semester. In addition to camping, rock climbing, and hiking, they had an elaborate Earth Day display with live honey bees, camping equipment, and Leave No Trace materials, with Ken Burns’ The National Parks: America’s Best Idea playing in the background. Three members received a UUSA grant to attend the Southeastern Recreation Research Conference in Greenville, SC. Society members also collected enough donations to purchase and send a tent to Haiti for earthquake survivors. A big Thank You! for all the great work for the club by outgoing president Jeffrey Curtis, and congratulations to Stephen Eren, the newly elected president.
**Outstanding M.S. and Ph.D. Students**

Salli Dymond has been selected as the department’s Outstanding M.S. Student for 2009-10, and Jeremy Stovall is the Outstanding Ph.D. Student for 2009-10. Each will receive a plaque from the department and are now in the running for the College of Natural Resources and Environment Outstanding M.S. and Outstanding Ph.D. Students.

**Tom Fox Receives Fulbright Grant**

Dr. Thomas R. Fox, Professor of Forestry and Co-Director of the Forest Nutrition Cooperative at Virginia Tech, has been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship for research and teaching at The Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago, Chile, during the 2010-2011 academic year. The Fulbright Scholarship was awarded to Dr. Fox by the United States Department of State and the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

Recipients of Fulbright awards are selected on the basis of academic or professional achievement, as well as demonstrated leadership potential in their fields. Fulbright recipients seek to promote mutual understanding and respect between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. The Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program is administered by the Council for International Exchange of Scholars.

**Claudia Cotton Receives the Department’s A. B. Massey Award**

Congratulations to Claudia Cotton, who received the department’s A. B. Massey Award for 2009-10. This award is presented annually to one graduate student from each academic department within the College of Natural Resources and Environment who has displayed outstanding academic and professional leadership. Claudia was recognized at the CNR Showcase event on April 6, 2010.

**Sara Murrill Wins Oral Presentation Competition**

Sara Murrill (M.S. candidate; Dr. John Munsell, advisor) was one of the winners of the graduate student oral presentation competition at the 2009 Society of American Foresters National Convention in Orlando, Florida. Her presentation was entitled *The Faith-Based Environmental Movement: What Role Can Forest Conservation Play?* Her accomplishment will be announced in the *Forestry Source*, and her abstract will be published in the *Journal of Forestry*.

**Kemal Gökkaya Selected to Participate in Switzerland Seminar**

Kemal Gökkaya has been selected to participate in the 2010 Graduate Seminar & International Experience course at the Center for European Study and Architecture (CESA) in Riva San Vitale, Switzerland. Kemal is one of 13 people selected from Virginia Tech. The goal is for graduate students to explore trends and issues of global higher education as part of the Future Professoriate certificate program run by the graduate school. Kemal will present a topic of interest from this trip at the Global Perspectives Program (GPP) held at CESA. The trip is scheduled for May 23-June 3, 2010.

**Harold Burkhart receives 2010 Alumni Award for Excellence in Graduate Academic Advising**

Established by the Virginia Tech Alumni Association, the Alumni Award for Excellence in Graduate Academic Advising is presented annually by the Office of the Provost to Virginia Tech faculty members who have been particularly dedicated and effective while advising graduate students.

In the 41 years Burkhart has been a member of the Virginia Tech community, 29 master's degree students and 27 doctoral candidates have completed degrees under his direction. In addition, he has served as a member of more than 150 graduate student advisory committees in a variety of academic programs from across the university. Graduate students from Austria, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Mexico, Korea, and South Africa have studied with Burkhart at Virginia Tech as part of degree programs from their home institutions.

Burkhart received his bachelor's degree from Oklahoma State University and a master's degree and Ph.D. from the University of Georgia.
Nilam Kayastha Receives Edna Bailey Sussman and Jeremy Herbstritt Memorial Internship

Nilam Kayastha, a doctoral candidate in the College of Natural Resources and Environment from Kathmandu, Nepal, has been awarded the 2010 internship sponsored by the Edna Bailey Sussman Fund Foundation and the Jeremy Herbstritt Memorial Foundation, totaling $10,000. Nilam is in the Geospatial & Environmental Analysis (GEA) program and is co-supervised by Valerie Thomas (Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation) and John Galbraith (Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences). Nilam has brought the GEA’s interdisciplinary approach to her work by integrating wetland ecology, forestry, soil science, remote sensing, and GIS. Her work examines wetland change detection and focuses on identifying disturbance of Virginia’s forested wetlands to assist public agencies with permitting. Nilam is funded both by the GEA and by an EPA grant in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for an internship in Roanoke and Lynchburg during the summer. After graduation, Nilam will assist with wetland research in Nepal.

Susan Day Recognized As 2010 Early Career Scientist

Susan D. Day has been awarded the 2010 Early-Career Scientist Award by the International Society of Arboriculture. This award is granted to scientists in the fields of arboriculture and urban forestry who demonstrate exceptional promise and high career potential for producing internationally-recognized research. She will receive it at the annual meeting of the ISA in July 2010 in Chicago.

Student Communication Award Presented

Charlie Wade won the 2010 Council on Forest Engineering Student Communication Award for presenting the best student proceedings paper at the Annual Meeting in Auburn, AL. Charlie’s paper was entitled “Evaluation of Bladed Skid Trail Closure and Cover BMPs for Erosion Control.” Charlie is an M.S. student and his co-chairs are Mike Aust and Chad Bolding.

Jennifer Gagnon Receives 2010 Young Forester Leadership Award

Jennifer Gagnon received the 2010 Young Forester Leadership Award on June 10, 2010, at the Virginia Division SAF 2010 Awards Dinner in South Hill, VA. Jennifer is the Coordinator of the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program.

Dr. John Hosner Establishes a New Record

Dr. John Hosner, the former Head of the School of Forestry & Wildlife, now the College of Natural Resources and Environment, established a new American one mile record for the 85-90 age group at the U.S.A. Track and Field Southeastern Masters Championships at Raleigh, June 14, 2010. The race announcer indicated that Hosner “shattered” the record with a time of 8:22. The former record time was 9:18, established in 2005. Dr. Hosner has established world and North American Masters records from 1500 meters to the half marathon (13.1 miles) over the past 35 years of masters running.

May 2010 Graduation

FREC graduates on the steps at Owens Hall. Second from the right on the first row is Shannon Fowler. She was the College of Natural Resources and Environment Outstanding Senior. She will be continuing her studies as a FREC graduate student.

Dr. John Hosner

Dan Goerlich and Jen Gagnon

Charlie Wade

Dr. Susan Day

Nilam Kayastha
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Alumni Corner / Announcements

Guillermo Trincado (Ph.D. 2006) will receive an International Union of Forest Research Organizations Outstanding Doctoral Research Award at the IUFRO World Congress in Seoul, South Korea, August 23-28, 2010. Eighteen nominations from all over the world were received and Guillermo was chosen as one of eight winners.

The IUFRO Outstanding Doctoral Research Award is given in recognition of outstanding scientific achievements of doctoral research within the field of forest biometrics. The award consists of a medallion, certificate, and air travel to attend the XXIII IUFRO World Congress and will be presented during a special Sublunary Session at the Congress.

Currently, Guillermo is visiting in the Biometrics Unit, Forest Management Branch, Alberta Department Sustainable Resource Development, Edmonton Canada. The objective of this 10-day visit is to establish collaborative research work on growth and yield forest modeling with Dr. Shongming Huang.

Sixth Annual Swine and Soiree

FREC graduate students organized the sixth annual Swine and Soiree and it was, again, a great success. Supported by the College of Natural Resources and Environment and all four departments with the College, we were able to hold this fun event at the University Club on April 27. Thanks to everyone who participated in the field-of-research dessert making contest. Nick Bonzey won this contest with his soil-profile pumpkin rolls. We were really happy about the turnout and it was estimated that 100 people were in attendance at this great event. Music was performed by The Black Diamond Ramblers and Katie and the Bubbatones. Thanks to everyone who helped out with this event and we hope to see everyone again next year!

Congratulations 2010 Graduates!

- Priscilla J. Bocskor – M.S. (Day)
- Joseph Conrad – M.F. (Bolding)
- Claudia Cotton – Ph.D. (Fox)
- Tripp Dowling – M.S. (Bolding)
- William Ford – M.F. (Aust/Bolding)
- Benjamin Hook – M.S. (Copenheaver)
- Charlene Kelly – Ph.D. – (Schoenholtz)
- William West – M.F. – (Day)
- William Worrell – M.F (Aust)
- Mary Elizabeth Wright – M.S. (Stern)

Faculty/Staff/Student Spotlight (continued)

Welcome New Graduate Students 2010

Ph.D. Program
Nathan Kennedy

M.F. Program
Steven Gaines

M.S. Program
Rajesh Bawa
Kylie Krauss
Will Stanley
Haktan Suren

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Guillermo Trincado (Ph.D. 2006)

Nic Bonzey, Jeff Feaga, and Tyler Wright