

## **OHIO WOODLANDS JOB CORPS PROVIDES 132 TRAINING JOBS AND LONG TERM BENEFITS FOR BUCKEYE STATE FORESTS**

Eleven crews with a total of 66 conservation workers are currently receiving extensive training and work experience on Ohio State Forests as they conduct the largest invasive species control project ever conducted on Ohio Department of Natural Resources lands. The end result of this effort promises for Ohio woodland owners increased numbers of available timber stand improvement (TSI) vendors, wildfire fighters, potential Master Loggers and a collection of data that will help lead to improved methods of dealing with invasive species in woodland settings.

Beginning in February of 2010, applications will be accepted for a second class of 66 workers to be hired for the training program that is managed by the Ohio Division of Forestry with training assistance from OSU Extension and Hocking College. Each class of 66 participants will receive up to four weeks of training during their 25-week corps experience.

### SOURCE OF THE PROGRAM'S FUNDS AND DEVELOPMENT

On February 13, 2009 the Ohio Division of Forestry received word that \$250 million was available through the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for projects to improve woodlands on private and state properties.

The announcement came with a short deadline for proposals -- four business days -- and only specified two selection measures: the number of jobs created and how quickly projects could begin work.

“Those were four busy days as we developed 16 different proposals totaling \$25 million in requests for submission to the USDA Forest Service,” said David Lytle, state forester and chief of the Ohio Division of Forestry. “Our hope was that in offering a wide range of proposal ideas that we would be successful in obtaining funds that would improve woodlands here in Ohio.”

Included in those proposals were funds for removing and replacing EAB-damaged trees; funding private consultant foresters in writing forest management plans; conducting pre-commercial stand improvement projects on state forests; and to create a private lands forest certification pilot project.

“In the end, we received a \$4.4 million grant to create an invasive species job corps that would work to remove bush honeysuckle and Tree of Heaven on state forest lands,” said Lytle. “Thanks to a positive working relationship with the USDA Forest Service’s Morgantown Field Office, we were able to further develop the original proposal in a manner that still focused on removing invasive species, but that also addressed a number of ongoing wood industry and forest resource concerns.”

### INCREASING NRCS WOODLAND INCENTIVE FUNDS SHOWS NEED FOR MORE TSI VENDORS

Ohio is one of the leading states in the country for the amount of Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) landowner incentive funds dedicated to forest management project. With NRCS Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) funds landowners can better afford to plant trees, remove invasive species and perform TSI work.

“Finding readily available TSI vendors to conduct EQIP work within required timelines is often difficult,” said Tom Berger, the Ohio Division of Forestry’s liaison with NRCS. “Having more vendors trained and available to do this work will provide additional employment opportunities in rural areas of the state and encourage good forest management. In fact, available EQIP funds in Ohio for woodlands practices increased to nearly \$1.5 million this year.”

#### DECREASING NUMBER OF TRAINED LOGGERS

Another concern voiced by many in the wood industry has been the long term downward trend in the number of trained and available loggers.

“Even before markets dropped as they have in the past 18 months, the number of individuals interested in working in the woods as loggers has declined,” said Ohio Forestry Association Executive Director John Dorka. “Our partnership in this project will assure that 132 people have met all the Master Logger training requirements needed to go to work for an Ohio Master Logging Company.”

With those two employment needs in mind, the Division of Forestry developed the original proposal into the Ohio Woodlands Job Corps, a project that would target invasive species on state forest lands, providing training to safely and properly conduct that work, and to target for the program individuals interested in a long term career in the wood industry.

#### KICKING OFF THE PROJECT:

After receiving official award notice on July 16 from the USDA Forest Service, Division of Forestry staff were able to obtain approval for posting and hiring the first 66 conservation workers for the OWJC.

Governor Ted Strickland held a news conference at the Ohio State Fair to announce the program where he obviously enjoyed announcing that fellow Scioto County native Ryan Redoutey, a co-recipient of the National Outstanding Logger of the Year award, would provide the chainsaw training for the program. “You can’t do any better than having the national champion on your team,” said Governor Strickland.

By August 9, more than 1,340 applications were submitted for the first 66 jobs. Four interview teams spent two days conducting interviews to choose the successful job seekers. By September 14, less than 60 days from the time of the official grant award notice, a full slate of Ohio Woodland Job Corp participants were hired and started work.

The headquarters for these crews include Blue Rock (1 crew), Shawnee (3 crews), Pike (1 crew), Scioto Trail (2 crews), Hocking (1 crew), Zaleski (2 crews) and Maumee (1 crew) State Forests.

Once their safety and resource training is completed, corpsmembers will devote their time to removing woody invasive plant species such as bush honeysuckle and Tree of Heaven, which suppress native trees and shrubs. In addition to removing invasive plant species, the crews will also assist with forest inventory work, timber stand improvement activities, trails maintenance and construction, and some tree planting activities.

#### LANDSCAPE LEVEL INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL AND DATA COLLECTION:

“To our knowledge, a project of this scope has not before been conducted to remove invasive species on forest lands,” said Dan Balser, forest health administrator for the Ohio Division of Forestry and coordinator of the Ohio Woodlands Job Corps.

Before starting field work with the project, Balser invited research scientists from the USDA Forest Service’s Northern Research Station based in Delaware, OH to sit down with project coordinators to ask what, given the compressed timeframe for the start of the project, could be collected by Division of Forestry staff during the project that researchers might find of value for future research efforts to assess the effectiveness of current control measures.

“This project provides a great opportunity to better understand the impact of invasive species in forest ecosystems on a landscape level, and to gauge how effective current approaches are to minimizing the impact of these exotics on native stands,” said Dr. Joanne Rebbeck, a research scientist with the USDA Forest Service who leads the Delaware Lab’s invasive species research.

#### NEXT STEPS:

The first class of 66 OWJC members will work from September 14 through March 26, 2010. Advertising for the next class of 66 OWJC participants will begin in February 2010 with interviews expected to take place in March/April with the new corpsmembers starting work in May, 2010.

“We’ve been successful in hiring a lot of good people who are interested in a career working in Ohio’s \$15 billion wood industry,” said Lytle. “The training and work experiences provided these folks will benefit Ohio’s forests for years to come.”

#### OHIO WOODLANDS JOB CORPS TRAINING CERTIFICATIONS:

**Master Logger Training:** The Ohio Forestry Association is partnering with the Ohio Division of Forestry to provide Master Logger training courses to OWJC participants. Successfully passing these training classes does not qualify a participant to refer to themselves as a “Master Logger” but having obtained OWJC certification will allow them to be fully trained and available to work for Master Logger companies. In addition, the Ohio Forestry Association is offering a one-year membership to OWJC participants.

- Best Management Practices

- Chainsaw Level 1
- Chainsaw Level 2 (with an emphasis on small saw use for TSI practices)

**Safety Training:** In addition to weekly safety meetings held at state forest units, OWJC participants are required to attend the following safety training classes taught by State Forest Officers:

- Red Cross First Aid
- Red Cross CPR
- Defensive Driving

**Wildfire Training:** All OWJC members are provided the opportunity for training in Incident Command System (ICS) and in wildfire fighting techniques

- ICS 100
- NIMS 700
- S130/S190 Wildfire Fighting Training
- L180 Crew Leadership
- Certified Prescribed Fire Managers (with necessary pre-requisites)

**Pesticide Safety and Application:** Core Commercial Pesticide Applicators License with subcategories are taught in cooperation with OSU Extension and the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

- Forestry
- Industrial Vegetation
- Aquatics

**Addition training:**

- Basic silviculture
- Improving Forest Stands/Crop Tree Release
- Topographic map reading
- GIS use
- Dendrology
- Invasive species identification and control techniques
- Federal Landowner Incentive programs
- NRCS Technical Service Provider training
- Continuing Education in Forestry/Natural Resource Management

**AmeriCorps Affiliation Benefits:**

The unique training and service components of the Ohio Woodlands Job Corps program made for an ideal partnership with The Corps Network, a national AmeriCorps affiliated program specializing in conservation programs. This arrangement allows for Division of Forestry staff to focus on training in forest management and practices training, while utilizing The Corps Network's expertise in conservation corps program management and member training to provide excellent corps experience.

As an added benefit, OWJC are eligible to apply for AmeriCorps affiliated Education Awards, which provides those successfully completing the six month program up to \$2362 towards educational expenses.

This funding is available to Ohio Woodlands Job Corps members and can be used in the following ways:

- Pay expenses from enrollment in an A.S. or B.S. forestry or natural resource management program, including tuition and fees, books and supplies, transportation, room and board, and/or other expenses
- Technical training in equipment operation and maintenance
- Continuing education courses in forestry or natural resources management
- Cost of attendance for earning a certificate in a forestry or natural resources specialization, such as training in carbon sequestration or forest certification standards
- Repay qualified student loans

**College Credit:**

Students enrolled at Hocking College and at Ohio State University are eligible for college credit for the work experiences and training they receive as members of the Ohio Woodlands Job Corps.

Anyone interested in applying for the next class can learn more at [ohiodnr.com/forestry](http://ohiodnr.com/forestry) or by calling (614) 265-6694.