**Report on International Oak Symposium for IUFRO**

Planning for the International Oak Symposium (IOS) started with a strong vision. Although international meetings had been held on oak by IUFRO and other organizations in the past, the IOS was not part of an established series. This lack of infrastructure gave IOS Committee Chair, Dr. Stacy Clark (USDA Forest Service, Knoxville, TN USA) freedom to be bold in making decisions, but she also had to build the vision, the planning, and the methods of execution. The planning committee included Dr. Magnus Löf (outgoing 1.01.06 Ecology and Silviculture of Oak Working Party Chair) and Dr. Dan Dey (incoming 1.01.06 Ecology and Silviculture of Oak Working Party Chair) as well as faculty members from the host organizations, The University of Tennessee and the USDA Forest Service. The committee was thoughtful and innovative in their approach because they wanted to combine the format of a traditional research conference with progressive and culturally integrated platforms. The IOS was held October 7-10 in Knoxville, TN USA, included 75 oral presentations (85% offered, 15% invited), 31 poster presentations, and 3 field tours.

One of the primary goals of the IOS was to attract young professionals and students to contribute to training and educating the next generation of professionals working in oak forests and landscapes. Approximately 40% of the 240 attendees were students or early career professionals who participated in mentoring programs, speed networking, socials, and competitions for best presentation. Students were also offered a 64% discount over the regular professional registration fee.

Hardwoods, oaks in particular, have unique and difficult challenges to their sustainability due to novel and interacting effects of disturbance regime change, climate change, and nonnative species. Unfortunately, there are few universities that specialize in hardwood forest management or ecology, and that is why it was important to partner with the newly formed School of Natural Resources (SNR) at The University of Tennessee, Directed by Dr. Don Hodges. The SNR includes one of the oldest hardwood tree improvement programs in the country and has a long history of research, education, and outreach in oak ecosystems.

The committee encouraged participants to be actively engaged during the IOS through various platforms such as panel discussions on carbon and fire organized by partners from The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Forest Service, and Extension programs from UCLA. Field trips were held in the middle of the Symposium as part of the regular registration fee and featured research and management from industry, NGOs, academia, and state natural resource organizations. The symposium attracted researchers and practitioners from 11 different countries and 27 states including representatives from wood product companies and distilleries who use oak to produce whiskey.

Learning and building from the experience at the IUFRO World Congress in Sweden, Dr. Clark felt that the IOS should feature local culture. Several local artists provided Bluegrass and Americana music during the introductory welcome and at an evening southern-style BBQ reception. Music focused on environmental topics and local history and were interwoven between introductory speakers. Plenary speakers from the USA, Portugal, Germany, and Sweden presented on a variety of emerging and important topics such as cork oak management, prescribed fire, and genetic adaptability.

A second International Oak Symposium is being tentatively planned for 2027, and there is interest from scientists in Portugal, India, and Poland to host. Looking ahead, the Symposium could be expanded through additional virtual platforms and social events and by offering stipends for students and participants from underdeveloped countries.’

You can find more information on the Symposium website at <https://naturalresources.tennessee.edu/oak-symposium/> and by contacting Stacy Clark at stacy.l.clark@usda.gov