

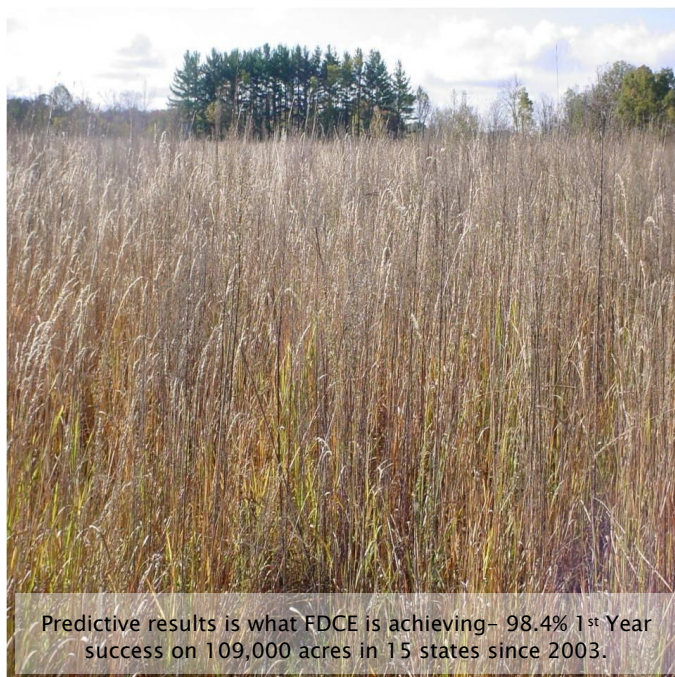
At FDC Enterprises, we believe successful conservation is a result of successful partnerships comprised of landowners, government agencies and private enterprise. Our new "Success Stories from the Field" series is intended to share with others some of the special projects we have been involved in throughout the United States, in hopes of inspiring similar efforts elsewhere.

Since 2002, FDC Enterprises has successfully established over 109,000 acres of native grass across 18 states. Through encouragement from our partners to bring additional necessary services, we have recently expanded our business services to include chemical and mechanical control of exotic/invasive weed and/or woody vegetation species. To learn more about FDC Enterprises, please visit our website at www.fdcenterprises.com

FDC Enterprises and Virginia Tech Explore Native Grass as a Cash Crop

In 2008, FDC Enterprises (FDCE) and Virginia Tech's Conservation Management Institute (CMI) began working together to advance the use of native grasses as a cash crop. "This is an exciting new chapter for FDC Enterprises business development," says Fred Circle, owner and president of FDCE. "Our joint efforts in Virginia are laying the groundwork for new markets for native grasses, those that will require predictable, first-year results, results that FDCE has been able to routinely achieve."

When CMI was awarded a Conservation Innovation Grant in 2008 they immediately turned to FDCE for technical assistance. Glen Stevens, who oversees the grant for CMI, says "Many of Virginia's institutions, agencies and landowners are excited about developing native grass markets for forage and biofuels, but we first needed to show them that it is a viable crop - and that starts with successfully establishing the grasses in a short period of time. That is why we chose to work with FDC Enterprises."



One key purpose for the research is to provide data on input costs, establishment time, stand quality and ultimately the cash markets for the crop. "We also believe that cash markets for native grasses and the environmental benefits they provide are not mutually exclusive," Stevens noted. That is why, in addition to research for cash crop markets, CMI will be studying the numerous environmental benefits offered by native grasses, including wildlife habitat, water quality enhancement, soil stabilization and carbon sequestration. Working with FDCE, native grass demonstration sites were established in 2008\09 using FDCE's specialty customized planters, micronutrient enhanced seed blends and precise computerized herbicide equipment.



Along with the research being coordinated with CMI, FDCE has been participating with the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. The Commonwealth is exploring opportunities to shift in-house facilities from conventional solid fuel feedstocks to a regionally produced, renewable biomass energy source; native grass feedstock. With FDCE native grass material as energy feedstock, the Commonwealth has run a successful pilot test at Piedmont Geriatric Hospital in Burkeville, Virginia. That success has led to Commonwealth interest in converting Catawba Hospital's current boiler to a biomass boiler.



The research with FDCE, Virginia Tech's Conservation Management Institute and the Commonwealth is beginning to show that native grass is a viable cash crop. "We believe markets for native grass will undoubtedly expand beyond where they are today," said Tom Schwartz, Senior Wildlife Biologist and Marketing Manager for FDCE. "Our hope is that the research being coordinated with Virginia Tech's CMI and others will further prove that native grasses can provide additional benefit for landowners, wildlife, and energy independence."

If you have any questions regarding this project, or if you would like to learn more about FDC Enterprises, you can visit our website at www.fdcenterprises.com or call (866)-270-4833.