



NEWS RELEASE



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Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Awarded Four Grants by U.S. Forest Service

PRINCETON, WVa— Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry Director Kathryn Maloney announced the awarding of more than \$1.5 million in grants to 23 competitively selected projects. The grants from the U.S. Forest Service encourage innovation and the sharing of processing and marketing knowledge among wood products manufacturers in the Eastern United States. The primary goal of the grants is to keep local wood businesses globally competitive and sustainable.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, VA, received four grants. One grant for \$27,750 will fund development of a workshop for hardwood component manufacturers. The workshop will help participants make decisions that will improve competitiveness by using better production methods, appropriate technologies, and financial analysis tools. The workshop information, developed over the last 5 years, will include new technologies and methods to enhance recovery and improve profitability. The workshop will also provide new tools to improve decision-making processes in day-to-day business operations.

The second grant for \$32,050 will be used to develop a rough mill cost-savings computer software tool for determining the least-cost mix of lumber grades. Current software applications require Internet access on a U.S. Forest Service server equipped with the SAS corporation statistical package. A new statistical software package similar to SAS is now available that will no longer require using Forest Service servers to compute a least-cost lumber solution.

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The third grant for \$98,786 will be used to assist small- and medium-sized hardwood lumber businesses in six States: North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. An assessment will identify detailed industry characteristics and needs. The information, in turn, will be used to define specific training needs, promote hardwood lumber products and services, and potentially help reduce marketing costs.

The fourth grant for \$45,928 will fund an assessment of the procurement needs of domestic hardwood lumber distributors to create a better match between what sawmills have to offer and what buyers need. This will create a more efficient supply chain.

When announcing the selected grants Maloney said, "A vibrant forest products industry is vital to sustaining healthy hardwood forests. These grants will assist American-based forest products industries remain competitive in the global market place. The projects selected this year address a diverse spectrum of industry needs including economic competitiveness, woody biomass utilization, urban wood utilization and invasive species control, and education."

Through the grant program, WERC develops partnerships with state forestry agencies, universities, the forest industry, and others to advance workforce skills and resource management opportunities. The funds awarded by WERC are leveraged with partner contributions to initiate projects. The 23 projects selected this year provide matching funds in excess of \$1.9 million.

Selections were based on a number of factors, including consideration of whether the project or grant recipient could:

- Maintain the economic competitiveness of hardwood industries.
- Bring information and technology to existing and emerging businesses that develop and manufacture wood products.
- Bring marketing and business-related skills to existing and emerging wood products businesses.

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- Encourage the adoption of new technology to improve competitiveness and profitability.
- Provide support and key information to entrepreneurs and start-up businesses.
- Address global issues and assist communities and industries facing threats from invasive species, such as the emerald ash borer.
- Increase the use of woody biomass for domestic energy use.

Funding is provided through the U.S. Forest Service Wood Education and Resource Center, located in Princeton, WV., and administered by the agency's Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry organization. The Center works with the forest products industry toward sustainable forest products production for the eastern hardwood forest region. It provides state-of-the-art training, technology transfer, networking opportunities, applied research, and information. For more information, visit <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/werc/>.

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