



NEWS RELEASE



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National Network of Forest Practitioners Awarded Grant by U.S. Forest Service

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

The National Network of Forest Practitioners (NNFP) in Athens, Ohio, received a \$100,000 grant to provide Web marketing expertise to small wood products firms to make their Web sites more effective. Studies indicate that many Web sites receive few visits and show a poor return on the investment made to have the site developed and maintained. However, effective Web sites do exist and some wood products businesses make nearly 100 percent of their sales through the Web. It is anticipated that Web traffic will increase by an average of 500 percent for wood products companies that receive marketing expertise.

The NNFP will conduct face-to-face training sessions about effective Web marketing in New England and the Ozarks. They will conduct a series of Webinars on how wood products companies can build Web marketing capacity and will help 25 wood products firms develop Web sites.

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."

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Through the grant program, the Wood Education and Resource Center (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.
- 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's mission is to work 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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