



NEWS RELEASE

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New Software Tools Available for Sawmill Efficiency Analysis

PRINCETON, W. Va.— Across the country, sawmills are finding it harder to operate under the constant financial squeeze between operating costs and lumber values. In these challenging times, it is critical that mill owners and managers have easy access to information about sawmill operating costs as well as detailed information about key operational factors such as the break-even costs of logs. Now a group of researchers and computer scientists at the U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station has developed two software tools that can help.

The free Forest Service software package includes two programs: **COST** (Cost Of Sawing Timber) and **SOLVE**, a sawmill efficiency study and analysis program that has been updated to a more user friendly Microsoft Windows format. The programs are designed so that sawmills can use them to analyze their own operations.

The software package will be rolled out to the wood industry in May 2008 through a series of workshops in the East and Midwest. State and university extension forest product specialists in Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, Massachusetts, and Indiana are working with scientists and software developers from the U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station Laboratory in Princeton, W. Va., to organize three hands-on workshops. These workshops, targeted to sawmill owners, managers, and business managers or comptrollers, are made possible by funding from the U.S. Forest Service Wood Education and Resource Center (WERC). A key activity of WERC is to provide training and information to the wood industry that will improve its economic competitiveness.

Workshop dates and locations include:

- May 20, 2008, at Stonewall Farm, Chesterfield, N.H.
- May 22, 2008, at Alfred State College, Alfred, N.Y.
- May 29, 2008, at Area 30 Vocational Center, Greencastle, Ind.

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The workshops will introduce the programs, data entry, data processing, and analysis of the results. Participants will be able to use the software themselves and have ample time to have a “hands-on” learning experience. Attendees are also encouraged to bring their own laptop computers to load the software and enter their own cost data.

COST calculates the per-minute cost of a specific sawmill operation. When using **COST**, the user first gathers and enters sawmill operational and cost information. Managers can then use the collected data and analysis to refine daily operational activities to reduce costs and improve efficiency, and as a result, increase profitability.

The **SOLVE** program is easy to use and provides a wide-ranging analysis of sawmill data. The knowledge derived from simple sawmill studies can help mills identify priority areas to focus on for improvements. **SOLVE** provides information about key operational factors, including log size distribution, lumber grade yields, lumber recovery factor and overrun, and break-even log costs. With this information, the sawmill manager can determine what types of logs (species, grades, and sizes) are affordable and can predict the product yield from those logs.

For more information about available software or to receive more workshop information, contact Paul Frederick at (802) 241-3698 or send an e-mail to paul.frederick@state.vt.us.

The Wood Education and Resource Center is located in Princeton, W.Va., and administered by the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry unit of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service. 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. Visit www.na.fs.fed.us/werc for more information about the Center.

The COST and SOLVE software tools are available on the Northern Research Station Web site <http://www.fs.fed.us/ne/princeton/software/index.html>.

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