



NEWS RELEASE

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Twins Cities Model for Urban Wood Waste Utilization

SAINT PAUL, Minn. -- Plenty of growth potential remains to increase urban wood debris usage across the United States, one recent federally-funded study noted.

Each year an estimated 16 million green tons or more of wood is removed from urban lands as a result of pests, wind storms, construction, hazard trees and other factors. That amount is comparable to the total annual harvests from National Forests each year. Much of this wood ends up in landfills, wasting potential resources.

In a less imperfect world, every bit of waste wood could be used, preferably at its highest level. However, today wood utilization in many urban areas falls far short of the full potential.

The case study, "Using Industrial Clusters to Build an Urban Wood Utilization Program: A Twin Cities Case Study," shows that opportunities exist to improve the amount of wood utilization in urban areas.

"In the Twin Cities, recycling is a big issue. Urban wood recycling is supported here. There may be certain cities that could adopt these practices," said Steve Bratkovich, author of the report.

"The Twin Cities—Minneapolis and St. Paul—are kind of on the cutting edge of communities around the nation in terms of wood utilization," he added.

"St. Paul has a [cogeneration] plant [District Energy] that uses about 300,000 tons of wood chips each year," he said. Cogeneration plants generate heat and electricity from the same fuel source.

"Most of those wood chips for the cogeneration plant come from urban wood waste. It is illegal to landfill trees in Minnesota, so virtually all of the wood waste from this urban forest is used. District Energy serves as an anchor industry for our growing urban wood business cluster."

Bratkovich said other municipalities could adopt similar practices to increase urban waste wood utilization, saving time, money, resources and landfill space.

As far ahead as the Twin Cities are compared to most other urban areas, it still has not perfected wood waste utilization, he added. "The urban wood cluster of the Twin Cities is evolving and expanding, but it's not the end game yet," he added.

Some of the benefits of increasing utilization of urban wood debris include:

- Reducing tree-disposal fees for cash-strapped communities
- Encouraging the expansion and development of niche urban wood-based businesses, and urban and community utilization programs

- Developing strong markets for urban wood recycling and utilization
- Converting urban “waste” wood into useful and locally-produced products
- Increasing environmental consciousness

Bratkovich said some other municipalities have small businesses doing wood utilization. He thinks some of them can benefit by adopting an urban wood business cluster model.

“They need more of an infrastructure in place. They need public and private support and market development. They need leadership and supporting organizations including financial assistance. Arborist groups, urban forestry research and on-going training and education are all very important.”

Urban land area makes up about 3.1 percent of the total land area in the Lower 48 States, equivalent in size to Vermont and New Hampshire combined.

The US Forest Service Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry Wood Education Resource Center funded the study.

On the Net: http://www.na.fs.fed.us/ss/10/industrial_clusters_wood_utilization.pdf

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