

Wood Education and Resource Center

USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry



Description: The Wood Education and Resource Center (WERC) began in 1999 when legislation directed the Forest Service to assume ownership of the Robert C. Byrd Hardwood Technology Center in Princeton, WV. WERC focuses on primary and secondary wood processing and woody biomass utilization across the 35 States that make up the eastern hardwood region. WERC projects focus on wood industry competitiveness issues, technology and information transfer, using woody biomass for energy, increasing collaboration within the forest products industry, and administering a fully functional WERC facility. The WERC program promotes a sustainable eastern hardwood resource.

Key Issues:

- Maintain the competitiveness of the wood products industry through competitively selected projects and partnerships.
- Support sustainable forest management goals by enhancing wood industry productivity and promoting woody biomass utilization for energy.
- Promote the economic competitiveness of hardwood forestry by providing technical expertise and information on efficient wood processing, utilization of damaged timber from invasive species, green building, and “wood-to-energy” opportunities to businesses, States, clients, and other partners.
- Improve the management skills of specific wood products business owners and managers through training and workshops coordinated by WERC in partnership with industry and service providers.
- Minimize the operating costs of the WERC facility and promote local wood products business by leasing government-owned wood products manufacturing space. The current lessee, Accurate Millworks, Inc., provides local employment and skills development opportunities.

Accomplishments:

- An Annual Competitive Grants Program is one of the Center’s key strategies for meeting its mission. WERC has invested \$9 million in 144 projects in 26 States during the last 5 years. In 2009, the fifth annual competitive grants program awarded approximately \$1.4 million to 20 projects. Projects focus on a range of activities that include technical assistance, training sessions, industry publications, and applied research geared toward maintaining wood products industry jobs and furthering Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry’s woody biomass goals.
- A comprehensive WERC Web site includes information about each funded grant and agreement and its final report and related documents. It also contains a wealth of information such as training DVDs and CDs for industry leaders and workers, community leaders, and others interested in the hardwood processing industry. The Web site address is www.na.fs.fed.us/werc.
- WERC strengthened existing partnerships and developed new alliances with a variety of organizations including State forestry agencies, wood products extension programs, universities, businesses, and key industry organizations.
- Continue to provide oversight assistance to Accurate Millworks, Inc., the current operator of WERC’s 43,000-square-foot rough mill facility and 12,000-square-foot shop.

Budget History:

Wood Education and Resource Center (\$ Thousands)					
	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
Total	\$2, 687	\$2,673	\$2,673	\$2,673	\$1,960

Future Direction:

- Provide additional training opportunities to wood industry personnel in the eastern hardwood region.
- Continue the grants program, selecting projects that align with WERC’s mission, vision, and goals.

- Maintain and expand the WERC Web site as an information hub for the hardwood processing industry by consistently adding final project reports and pertinent utilization and management information.
- Continue to provide technical assistance and support to organizations focused on improving the global competitiveness of wood-based manufacturing.
- Continue to provide hardwood utilization opportunities that support related program missions such as invasive species mitigation, urban forest management, the green building movement, and carbon sequestration.
- Provide information and technical support for sustainable development of woody biomass utilization.

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