

# Wood Education and Resource Center

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
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, technology and information transfer, woody biomass for energy, increasing collaboration within the forest products industry, and administering a fully functional WERC facility.

## Key Issues:

- Economic competitiveness within the hardwood industry: WERC provides technical expertise and information to businesses, States, clients, and other partners on efficient wood processing, using timber damaged by invasive species, green building, and wood-to-energy opportunities.
- Wood products industry competitiveness: WERC supports competitively selected wood industry projects and nurtures partnerships.
- Sustainable forest management: WERC enhances wood industry productivity and promotes using woody biomass for energy.
- Need to improve management skills among wood products business owners and managers: WERC provides training and workshops coordinated with industry and service providers.
- Minimize operating costs at the WERC facility and promote local wood products business: WERC leases its government-owned wood products manufacturing space. The current lessee, Accurate Millworks, Inc., provides local employment and an opportunity for workers to develop their skills.

## Accomplishments:

- An annual competitive grants program is one of the Center's key strategies for meeting its mission. WERC has invested \$10.7 million in 174 projects in 26 States during the last 7 years. In 2011, the grants program awarded \$288,257 to six projects. In addition, \$850,000 of supplemental funding supported another 11 projects, primarily sustainable biomass projects. Project activities include technical assistance, training sessions, industry publications, and applied research geared toward maintaining wood products industry jobs and Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry's woody biomass goals.
- A comprehensive WERC Web site includes information about each funded grant and agreement, its final report, and related documents. Other information includes workshops, conferences, and 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](http://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.
- WERC continues to focus attention on using trees removed from urban and suburban areas because of damage from pests such as the emerald ash borer or from natural disasters. Partners such as the Southeast Michigan Resource Conservation and Development Council and the Illinois Emerald Ash Borer Wood Utilization Team focus on innovative ways to utilize this wood by providing feasibility assessments, demonstrations, and training.
- More than 50 workshops, Webinars, Webcasts, and training sessions were held, both at the WERC facility and at other locations throughout the Eastern United States. Topics included using urban wood and woodworker skills standards.
- WERC continued to oversee and assist Accurate Millworks, Inc., the current operator of WERC's 43,000-square-foot rough mill facility and 12,000-square-foot shop.

## Budget History:

<b>Wood Education and Resource Center</b> <i>(\$ Thousands)</i>					
	<b>FY 2007</b>	<b>FY 2008</b>	<b>FY 2009</b>	<b>FY 2010</b>	<b>FY 2011</b>
<b>Total</b>	\$2,673	\$2,673	\$1,960	\$1,960	\$960

## Future Direction:

- Continue to provide technical assistance and support to organizations focused on improving the global competitiveness of sustainable wood-based manufacturing.
- Provide information and technical support for sustainable woody biomass utilization.
- Provide additional training to wood industry personnel in the 35-state eastern hardwood region.
- Continue the grants program, selecting projects that align with WERC's mission.
- Maintain and expand the WERC Web site as an information hub for the hardwood processing industry.
- 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 leadership on cutting edge and current issues in wood utilization and marketing.
- Promote local and regional economic development through WERC facilities and programs.

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