

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 emphasize the ability of wood industries to be competitive in local, regional, national, and global markets; 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 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 about efficient wood processing; utilization of timber damaged by invasive species; green building; and “wood-to-energy” opportunities to businesses, States, clients, and other partners.
- Improve the management skills of specific wood product sector business owners and managers through training and workshops coordinated by WERC in partnership with industry and service providers.
- Minimize operating costs at the WERC facility and promote local wood products business by leasing government-owned wood products manufacturing space. Leasing the facilities provides local employment and opportunities for workers to develop skills.
- Assist other Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry programs with meeting their primary goals and objectives by striving to have an economically competitive industry that provides markets for wood and trees.

Accomplishments:

- After a \$1 million reduction in WERC’s budget, the annual competitive grants program was discontinued in 2012. However, through FY 2011, WERC had funded more than 185 grants in 26 States with an investment of roughly \$11.4 million. Projects focused on 1) maintaining the economic competitiveness of the hardwood industry; 2) providing hardwood utilization opportunities that support invasive species mitigation, urban forest management, green building, and carbon sequestration; and 3) increasing the sustainable use of woody biomass for domestic energy use. Several grant modifications and one cooperative agreement were initiated in FY 2012 that primarily focused on training and technology transfer.
- WERC’s comprehensive Web site includes information about each funded grant and agreement, its final report, and related documents. It also contains a wealth of information that includes workshops and conferences as well 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.

- WERC continues to focus attention on utilization of urban and suburban trees removed because of disease and insect infestations (such as emerald ash borer) and 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 economically utilize this material by providing demonstrations, training, and feasibility assessments. In partnership with these organizations, WERC hosts quarterly urban wood utilization Webcasts.
- WERC has held more than 50 workshops, Webinars, Webcasts, and training sessions at both the WERC facility and other locations throughout the Eastern United States. Sessions covered topics such as urban wood utilization and woodworker skills standards.
- The previous mill lessee vacated WERC's 43,000-square-foot mill facility and 12,000-square-foot woodshop. WERC completed mill cleanup and repairs along with the release of a new prospectus for leasing the wood shop and rough mill.

Budget History:

Wood Education and Resource Center (Dollars in thousands)						
	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
Total	\$2,673	\$1,960	\$1,960	\$960	\$960	TBD

Future Direction:

- Provide additional training opportunities to wood industry personnel in the eastern hardwood region.
- Target specific project activities that address WERC's mission, vision, and goals.
- Maintain and expand the WERC Web site as an information hub for the hardwood processing industry.
- Continue to provide technology transfer activities that include periodic electronic updates and quarterly urban wood utilization Webcasts.
- 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.

Tony Ferguson, Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
610-557-4103 (4177-FAX)
tferguson@fs.fed.us

Mark Buccowich, Assist. Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
610-557-4029 (4177-FAX)
mbuccowich@fs.fed.us

Steve Milauskas, WERC Director
301 Hardwood Lane
Princeton, WV 24740
304-487-1510 (6661-FAX)
smilauskas@fs.fed.us



<http://www.na.fs.fed.us/werc>

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