Forest Service Field Representative Praises ‘Wood Innovation’ at Mass. Event

DURHAM, N.H., April 5, 2017 – U.S. Forest Service Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry Field Representative Constance Carpenter discussed the benefits of an innovative grant program at an event held at University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Apr. 3.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Wood Innovation grant program focuses on expanding and accelerating technologies and strategies that promote the use of wood. These technologies and strategies can be used in commercial construction, heat and power generation, and other wood product innovations that also benefit forest health.

“The Wood Innovation Program grants are used to introduce new uses of wood as a construction material in commercial buildings,” said Carpenter, the Forest Service New England-New York Representative. “They can also be used to stimulate wood products markets that can be supplied over the long term through management of public and private forest lands.”

The awarded funds serve to stimulate the use of hazardous fuels from National Forest System lands and other forested lands to promote forest health, as well as to generate rural jobs. The funds support a wide range of wood uses and new markets that include bio-chemicals, nano-materials, bio-char, and bioenergy, as well as engineered wood products for residential and commercial construction.

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Since 2005, more than 200 grants have been awarded nationally to small businesses, non-profits, Tribes, States, and local governments to improve forest health while creating jobs, renewable energy and healthy communities. Since 2013, this funding has also helped establish 20 Statewide Wood Energy Teams and five Statewide Wood Utilization Teams that collectively expand and support wood energy and wood products markets.

Responsibly-sourced forest products also provide income for private landowners that keep their land forested. Additionally, they support needed investments in forest management to provide clean water, wildlife habitat and other resources for millions of Americans.

Nationally, 114 proposals were received for the Forest Service's Wood Innovations grant program this year. Of those, 16 grants were received in the New England/New York region alone. These robust numbers highlight the expanding interest and use of wood as a renewable energy source and as an innovative building material.

The Forest Service awarded a Wood Innovations Grant in 2016 to New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) in Littleton, Mass. The grant for $149,875 was used to analyze the potential for manufacturing engineered wood products in New England. NEFF is providing $98,175 in matching funds.

"We are looking for opportunities to reduce forest restoration costs and create more jobs through strong forest products markets," said Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. "This funding supports improving forest health on the National Forest System lands and other forested lands and promotes the economic and environmental wellbeing of rural communities."

Also speaking at the event were Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Matthew Beaton and Massachusetts Secretary of Economic Development Jay Ash.

The event to share and discuss the Wood Innovations grant preliminary findings were held at the UMASS Laminated Timber Building.
A similar event will be held at the University of Maine in Orono for forest product industry leaders, April 7.

The mission of the U.S. Forest Service, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. Public lands managed by the Forest Service contribute more than $13 billion to the economy each year through visitor spending alone.

Those same lands provide 20 percent of the nation's clean water supply, a value estimated at $7.2 billion per year. The agency has either a direct or indirect role in stewardship of about 80 percent of the 850 million forested acres within the U.S., of which 100 million acres are urban forests where most Americans live.

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