

## Forest Products Utilization & Marketing

### Using Local Softwood Timber for Lumber Production in New York

#### The Challenge

In 2003, a new fire and building code was signed into law in New York that disallowed small sawmills from producing structural softwood dimension lumber for local residential and commercial use. This long-time practice had encouraged the use of underutilized softwood trees. The old code provided building inspectors with either a “local option” that allowed the use of ungraded local lumber products or a requirement that the producing mill certify that lumber products met a certain minimum grade standard.

#### The Solution

The New York Forest Utilization and Marketing Program worked with varied partners and many local sawmills to amend the new code by developing formal rules that reinstated the local option that was contained in the old code. Industry statistics and directories collected and maintained by the Forest Utilization and Marketing Program were used to underscore the economic importance of this little-known rural industry and to contact mills about the imminent threat to their livelihood and culture.

Once the new fire and building code was amended, the focus shifted to education. To encourage more local building inspectors to allow the use of locally produced lumber in their towns, the Forest Utilization and Marketing Program helped the Black River–St. Lawrence RC&D Council obtain funding from the USDA Forest Service Economic Action Program. The funding provided resources for several workshops that educated both sawmill personnel and local building inspectors about the issue.

*Implementation of the new code would have severely affected the sales of many small sawmills (estimated at \$9 million), deprived rural residents of a source of low-cost lumber, reduced forest harvest and improvement opportunities, and reduced timber sale income to private forest owners.*



*Locally produced softwood lumber is ready for use.*

#### Resulting Benefits

- Increased awareness of the importance of the small forest products industry to rural economies at the State and local level
- Maintained stewardship of privately owned forests, as well as an important income stream for rural forest landowners
- Promoted economic opportunity by using underutilized softwood timber for softwood dimension lumber

#### Sharing Success

- Many local building inspectors across the region are aware of the importance of continuing to use local lumber products as a result of the workshops.
- Information about the workshops was published in the *Empire State Forest Products Association Newsletter*.
- In addition to newspaper articles, workshop information appeared on local television and radio stations.



USDA Forest Service  
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