

Mission of the Southern Research Station in Pineville, Louisiana

Summary: U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's Southern Research Station (SRS) maintains a strong research mission at the Forestry Sciences Laboratory in Pineville, Louisiana. Research programs include those of Restoring and Managing Longleaf Pine; Insects, Diseases and Invasive Plants; Utilization of Southern Forest Resources; and Forest Inventory and Analysis. In addition, the Kisatchie National Forest Supervisor's Office and the Southern Region's State & Private Forest Health Program are co-located with SRS at this facility.

The SRS Station Director is consolidating staff of the Utilization of Southern Forest Resources program to Auburn, Alabama. SRS is not closing the Pineville, Louisiana research operations. The other programs will remain active and in place. This will allow SRS to enhance essential research pertaining to restoration of longleaf and shortleaf pine ecosystems, management of southern pine forests, and control techniques for invasive insects, diseases, and weed species in the mid-South. These are priority areas of research identified by State forestry agencies and national forest managers.

Background: The Utilization of Southern Forest Resources program was created in 1963 to support the forest products industry. The unit has a long history of contributing innovative technology in support of southern markets. However, during the last decade, several changes resulted in diminished staff levels, including retirements and movement of staff to other Forest Service locations, including the assignment of a new Project Leader with a duty location of Auburn. This project leader also supervises the Forest Operations Research Work Unit located in Auburn. Currently, there are only three employees remaining in Pineville, with just one research scientist remaining.

Current Status: The decision to move the remaining staff of the Utilization of Southern Forest Resources program from Pineville to Auburn is based on numerous additional factors: (1) research scientists will continue to support the forest products industry in the South; (2) having all unit scientists located in Auburn will allow them to share technical staff and equipment and will result in significant cost savings; and (3) research capacity will be enhanced by being co-located on campus at Auburn University, a leading forest products university.

This decision supports Administration direction to reduce the agency's facilities footprint. It is also consistent with congressional direction related to research programs for the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin.

SRS will continue to maintain a strong presence in the Pineville location. There are 17 personnel associated with research programs for Restoring and Managing Longleaf Pine; Insects, Diseases, and Invasive Plants; and Forest Inventory and Analysis who will continue to operate from that location. In addition, the headquarters of the Kisatchie National Forest and the State & Private Forest Health Program will continue to maintain a strong presence at the co-located facility.