



Wisconsin DNR forest products specialists helped Midwest Black Locust increase production of new and existing products for projects like this in Manhattan, which was built by Let It Grow. Courtesy photo by Let It Grow.

Expanding Forest Utilization Means Healthy Forests, Stronger Markets

Healthy forests and strong markets rely on active, responsible forest management. Expanding markets for wood and forest products supports increased timber harvesting and sustainable forest management best practices. This improves the health of our Nation's trees and forest resources, making forests healthier.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service Wood Innovations Program is working with the Southern Group of State Foresters, the Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance, and the Council of Western State Foresters to expand the group's operating capacity and provide funding for market utilization projects across the United States.

Forest Service staff support these associations with expert technical assistance and high-quality information resources. Staff also support strong collaborative partnerships with businesses and other organizations, and foster business expansion and new business development.

Developing strong, sustainable markets for forest products delivers multiple environmental and economic benefits. Effectively using forest residues—such as wood chips left after thinning or logging—can offset the costs of forest restoration and fire hazard treatments. Using these overlooked bio-based forest products can also improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester carbon, improve soil quality, and create employment in rural communities.

BIOCHAR, TORREFIED WOOD, AND MASS TIMBER PRODUCTION OPPORTUNITIES

“Expanding forest utilization is as much a solution to local issues, like building a new mill to process locally abundant material, as global issues, like developing sustainable biofuels and products to combat climate change,” says Laura Schweitzer, executive director of the Council of Western State Foresters.



Portable steel bridgemats, a best management practice that minimizes the impact on streams, help sustainably expand forest utilization. Courtesy photo by the Southern Group of State Foresters.

The Council of Western State Foresters used Forest Service Wood Innovations grants to study emerging wood products and their markets. This information will help expand those markets, increasing the commercial use of wood products from fuels reduction and forest restoration projects. These studies are providing information to increase wood use and development of markets and manufacturers.

FOREST UTILIZATION TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXPANDS FOREST INDUSTRY

An interest survey and a training assessment was conducted to understand the technical skills needs of the Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance. The survey led to training and workshops covering wood basket analyses, forest products marketing, and business retention and expansion. Several Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff attended these trainings. The courses were well received and led Wisconsin DNR to offer similar training to local governmental, Tribal, nongovernmental, and industry entities.

These activities have allowed Wisconsin DNR forest products specialists to provide technical assistance to Midwest Black Locust in Muscoda, WI, helping them expand their operations and increase production. These efforts are improving management of local forests and helping the area's economy.

HELPING BUSINESS SEE GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TEXAS FOREST SECTOR

"The Forest Service Wood Utilization Program supported our timber supply analysis web application. This supported our efforts to convince Angelina Forest Products to build a \$100 million sawmill in Lufkin, Texas," says Hughes Simpson, Division Chief Operating Officer at the [Texas A&M Forest Service](#).

The State agency also helped survey the area around the prospective mill for timberland, softwood sawtimber, and trends in growth and removals of softwood sawtimber. Agency data streamlined the process for siting a new mill and analyzing the local wood supply. The softwood mill created about 100 full-time jobs and contributed \$52 million to the Texas economy in 2019.

More Information

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FAST FACTS

- Expanded markets for wood and forest products support increased harvesting and sustainable forest management
- Accelerating development of markets for forest products that might not otherwise be commercially viable can deliver environmental and economic benefits
- Using overlooked forest products can improve air quality, mitigate climate change, improve soil, and create rural jobs



A firefighter conducts tactical firing operations on the Hippy Ridge Fire in Wise County, Texas. Effectively using forest residues can help offset the costs of wildfire hazard treatments. Courtesy photo by Texas A&M AgriLife.

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