

Wood Education and Resource Center

USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry



Description: Created by Congress in FY 1999, the Wood Education and Resource Center (WERC) assists diverse constituencies in the eastern hardwood region address economic, environmental, technological, and social challenges by providing state of the art access to information resources. Activities include training, technology transfer, and applied research.

Key Issues:

- Solutions to complex problems require up-to-date, reliable, and unbiased information.
- Lack of knowledge/skills/capacity of the forest industry workforce *and* resource users.
- International competitiveness of forest products industries lagging resulting in dramatic job losses in rural and urban areas
- Globalization of business increasing spread of exotic invasive species across borders
- Certifying agencies, licensure boards, professional societies and legislative mandates all require natural resource professionals to receive annual training
- Changing workforce demographics require that employers develop new strategies to ensure availability of safe and productive workers
- Reduced availability of technical assistance personnel increases the urgency to develop more effective and efficient methods to conduct technology transfer activities
- Potential negative environmental impacts resulting from the production of forest products.

Accomplishments:

- Assisted more than 1,650 pallet manufacturers and shippers in 22 states comply with new international regulations to prevent the spread of exotic invasive pests. Funded the development of treatment alternatives yielding a patent application by a project cooperator.
- In partnership with major national and regional industry associations, completed a national assessment of Hispanic worker and employer needs in the woodworking industry and developed a web based network to deliver information resources.
- Developed beta version of technology transfer CD summarizing 40 years of hardwood quality research within the USDA Forest Service Northeastern Research Station's Princeton Lab
- In collaboration with the Forest Products Society completed development of a searchable database enabling retrieval of nearly 50 years of technical articles available in the *Forest Products Journal*.
- Completed a project with West Virginia University to develop a website program enabling foresters and landowners to calculate the financial benefits of long term forest stewardship.
- Assisted Woodlinks USA develop and deliver programs focused on increasing educational partnerships between the wood industry, educators and local school districts.

Budget History:

Wood Education and Resource Center				
<i>(\$ Thousands)</i>				
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004
Total	\$2,459	\$2,700	\$2,682	\$2,667

Future Direction:

- Significant focus in FY 05 will be on the creation and delivery of professional development programs enabling natural resource professionals to meet certification requirements of states, professional societies, and certifying organizations.
- In collaboration with the Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters complete the assessment of a business case for establishing a distance learning and videoconference network for the Northeast and Midwest and begin establishment if warranted.
- Continue efforts to provide technical assistance and support to organizations focused on improving the international competitiveness of wood based manufacturing.
- Expand efforts to assist states and municipalities address wood disposal issues resulting from exotic pest infestations; complete efforts to assist manufacturers address new international regulations requiring pallet treatment to prevent the spread of exotic invasive pests.

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