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Research looks for one last use for Badger Army Ammunition Plant

Madison, Wis.— The Badger Army Ammunition Plant near Baraboo, Wis., has lain dormant for more than three decades. But a researcher at the USDA Forest Service, Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) in Madison, Wis. is giving the plant one last chance to produce.

Dr. Robert Falk, a FPL research engineer believes the buildings at Badger are still a source of a valuable product: the old-growth timber used to construct them more than 60 years ago.

Falk is working to make the plant a candidate for building deconstruction, a process in which buildings are dismantled and the resulting lumber and other materials are recovered for reuse. Rather than demolishing the buildings and landfilling the debris, deconstruction diverts the usable materials away from landfills and provides a new source of high-quality building materials.

Falk's work includes several deconstruction success stories, and he was honored last month for the partnerships he forms to get the work done. Falk received the USDA Forest Service Chief's Partnership Award for his "efforts in implementing wood-framed building deconstruction and lumber salvage."

In 2002, Falk worked in partnership with the U.S. Army, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the University of Florida, and Habitat for Humanity at Fort Campbell, Ky. Habitat for Humanity and Americorp volunteers dismantled five wood-framed buildings. Oak flooring and joists valued at more than \$40,000 were salvaged, enough for Habitat for Humanity to build a home for a low-income family.

Another successful partnership with the U.S. Army, conducted at the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant in St. Paul, Minn., involved the deconstruction of two large WWII industrial buildings. The use of deconstruction saved the Army more than \$400,000 in building disposal costs and 2 million board feet of high-quality Douglas fir timber was salvaged. The wood was enough to build 150 new homes and was valued at more than \$1 million.

Falk believes deconstruction at Badger can be as successful, and on a much larger scale. "We know there is a wealth of materials at Badger," says Falk. "We're currently in the process of determining how many buildings will be suitable for deconstruction and how much reusable material they contain."

Preliminary research shows at least 200 buildings are candidates for deconstruction and another 900 have potential if the Army determines they can be cleaned of explosive hazard. The largest 77 of the 1,400 buildings at Badger contain enough lumber to build more than 300 Habitat for Humanity single-family homes.

In addition to Falk, FPL mycologist D. Jean Lodge received the Chief's Award for Distinguished Science for her work in documenting the biological diversity of fungi in the Tropics. Lodge is currently stationed in Puerto Rico.

The USDA Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory was established in 1910 in Madison, Wis., with the mission to conserve and extend the country's wood resources. Today, FPL's research scientists work with academic and industrial researchers and other government agencies in exploring ways to promote healthy forests and clean water, and improve papermaking and recycling processes. Information is available at FPL's Web site: www.fpl.fs.fed.us. Through FPL's Advanced Housing Research Center, (www.fpl.fs.fed.us/ahrc/), researchers also work to improve homebuilding technologies and materials.

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