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USDA FOREST SERVICE • FOREST PRODUCTS LABORATORY

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Middleton Man Praised for Leadership at Forest Products Laboratory

Madison, Wis.— Chris Risbrudt, Ph.D., director of the USDA Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) in Madison, has been named a “Laboratory Director of the Year” by a national group representing major government research facilities. Risbrudt was cited for his leadership in developing and transferring wood-utilization technologies.

“This award really recognizes the excellent innovative work by the dedicated scientists and support staff at FPL,” Risbrudt said. “Making their research findings readily available to the public is an important aspect of our work at FPL,” Risbrudt said. “The ultimate purpose of the research is its application by businesses, home owners, builders and others in the construction, paper or lumber industries.”

Risbrudt was recognized by the Federal Laboratory Consortium for Technology Transfer (FLC), a network of federal laboratories, whose mission is to promote the movement of federal laboratory research results and technologies into the mainstream of the U.S. economy. He was cited for “outstanding leadership at the FPL in the development and transfer of new wood utilization technologies that contribute to forest resource conservation and productivity, to the economy, and to the quality of human life.”

Risbrudt assumed the reins at FPL in the fall of 2001, when the laboratory was being challenged to play an important role in direct support of the Forest Service’s efforts to reduce overcrowding in the nation’s forests.

One task was to develop new uses for small-diameter trees and underutilized species to increase their value and help offset the cost of thinning the forests. Another challenge facing FPL was the growing public concern about mold in homes and the durability of some construction materials and technologies.

Risbrudt focused the laboratory's resources on programs involving underutilized forest materials, extending the useful life of wood products, and facilitating the recycling of wood and paper products. He also encouraged increased communications and technology-transfer activities. FPL's Technology Marketing Unit takes information and technical assistance to communities throughout the Western United States. These activities also help to revitalize rural economies that had been hard hit by major cutbacks in traditional logging activities a decade ago.

FPL has also opened its doors to sawmill operators and other business people as well as to homeowners, builders and architects who want to learn about new uses for forest resources as well as recommended homebuilding techniques.

Risbrudt lives in Middleton with his wife, Sue.

The FLC has more than 700 members representing major federal laboratories and centers and their parent departments and agencies. The other laboratory directors honored in May are from the National Center for Agriculture Utilization Research in Peoria, Illinois, and the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Washington, D.C.

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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