



NEWS RELEASE

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Madison Lab Employees Recognized for Work to Preserve Forests Efforts Could Help Reduce Costs of Managing Forests

Madison, Wis.— Several employees of the USDA Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) here have been recognized for their roles in an innovative effort aimed at reducing the threat of ecologically destructive forest fires like ones that ravaged western U.S. forests in recent years.

The local Forest Service employees have been collaborating with private companies, organizations and other Forest Service personnel on projects in Montana that demonstrate new uses for small-diameter roundwood.

This work earned those involved a National Award for Excellence in Innovation in Biomass Utilization from the National Fire Plan, presented Tuesday evening (Feb. 15, 2005) at a conference in Albuquerque, N.M.

Created five years ago, the National Fire Plan is a cooperative effort by the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and other government agencies to ensure that the country has the capacity to fight wildland fires and to reduce the number and intensity of future fires and their impact on local communities.

The Montana projects included a new community library in Darby, and a kiosk and pedestrian bridge at Travelers' Rest State Park near Lolo. Each project made extensive use of small-diameter roundwood from fire- or insect-damaged trees taken from the nearby Bitterroot National Forest in the effort to reduce hazardous fuels.

Removing young trees—those with a trunk diameter of nine inches or less—from overgrown forests is an important strategy in the effort to reduce the frequency and intensity of forest fires. Such forest-thinning activity can be prohibitively expensive unless the removed trees can be sold.

The Montana projects demonstrated new, high-value uses for small-diameter trees, which could improve the utilization of, and create markets for, trees that have been neglected or undervalued. This could reduce forest-management costs by increasing the value of the small-diameter trees. Such projects could also help revitalize rural communities whose forest-based economies have suffered in recent years.

The FPL employees were: David W. Green, supervisory research general engineer; and members of the State and Private Forestry Technology Marketing Unit, including Susan LeVan-Green, program manager; John (Rusty) Dramm, utilization specialist; Gerry Jackson, marketing specialist; Mark Knaebe, forest products technologist; Jean Livingston, communications specialist; Adele Olstad, visual information specialist, Linda Richter, program assistant; and John Zerbe, volunteer wood energy specialist.

Montana organizations included the Forest Service's State and Private Forestry unit in Montana and the Bitterroot National Forests, the Montana Community Development Corporation, the Porterbilt Company, Inc., Beaudette Consulting Engineers, the Bitter Root Resource Conservation and Development Area, and Travelers' Rest Preservation and Heritage Association.

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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