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Haywood Habitat Affiliate To Reconstruct Unique Sustainable Resource House Previously Exhibited in Nation's Capital and Donated by USDA Forest Service and Industry Contributors

MADISON, Wis. -- The Haywood County (N.C.) affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, in collaboration with the USDA Forest Service's Forest Products Laboratory and Haywood Community College, will erect an unusual house in Canton next week, April 26-28.

The house, a 1,200 square-foot wood-frame structure, has many features designed to outperform conventional construction and cut energy bills for the occupants. In addition, the house demonstrates the use innovative wood products that can be manufactured from small trees that need to be thinned from forests to improve forest health.

An Open House, scheduled for 2-5 p.m. on Saturday, April 29, will enable the public to tour the so-called Sustainable Resource House and examine many of the house's energy-saving and environment-friendly features before the interior of the house is complete. In following weeks, the interior will be finished and the house will be dedicated to a Habitat partner family. The Open House will be at Skyland Terrace, Canton, N.C.

The Sustainable Resource House was originally constructed and displayed on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., last summer as part of the Smithsonian Institution's 2005 Folklife Festival, which commemorated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the USDA Forest Service. Thousands of visitors toured the house and learned about the construction materials and technologies used in the home's construction. When the festival ended in July, the house was dismantled and shipped to Haywood County, where Haywood Habitat for Humanity volunteers, industry partners, and students from Haywood Community College will reassemble it.

The house was donated to the Haywood County Habitat for Humanity affiliate because Haywood Community College has a cooperative research relationship with the Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) and because the local Habitat organization is an active one, having built 30 houses since 1990. Habitat for Humanity uses volunteer labor and donated money and materials to build houses that are then sold at no profit to families that would otherwise not be able to afford their own homes. Mortgage payments for Habitat homes are applied to build more homes for other families.

"This project has been especially important to the Haywood community because it is enabling our Habitat for Humanity affiliate to work more closely with many local businesses, several of which are providing materials and

assistance. For example, even the land for the house was donated by Blue Ridge [Paper Products, Inc.],” said Marnette Colborne, executive director of Haywood Habitat for Humanity. “We continue to hear from new businesses as the project progresses.”

The house’s construction incorporates engineered wood products such as I-joists, tongue-and-groove plywood floor sheathing, structural insulated panels that are manufactured with oriented strand board (OSB), laminated veneer lumber, glulam beams and engineered wood lap siding. Interior walls were framed with finger-jointed southern pine lumber. Such materials all can be manufactured using wood from small trees.

“Products like those show there is an economic outlet for trees that usually are regarded as undesirable,” explained Karen Martinson, program specialist at the Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) in Madison, Wis. “By doing the research and applying the technology, we can improve forest health and make homes more durable and affordable.”

Many of those home-building technologies and materials were developed or tested by Forest Service researchers at the FPL, which has been involved in developing engineered wood products since it opened in 1910.

“Builders like to use engineered wood products because they are designed with specific applications in mind and are manufactured to rigid specifications,” said Mike Ritter, assistant director of the FPL and head of the lab’s Advanced Housing Research Center.

The speedy construction on the National Mall and reconstruction in Haywood County are made possible by the use of structural insulated panels, called SIPs, which are made using OSB and an insulating foam layer. The walls and roof are pre-assembled in a factory and then erected on the job-site in a just a few days. The insulating properties of SIPs can significantly lower the energy required to heat and cool a home. Also, studies that look at the life of a building, called life-cycle assessments, show that using wood is good for the environment in terms of embodied energy, global-warming potential, air emissions, water emissions and solid-waste production.

Building materials for the house were donated by members of three industry groups—APA-The Engineered Wood Association, the Southern Pine Council, and the Structural Insulated Panel Association. The industry groups worked with the Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) to construct a house that would demonstrate the link between sustainable forestry, modern wood products and environmentally friendly building.

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, researchers also work to improve homebuilding technologies and materials.

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