

Macon Ridge Economic Development Research Project

(excerpted from a press release prepared by John Tarver, Ag Center Communications)

The Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory, part of the LSU Agricultural Center, has launched a market-based study of the potential for the secondary wood products industry to contribute to economic development in a 10-parish area in Northeast Louisiana.

Ruth Lynn Russell, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Rural Development, contributed \$50,000 for the project. The Macon Ridge Economic Development Council, representing the 10-parish area, has contributed \$10,000, and the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station will contribute about \$36,000.

The Macon Ridge council also volunteered its offices, staff, manpower and other resources to support the study. The project also has the support of Commissioner of Agriculture Bob Odom and the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

Dr. Richard P. Vlosky, Assistant Professor of forest products marketing at the Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory, is the principal investigator in the study. He is assisted by Paul Chance, previously executive director of the Louisiana Furnishings Industry Association and now studying for his Ph.D. in the School of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries.

Vlosky and Chance proposed the project to the Macon Ridge council in March and fine-tuned it to focus on an area where federal funding has

been available for economic development based on the region's designation as an Enterprise Community.

The area still contains an important hardwood forest resource although it has been heavily depleted in recent decades. Russell said economic conditions in the region present a challenge to policy makers.

"Markets and marketing represent only one part of the economic development puzzle often overlooked by the public", Vlosky pointed out. We are trying to add a perspective that will serve as a guide for policy makers when they consider the inputs necessary for making rational development decisions."



Pictured from left to right, Rich Vlosky, Assistant Professor of forest products marketing (LFPL); Ruth Russell, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Rural Development; Paul Chance, Ph.D. candidate in the School of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries. (Ag Center photo by John Wozniak)

"It is a unique place in which to expand the secondary wood products industry," she said, citing it as an economically depressed area in need of new businesses and training opportunities to serve as an incubator.

The marketing study will identify markets appropriate for the region, Vlosky said, that will return added value to secondary wood products industries. The raw materials of the area must match the available markets, he added.

Under Vlosky and Chance's proposal, the Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory will study a range of economic indicators, including consumer market trends, location decision criteria, raw materials availability and applicability, labor force skills and training requirements, target market identification, recruitment and retention strategies, comparative advantages and specific production segments of the forest industry. ■



2 The Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory - Another Year

The Christmas holidays are now behind us, and we all hope everyone had an enjoyable and successful season. May you have the very best in the new year.

The Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory has had another successful year and I am very proud of what the staff accomplished. I want to highlight some of these accomplishments here, but we are also including a publications insert to better fill in the details. This list will also provide you with the specific members of our staff who are responsible for each area of research.

Among our publications are two Louisiana industry directories compiled by Rich Vlosky and JoAnn Doucet, one for primary and one for secondary wood products, and an information booklet on the woods of Louisiana compiled by Vic Harding and Ramsay Smith. A catalog of products and services offered by Louisiana's secondary wood products manufacturers developed by LFIA has been reproduced electronically by Rado Gazo and is now resident on the Internet. This catalog is available to potential purchasers of Louisiana's secondary wood products, locally, nationally, and internationally.

A network has also been established by all members of our staff to help primarily smaller firms with technical and marketing information through newsletters, fact sheets, direct contact, site visits, dissemination of literature and laboratory analyses. We have had more than

150 requests for information and more than 3000 mailings have been sent to Louisiana residents. In addition, workshops are provided at minimal costs to assist Louisiana firms in becoming more efficient and help expand their operations through identifying new markets.

On the research side, a recently completed study by Rich Vlosky examines forest products-oriented development efforts in place around the United States. This study is helping us learn what is going on in surrounding states and how they are developing value-added wood products industries in these states. Now we can help implement the more successful efforts in development of our own value added industry.

An analysis of both wood and agricultural residues produced in the state has been completed by Niels de Hoop and placed in a GIS computer system to help locate and provide information on potential raw material for fuel and further processing. A copy of the report containing residue sites is available from the LFPL.

In working closely with other units within the school as well as on campus, such as Cooperative Extension Service, College of Business and Economics, and College of Engineering, other activities have been completed. Elvin Choong is developing information critical to the use of recycling of wood materials. The primary products being examined at this time are recycling transmission poles and development of wood residue and waste plastic composites. Joseph Chang is continuing to increase the viability of using X-ray scanners to locate interior characteristics prior to logs being cut. This system, known as TOPSAW, has been very well received in the hardwood sawmill industry. Rado Gazo has been working very closely with Thomas Ray in the School of

Industrial and Manufacturing Systems Engineering to develop more efficient processing systems and software for small wood working firms. We have a new member on our staff, Qinglin Wu, who will also work in the area of processing. He will be starting a new program in process analysis.

Rich Vlosky and Paul Chance have started a comprehensive study to assist the Macon Ridge Economic Development Council in maximizing its economic development effort. They are analyzing sources of competitive advantage for the forest products industry manufacturing base in the Macon Ridge area. Niels de Hoop has begun a study to analyze stormwater runoff from log yards to examine the environmental effects. Rado Gazo is identifying and working with smaller wood working industries implementing some of the software that has been developed to assure the compatibility of its use and efficiencies. He is also working closely with Lynn Hannaman of Cooperative Extension in helping young businesses develop floor plans and placement of wood working machinery to provide more efficient material flow in their operations. Mark Gibson and George Grodzitz in the Louisiana Tech LFPL are continuing their work in wood and processing characteristics of southern yellow pine plantation material.

Many of these activities were started simply by a phone call from people like yourself. In this way we can react directly to those questions and welcome the opportunity to work with each and every one of you. We at the Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory hope that you have a great and successful 1996, and please let us hear from you. ■

W. Ramsay Smith,
Program Director, LFPL

Want To Submit An Article?

If you would like to have an article printed in the newsletter, contact JoAnn Doucet at (504) 388-4157 or fax (504) 388-4251.

Labor and Material Tracking Program

Bar code-based inventory tracking and control systems are a source of cost reduction, better business practices and competitive advantage. There are two main uses of bar codes for internal inventory management. The first is in work-in-process inventories, which can assist wood products producers with recovery rate calculations, and the second is a finished and rough inventory tracking and control system.

The Labor And Material (LAM) bar code-based inventory tracking program was developed by Rado Gazo at the Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory. The program, based on a dBASE database platform, is Windows 95 and LAN network compatible. It uses bar code technology for data transfer as well as desktop and portable radio frequency bar code scanners for entering and transmitting inventory information. Job numbers, invoice numbers, employee names, manufacturing operations, raw material inputs and finished products are assigned bar codes and tracked. Available management reports include employee attendance for payroll accounting and labor and materials used per invoice, job or time unit. It is also an excellent tool for estimating finished product prices in a custom production environment. The LAM has user-friendly interface and a short learning curve.

This program was developed specifically for small- to medium-sized secondary wood manufacturers to offer management information systems that only large companies can generally afford. It has been tested in a medium-sized millworking company. For more information, contact Rado Gazo at (504) 388-6432. ■

What's New At Our Ruston Location

Our LFPL location at the School of Forestry, Louisiana Tech University, in Ruston is alive and well. In addition to our on-going wood quality research, technical assistance to industry and writing proposals for extramural funding, we have been serving as an information clearing-house and responding to inquiries from Louisiana citizens about forest products. A recent inquiry concerned the ginning of Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides* L.). The question came from a local resident who had read a recent article in *Louisiana Life*, Spring, 1995, that discussed a gin in Livingston Parish that was still processing the moss. The individual wanted to know if we had any further information regarding harvesting, ginning or current and past uses of the moss, and whether or not we could direct her to any available published information on the subject. We are pleased to say that we were able to provide a small amount of information on the subject, but we would welcome any comments our readers might have or additional information on this interesting "minor" forest product of Louisiana.

The Ruston Laboratory will again be one of the cooperators for the Louisiana Tech University School of Forestry's Annual Hardwood Log, Lumber and Tree Grading Workshop. This workshop is designed to present a working knowledge of the USDA Forest Service grading system and its relationship to lumber grades and product utilization. Attendees will learn to recognize external defect indicators and their importance in hardwood logs. The application of log grading to standing timber will also be covered. The course is designed to assist those involved in the hardwood lumber industry (mill owners, sawyers, edger operators, inspectors, sales and office personnel), those involved in timber management (forestry technicians, foresters, refuge managers and private landowners) and other interested persons. The workshop is scheduled for March 12-15, 1996. Further information can be obtained from Dr. Mark D. Gibson, Workshop Coordinator, by calling (318) 257-3392 or writing to the School of Forestry, Louisiana Tech University, P.O. Box 10138, Ruston, LA 71272-0045. ■

New Staff Member Appointed

We are excited to announce the appointment of Dr. Qinglin Wu to our staff as a new Assistant Professor in Wood Processing. Dr. Wu will be using his background and experience to develop a comprehensive program in wood processing dealing primarily with material use and properties.

Dr. Wu comes to us from Michigan State University where he was conducting research on the utilization of eastern hardwoods. He received his Ph.D. in forest products at Oregon State University in 1993 and his master's degree in mechanical engineering at the University of Tasmania in Australia.

He was the recipient of the prestigious 1994 Wood Award for the best graduate research paper given by the Forest Products Society. He received second place.

We are very pleased to have Dr. Wu join us, and he is looking forward to meeting all of you. Please feel free to contact him at (504) 388-8369. ■



Dr. Qinglin Wu



Calendar of Events And Workshops

- March 12-15, 1996** Louisiana Tech University, School of Forestry's Annual Hardwood Log, Lumber, and Tree Grading Workshop. For more information call Mark Gibson at (318) 257-3392.
- March 13-17, 1996** 1996 New Orleans Home & Garden Show. At the Louisiana Superdome. LFIA members are exhibited in the show.
- January - May** Louisiana Furnishings Industry Association (LFIA) holds regular monthly meetings at the Ponchatoula headquarters. If you are interested call LFIA at (504) 386-0471 for the date and time.



Louisiana
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LFPL FACULTY & STAFF LSU

W. Ramsay Smith - Program Leader & Professor
Niels de Hoop - Assistant Professor
Rich Vlosky - Assistant Professor - Marketing
Rado Gazo - Postdoctoral Research Associate
Qinglin Wu - Assistant Professor - Processing
Pat Lefeaux - Chief Clerk II
JoAnn Doucet - Agricultural Laboratory Assistant
LA Tech
Mark Gibson - Associate Professor
George Grozdits - Research Associate

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center
H. Rouse Caffey, Chancellor
Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station
Kenneth W. Tipton, Vice Chancellor and Director
School of Forestry, Wildlife, & Fisheries
Stanley B. Carpenter, Director
Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory
W. Ramsay Smith, Program Director
Forestry, Wildlife, & Fisheries Building
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-6202
TEL (504) 388-4155 FAX (504) 388-4251
<http://www/lfpl.forestry.lsu.edu/>
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