Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory

NEWSLETTER

Spring/Summer 1998

Dr. Mark Gibson (left) of the Louisiana Forest Products Lab and David Einsel, a graduate student in Civil & Environmental Engineering, are programming a solar-powered water sampler that collects water samples whenever it detects a rain storm event. Picture taken by Niels de Hoop.

Stormwater Runoff from Log Yards: Preliminary Results Available

What is the quality of the stormwater running off of log yards, such as those associated with sawmills, chip mills, etc.? LFPL researchers Drs. Cornelis de Hoop (LSU), Mark Gibson (LA Tech), and George Grozdits (LA Tech), along with Dr. Kyoung Ro of LSU's Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering have been looking at just that. They have been studying six pine log yards in Louisiana in an investigation sponsored by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Tests were performed for standard parameters (such as oxygen demand and suspended solids), heavy metals, and priority pollutants (pesticides and volatiles). Water quality from recirculation ponds was found to be of the same quality as runoff water from dry storage yards. For a copy of the draft final report that was sent to DEQ, contact Dr. de Hoop at (504) 388-4242. ■

Certification Research at the Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory

Environmental certification of forest products and forestry practices, part of the more encompassing green movement, is proliferating globally. In response to environmental concerns, some environmental organizations, retailers, and wood products companies are developing standards to encourage consumers to purchase wood originating from certified sustainable forests.

These efforts are intended to counter the common perception by the general public that most forest practices involving the harvesting of wood do irreversible damage to the environment. The basis for this action is a perceived need for consumers to be assured by neutral third-party organizations that forest products companies are employing sound practices that will ensure a sustainable forest. In addition to countering negative perceptions by consumers and the general public, it is believed that companies that prove themselves to be environmentally responsible will benefit from certification by differentiating their products in the marketplace and thus acquire a larger share of the market.

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The objectives of certification generally include an objective audit of the management of the forest asset, promotion of sustainable forest management, and a demonstration that forest management provides sustainable economic, ecological, and social benefits. Certification programs typically involve in-depth evaluation of specific timber harvesting operations on three program elements: (1) timber resource sustainability; (2) forest ecosystem health and maintenance; and (3) financial and socioeconomic sustainability. Programs also call for ongoing, periodic monitoring to assure continued adherence to management plans and practices, and to assure adequate tracking of the ”chain-of-custody“ of products from certified operations (i.e. from the forest to the retailer and to the final consumer).

At the Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory, part of the LSU Agricultural Center in Baton Rouge, Dr. Richard Vlosky and colleagues at universities around the world are conducting a series of forest certification studies. The researchers, including Dr. Juan Antonio Aguirre at the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) in Costa Rica and Dr. Lucie Ozanne at Lincoln University in New Zealand, have conducted studies in the United States, New Zealand, Costa Rica, and Honduras.

The goals of the research include determining attitudes, perceptions, and willingness to pay a price premium for certified products for various stakeholders in the certification process. Examples of stakeholders include timberland owners, wood product manufacturers, home center retailers, building contractors, architects, consumers, and state and federal government public land managers. Results indicate that there are stark contrasts in attitudes and willingness to pay for certified wood products or certification procedures between these groups. For information on obtaining copies of articles written on this research contact: Richard P. Vlosky, Assistant Professor, Forest Products Marketing, Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory, 227 Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Building, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803. phone: (504) 388-4527; fax: (504) 388-4251; e-mail: vlosky@unix1.sncc.lsu.edu ■

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Vlosky Goes to Venezuela

Richard P. Vlosky, Assistant Professor, Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory, visited the University of the Andes in Merida, Venezuela. Dr. Vlosky, hosted by Mr. Franz Rosso, Director of the Venezuela Forest Products Laboratory, lectured graduate students and industry professionals for three days at the university, and presented two papers at a national conference on international forest products trade and environmental wood products certification. As a result of this visit, Dr. Vlosky has been asked to help in the establishment of a Venezuelan Forest Products Marketing and Trade Center at the University of the Andes.

New Challenges Facing Lumber Drying Industry

Over the last decade, significant changes have occurred in the forest products industry in the country and throughout the world. These changes include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

a) Curtailment of old growth materials has led to increased use of low-grade commons from second growth stands for finger-jointed structural markets;

b) The impact of the Endangered Species Act and American's growing reservationist policies have drastically reduced available raw material, as well as increased its cost, through the control of supply and component prices. Therefore, increased and finished products costs have escalated;

c) American's love affair with painted wood work combined with an aggressively priced MDF market have undercut demands for clear wood products;

d) Steel, fiber glass, and molded doors are now the norms for homes up to $500,000; and

e) Imports from New Zealand, Chile, Mexico, South African, etc. have put more pressure on an over-supplied market.

The kiln drying industry, an important component in the value-added chain during lumber manufacturing, should adapt itself to meet the new challenges in the industry. Kiln operators can provide services to the lumber re-manufacturing industry through:

a) Sorting of DRY wood to pull out what needs re-drying;

b) Ripping of wide width lumber, for grade if possible;

c) Processing efficiently lumber trim ends (2 feet or less);

d) Successfully drying lumber from vastly different age groups and geographic regions;

e) Dealing with increasingly smaller lots of wood. Instead of 120,000-foot lots of one item, a mill today often deals with 20,000-foot lots. The mixing of kilns is much more common now; and

f) Quick access to the information on out-of-kiln moisture content spread and lumber grade distribution. This often requires manpower to deal with detailed breakdowns of recoveries and tallies, etc. However, it is vital to the success of the kiln industry and is often more important than cost of drying.

The kiln industry can no longer take the attitude of ***promise them anything - ship 'em what you've got***. The kiln and lumber re-manufacturing industries must be partners in the business, working together with more cooperation than ever to ensure the livelihood for the future. The ability of kiln operators to provide the services that secondary producers need may well mean a success or failure of the secondary industry. ■

New Forest Economist Joins the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service

Michael A. Dunn joined the Economics and Natural Resources Division January 1, 1998 as an Assistant Specialist (Forestry).

Mike is originally from Caldwell Parish, Louisiana. He obtained a bachelor's degree in economics from Northeast Louisiana University in 1985 and worked in the retail and banking industry for seven years.

In 1995, he received a B.S. degree in Forest Management from Louisiana Tech University. Afterwards, he enrolled in a Ph.D. program in Forest Economics at Auburn University. He currently has completed all doctoral course work and is completing his dissertation.

Mike's graduate research areas include environmental law and policy, economic history of forestry in the southern United States, and the impact of timber contract restrictions on timber bid amounts. His interests include forest taxation (policy and law), landowner economic issues, and timber supply and sustainability. ■

Grading Workshop a Success

The 43rd Annual Hardwood Log, Lumber, and Tree Grading Workshop, held March 17-20, 1998 at the School of Forestry, Louisiana Tech University hosted 30 participants from five states (Alabama - 1, Arkansas - 9, Louisiana - 11, Mississippi - 5, and Texas - 4). Registrants came from 17 different companies and agencies, representing large and small hardwood forest industry.

Cooperators included the LFPL at Louisiana Tech, Anderson-Tully Company, Kitchens Brothers Manufacturing Company, LA Department of Agriculture and Forestry - Office of Forestry, and Louisiana Tech University - School of Forestry. In addition to supplying the logs for the workshop, Anderson-Tully provided their senior sawyer, Notton Jones, to operate the sawmill. Kitchens Brothers provided several red oak boards for lumber grading practice.

Instructors for the course were George Screpetis of George Doyle, Inc., Pineville, LA and John Martel, Forest Manager, Alexander State Forest, Woodworth, LA. Both combined their own blend of humor and experience to transfer a working knowledge of log, lumber, and tree grades to the participants. If you missed this year's workshop, don't give up hope. Next year's workshop is scheduled for March, 1999. Contact Mark Gibson, Workshop Coordinator, at LFPL, School of Forestry, Louisiana Tech University, P.O. Box 10138, Ruston, LA 71272-0045 or call (318) 257-3392 to add your name to our mailing list. ■

The Second Annual 3-day Lumber Drying Workshop Offered

The second annual three-day workshop on **Drying Lumber for Quality and Profits** was offered on February 11-13, 1998 in the School of Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries at LSU. The workshop was a result of a joint effort between the Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory and the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service to enhance value-added wood processing in Louisiana through improved drying technology. Eighteen people representing various wood products companies throughout the south attended the hands-on workshop and received valuable experience. The workshop was well received by all who attended and will be continued in the future.

LFPL Newsletter Wins Award

Barbara Corns, Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station graphic designer, has won a Silver Award for her entry of the Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory Newsletter in the Agricultural Communicators in Education Critique and Awards program.

Congratulations, Barb, for the excellent work you do!

Participants preparing kiln and moisture content samples, performing necessary calculations, and building up the lumber stack. Picture taken by Qinglin Wu.

Dr. Ramsay Smith explaining to the participants how to start a kiln charge. Picture taken by Qinglin Wu.

Calendar of Events and Workshops

June 21-24, 1998 **Forest Products Society.** Annual meeting held at the Fiesta Americana Hotel in Merida, Mexico. For more information, call (608) 213-1361.

May - Sept., 1998 **Louisiana Furnishings Industry Association** (LFIA) holds regular monthly meetings at the Ponchatoula head quarters. If you are interested, call LFIA at (504) 386-0471 for the date and time.

October 15, 1998 **Tips for Secondary Producers of Wood Products.** A Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service workshop held in Lomax Hall at Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, LA. For more information contact Steven Hotard, Area Agent (Forestry) at (318) 644-5865 or Dr. Todd Shupe, Assistant Specialist (Forest Products) at (504) 388-4087.

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