



November 2006							
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# INSIDE VT WOOD

## Reminder...

Remember to submit department news items by Friday 3 pm of each week to Will Pfeil at [wpfeil@vt.edu](mailto:wpfeil@vt.edu) for inclusion in Inside VT WOOD each Monday morning. All past issues of Inside VT Wood reside on our department website under the publications link.

## News From Paul Winistorfer

- The initial roll up of space across the department for 'Building Our Future' is approximately 60,000 sq ft. Refinements to this estimate, description of the space, and early estimates of cost will be coming very soon.
- The department Strategic Issues Committee met last week to pick up from the broad based actions of the committee last academic year, and will be moving forward with a platform immediately.
- Last week Joe Loferski lectured and coordinated the department effort in NR 1114 – Introduction to Renewable Natural Resources. Thanks to Dan Hindman, Scott Renneckar, Jongkoo Han, Ralph Rupert, Jim Fuller, Will Pfeil and others for supporting this important venue for our department.
- Daniel Roethle, freshman student in our program from Hartford High School in Wisconsin, and a former WoodLINKS student, has been selected as the student of the month by Wood Digest Magazine. Daniel will be featured in an upcoming issue. Congratulations Daniel!
- Last week I made a presentation to the National Association of Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturers (KCMA) regarding WoodLINKS USA. There was much interest in the program. I also talked to a number of industry representatives about our programs in the department.
- The Forest Products Society (FPS) board of directors has agreed on a strategic partnership platform with WoodLINKS USA. The strategic partnership has many positive attributes for both FPS and WoodLINKS teachers and students across the U.S.
- I visited Mitch Carr at Augusta Lumber Co. in Waynesboro on Friday last week regarding 'Building Our Future'.
- November 15 is our next department meeting – 10:00 – 11:00 am Brooks Classroom.

## President Steger to Visit Department November 28 – Faculty Mark Your Calendar

One of the major tasks facing the university is the update of the Strategic Plan. In that regard, I look forward to having faculty join me for an informal discussion on Tuesday, November 28, 4:00-5:00 p.m. in 311 Latham Hall.

Plan to bring to the table your ideas and concerns. I look forward to this opportunity to talk with you.

Charles W. Steger

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## **Dr. Al Shuler to Give 2 Lectures in Department on Tuesday November 7th.**

Dr. Al Shuler from the US Forest Service Princeton Lab, Princeton WV will be in our department on Tuesday November 7th giving lectures in WOOD 5004 Graduate Seminar, and WOOD 1234 – Introduction to Wood Science and Forest Products. Please join us if you are interested in hearing Dr. Shuler talk about residential housing and engineered wood products. He is a leading expert in analysis of business and economic trends in the forest products industry.

The best opportunity is Tuesday Nov 7th at 8am - at the Brooks Forest Products Center classroom (1650 Ramble Road - directly across from the VT airport with the airport beacon in the front yard). Another opportunity is during our WOOD 1234 class lecture on Nov 7, 2006. The class starts at 3:30 in Cheatham Hall.

Dr. Shuler's talk is officially titled "Engineered Wood Products and Residential Construction Markets."

## **Deans Forum on the Environment - February 26, 2007 – Hold the Date**

The second Deans Forum in support of implementation of the University Strategic Plan update will be held at the Skelton Conference Center on February 26, 2007. The focus of this forum will be on existing efforts within the university relating to the environment and environmental quality. Our goal is to bring together from all corners of the Virginia Tech community those currently working in the general area of the environment to showcase existing efforts and to provide an opportunity for discussions leading to new efforts and partnerships. More details will be provided shortly. In the meantime please reserve this date on your calendar.

## **New Education Website for the Wood Industry**

The Association of Woodworking & Furnishings Suppliers (AWFS) has built a new broad-based website for educational programs in the wood industry. Check it out at [www.woodindustryed.org](http://www.woodindustryed.org)

## **Smith, Bush Recently Taught Workshops**

Bob Smith recently taught the "Selling Forest Products" workshop to members of the Northeastern Lumber manufacturer's Association (NeLMA) in Portland, Maine.

Bob Smith and Bob Bush recently taught the "Marketing Forest Products" workshop at Virginia Tech.

## **WOOD 1234 class on a field trip to Timber Truss**



Phil Araman took a group of WOOD 1234 students on a field trip to the Timber Truss Housing facility in Salem, Virginia on Thursday, October 19.

## **Japanese Businessmen Visit CULD**

by Bonnie MacCubbin

A delegation of six Japanese businessmen from the distribution industry, along with a Canadian interpreter, visited the Center for Unit Load Design on Friday, October 27, to learn about center operations and capabilities. The group included:

Kazuo Okada, Okada Industry Co.  
Masayuki Iwasaki, UBE Pallet Rental Leasing Co.  
Ryouzaburou Ootsuki, Dainoppon Ink and Chemicals  
Junichi Shimoda, Yamagishi Corporation  
Koichi Fuse, Hokushin Kizai Co.  
Bizou Yamada, Japan Rental Corp.  
Mitsuko Dazai, Interpreter



## **Dan Hindman attends NFBA**

by Dan Hindman

On October 12th, I attended the annual meeting of the Mid-Atlantic chapter of the NFBA, (National Frame Builders Association). I was asked to make a presentation by John Fuog, the president of the chapter. Since this was a group that I had not met before, I presented an introduction to Virginia Tech, Wood Science and Forest Products and the Wood Engineering Laboratory. Many of the participants had been to the Wood Engineering Lab previously with Dan Dolan or Frank Woeste several years ago. I talked about some of the current research projects in Wood Engineering, including the lateral buckling as a cause of falls, deck ledger testing and perpendicular to grain bolted connections.

About 20 people attended, representing many different parts of the post-frame industry including builders and contractors, foundation systems, metal fabrication companies, and building envelope producers. The geographical area ranged from northeastern Pennsylvania to South Carolina.

Another presentation was made by Sandy Barber, a post-frame designer who now lives in Roanoke. Sandy is retired and was the first president of the chapter. He led an interesting life and described how he came to work with post-frame buildings. A discussion panel consisting of product suppliers was held, which was a great discussion to understand the pulse of the industry. Most of the participants felt that post-frame construction was on the rise and that their future as an industry was bright. Chief concerns were the fact that material prices of concrete and steel have increased dramatically over the last two years. One person mentioned that it is difficult to get a quote for a steel frame building due to the price increases and volatility of the market. Future demands will see some price drops as more steel and mineral production facilities are completed due to the market demand. The price of lumber has fallen for this industry, which is an encouraging sign. A popular topic of conversation at the luncheon was the effects of the changes in pressure treated lumber and what the implications for post-framers were.

This is the second NFBA event that I have attended and I have found this industry to be very excited and motivated about their work and their industry. I talked to one member who told me that he CANNOT be out-bid by any steel frame builder. This group has a lot of energy and I think that Wood Science can be helpful to them in providing future employees and research expertise.

## **Brian Perkins to Represent VT Grad Student Community on the University's Energy Committee**

by Brian Perkins

I will be representing the Virginia Tech graduate student community on the University's Energy Committee. The first meeting will be held on November 9th. According to the Energy Committee's bylaws, the current and long range purposes and objectives of the Energy Committee are to:

- 1) Create a greater appreciation and understanding of the science and art of saving and efficiently generating energy;
- 2) Review annual targets and plan for the reduction in energy use, and jointly recommend an overall strategy for energy use;
- 3) Help identify energy reduction opportunities and review energy saving proposals;
- 4) Assist in the update and preparation of a university energy plan;
- 5) Help conduct a public relations program to promote the university energy program, and
- 6) Disseminate knowledge of energy to the university community by scheduling lectures, discussions, publications and tours for interested groups.

## **Ancestor of modern trees preserves record of ancient climate change**

by Susan Trulove

BLACKSBURG, VA., November 2, 2006 -- About 350 million years ago, at the boundary of the Devonian and Carboniferous ages, the climate changed. There was no one around to record it, but there are records nonetheless in the rocks deposited by glaciers and in tissues preserved in fossils of ancient life.

"Events at the transition had terrific biological impact, marked by extinctions and the beginnings of new life forms," said Stephen Scheckler of Blacksburg, professor of biological sciences and geosciences at Virginia Tech. He reported on evidence of climate change that he found in the fossils of the ancestors of modern trees at the Geological Society of America national meeting in Philadelphia Oct. 22-25.

"This glaciation was not widely understood until recently," Scheckler said. "It was a worldwide event. The Europeans recognize the extinctions as the Hangenburg event, documented in a black shale deposit that contains a series of fauna changes. But the eastern United States was at a tropical latitude at that time, so the flora and fauna show less impact – but it is there. It is believed to be a time of coldness, because there was less diversity, but it is a subtle signal."

Scientists exploring parts of the world farther from the equator have found glacial deposits, where the earth was scoured and sediment was dropped as the ice moved across Africa and Brazil. "Then glacial deposits were discovered in the former tropics. There is a widespread belt of rocks in Pennsylvania that were glacially deposited," said Scheckler, who studied fossils from New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio, from an age when the equator ran through New York and south through Virginia and the region was uniformly at a low elevation.

In his search for evidence of climate change, Scheckler, an authority on the earliest modern tree (*Nature*, April 22, 1999), looked at plants that made wood in the same way modern plants make wood. In modern trees, cambium tissue produces layers of wood cells on the inside and bark cells on the outside. The cambium moves outward as the tree grows and the kinds of cells it produces reflect seasonal dormancy induced by wet and dry or warm and cold conditions. The layers, of course, are tree rings.

In the fossil record, lignophytes – all those trees that grow like modern seed plants -- also produced successive layers of wood from perennial cambium tissue, "and left a permanent record," said Scheckler. "And if they did everything else the same as modern trees, maybe they responded to climate the same."

Tree rings are a response to resumption of growth after a period of dormancy. "Cessation of growth and resumption of growth leave an anatomical signal that differs between tropical and temperate dormancy," Scheckler added.

In temperate trees, cells become smaller and thicker walled before growth is stopped by cold, then the new wood cells become large and thin walled when growth resumes. In tropical trees, the rings are subtle, with no change in cell wall thickness and only slight changes in cell size. And the changes occur more in response to wet and dry periods, rather than cold periods, so can happen several times a year.

Using this background from modern trees, Scheckler studied the ancient plants that had the same genetics for controlling wood growth and produced the same signatures for dormancy. He has documented that the fossil “trees” from most of the Devonian period show tropical growth rings, but those from the latest Devonian and earliest Carboniferous show growth rings that resemble those of temperate trees.

“That plants of this time responded as modern plants would to cold supports the idea that there was a sudden chilling at the end of the Devonian,” Scheckler said. “Later in the Carboniferous period, you no longer see the temperate signature rings because the glacial event went away.”

He delivered his talk, “Woody plant growth as a proxy for climate change at the Devonian-Carboniferous boundary,” as part of the session on the Devonian-Early Carboniferous Climate Change: Glacial Deposits and Proxy Records, during there were other presentations on analysis of rocks and fossils from the period.

## General Announcements

### **U.S. gives US\$450M to U.S. agencies, Habitat for Humanity after softwood**

TORONTO (CP) - The United States government is giving almost half a billion dollars to charitable agencies in the country under the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber deal.

“I am pleased that, in consultation with the Canadian government, we were able to fund worthy causes that will meet fundamental needs in the forestry sector to the benefit of both countries,” U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab said Friday in a release.

“The meritorious initiative funds promote a stronger North American lumber industry by connecting sustainable forest practices in the woods with the communities where wood products are made, and the use of lumber in building low-income housing and rebuilding after disasters.”

Under a US\$450-million provision in the agreement that went into effect Thursday, the U.S. government said it will create endowments in the amounts of \$200 million to the United States Endowment for Forestry and Communities Inc. and \$150 million to the American Forest Foundation (read Tree Farm here) and a \$100-million revolving loan fund to Habitat for Humanity International.

The seven-year accord replaces U.S. duties on Canadian softwood with a sliding export tax that adjusts for low lumber prices.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper said Thursday that the new deal was necessary to bring stability to a troubled industry and has not had an impact on jobs lost in the sector.

Several forestry giants have announced job cuts in recent weeks, including more than 1,600 this week alone at mills in Quebec and Ontario. On Wednesday, Domtar Inc. (TSX:DTC) announced the indefinite closure of four sawmills and about 950 job cuts, most in Quebec. A day earlier, Abitibi-Consolidated (TSX:A) said it was cutting nearly 700 jobs in Quebec.

Harper said the minority Conservative government planned to come forward with “additional measures” to help the forestry industry but did not elaborate on what those might be.

## **USFS Responds to Timber Industry Crisis**

Britta Arendt | Herald-Review

Last Updated: Monday, October 16th, 2006 08:28:03 AM

While many are calling the recent state of Minnesota’s forest industry a “crisis,” with the combination of a soft housing market and incredibly high stumpage prices “the perfect storm,” Congressman Jim Oberstar invited officials

from the United States Forest Service to Grand Rapids Thursday evening to meet with industry stakeholders in an effort to discuss the situation and possible solutions.

"In the spring of this year, I toured Ainsworth and heard concerns for the age of equipment which are huge costs, the availability of supply and market conditions. These are all aspects of the issue that we need to review today," said Oberstar regarding the company which recently suspended production at its three oriented strand board plants in Grand Rapids, Cook and Bemidji.

Oberstar's guests explained that the issues relating to the current condition of Minnesota's forest industry are much more broad, and similar throughout the entire nation. And, as the meeting progressed, there was some common understanding that a downturn in demand for oriented strand board and a limited supply of timber are driving factors in the industry's decline.

The panelists included USFS National Director of Forest Management Corbin Newman, USFS Region 9 Regional Forester Randy Moore, Chippewa National Forest Supervisor Rob Harper and Superior National Forest Supervisor Jim Sanders.

"A lot of the stuff you're concerned about here is fairly typical of the things I've seen other places," said Moore who manages USFS forestland in the northeastern states, as far west as Minnesota, Iowa and Missouri. "This is fairly typical in all lake states."

Those attending the meeting included county and state lawmakers as well as representatives from the wood product industry and the logging and trucking industry.

"I would like to listen to what you think the problem is," continued Moore. "I am hopeful here in Minnesota because what has always impressed me is that the forest services is recognized as only part of the problem and part of the solution. We need to build on relationships like those with the Minnesota Forest Resources Council and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. If we can agree on what the issues are, then we can work on solutions."

"I am proud of the eastern region, not because there are problems but because you are working at it," commented Newman. A senior forest supervisor, Sanders explained how last summer was a summer of extremes for the Superior. He said the forest had the lowest harvest level since 1943 with a record number of 120 fires, including one that burned 3,200 acres—the forest's largest since European settlement. Plus, according to Sanders, the USFS has been in court in some type of litigation over issues with the Superior since 1949.

"In order for us to meet our agency objectives, we need to have a healthy logging industry and strong logging infrastructure; without that, none of us will survive in the public or private sector," said Sanders as he explained that low bid sales on Superior timber in recent years prompted them to lower appraisals.

Although Sanders said less than half of the timber offered up for sale from the Superior was bid, they expect to re-offer that which didn't sell. And, he said he hopes they will be able to increase the board feet they are able to offer for sale in the future. The biggest problem facing the Superior is cost for litigation regarding the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA.

"This is an opportune time for me to learn about the forest industry in Minnesota," said Harper who just took over the Chippewa, after serving as a district ranger in Montana.

Compared with Montana, Harper said Minnesota's forest industry is much more vibrant, "In Montana, the wood product industry is hanging on by a thread."

On the Chippewa, Harper said the volume of timber offered and sold has been on the increase.

"In 2005, we sold just under 30 billion board feet," said Harper. "And we have about 53 million now under contract. We hope to be looking at 74 million by 07. The volume under contract, has increased by 25 percent, while at the same time acres logged has decreased by one third. So, something is going on."

Wood product industry stakeholders in attendance urged the panelists to continue to make the timber available, while Oberstar promoted increased federal funding for more USFS personnel to make those sales possible. As more and more mills close across the country, the discussion focused how the agency and the industry can work together.

Moore touted stewardship contracting, which the USFS partners with local communities in a range of activities that improve land conditions.

"This is an interesting time to be in forest management," added Dave Epperly, director of the DNR Division of Forestry. "There is not one silver bullet that will fix it all, instead many different approaches. Things that are happening now are going to take coordination. One thing is for sure, there are a lot of folks that care."

Epperly said Governor Tim Pawlenty has reinstated the forest industry task force and directed it to make some recommendations by mid-December.

"There is a situation in this state where there is an insufficient available [timber] supply, not physical supply, for a whole host of reasons," said Wayne Brandt, executive vice president of the Minnesota Timber Producers Association. "Folks are forced to look outside the state to bring the wood into the mills. We need to get the supply back in balance with demand in this state. The solutions are multifaceted. We want to work with the agency, state and forest service to get to some of those solutions."

Oberstar suggested that another similar meeting be held with federal, state and industry representation in mid-December.

## 2006-2007 Holiday Schedule

I am pleased to inform you of Governor Kaine's decision regarding the remaining 2006 holidays and for the 2007 holidays. It will allow you to make family plans and to give your agency time to ensure adequate coverage during the holiday.

### 2006 remaining holiday schedule\*

• Thanksgiving	Wednesday, November 22, close at noon (4 additional hours)
	Thursday, November 23
	Friday, November 24
• Christmas	Friday, December 22, close at noon (4 additional hours)
	Monday, December 25
	Tuesday, December 26 (8 additional hours)

### 2007 holiday schedule\*

• New Year's	Monday, January 1
	Tuesday, January 2 (8 additional hours)
• Lee-Jackson Day	Friday, January 12
• Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Monday, January 15
• Presidents Day	Monday, February 19
• Memorial Day	Monday, May 28
• Independence Day	Wednesday, July 4
• Labor Day	Monday, September 3
• Columbus Day	Monday, October 8
• Veterans Day	Monday, November 12
• Thanksgiving	Wednesday, November 21, close at noon (4 additional hours)
	Thursday, November 22
	Friday, November 23
• Christmas	Monday, December 24 (8 additional hours)
	Tuesday, December 25
• New Year's	Monday, December 31 (8 additional hours)
	Tuesday, January 1, 2008

\* Normal agency procedures as set forth in the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) policies and procedures that govern holidays will be used in implementing this additional holiday leave for all agencies, including those with 24-hour operations. Also, agencies with unique customer service requirements may modify the holiday schedule, at the discretion of the agency head/director, so as not to adversely impact services to our clients. Agencies with employees working flexible or alternate schedules should consult Policy 4.25, Holidays, for guidance. If you have any questions, please contact your Agency Human Resources office. The Governor and his staff wish you and your family a happy holiday season.

## Uniform Day

Tuesday, October 31 was light blue, long sleeve shirt, and khaki pants day in Cheatham!



From left to right: Bob Bush, Tom Hammett, and Paul Winistorfer