

# **Public Perceptions of the Forest Products Industry in the United States**

by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Myths prevail among the general public about wood, forest products, and the condition of the environment in the United States. Research shows that most people are unaware about the proliferation of products that they use in their daily lives that are made out of or are derived from wood, about the amount (and shortcomings) of paper recycling in America, and the degree of environmental “friendliness” that wood and non-wood substitutes inherently possess. Students surveyed on Virginia Tech’s campus could not state the main purpose of the United States Forest Service, nor could they identify the primary reason rainforests in South America are disappearing. Survey results from undergraduate students enrolled in the Department of Wood Science and Forest Products showed that they have a much better understanding of the environment and use of wood in people’s lives. Survey results from students enrolled in the wood curricula closely parallel those from employees in the wood products industry. An exhaustive literature review of current academic and popular journals is summarized, as are results from the Virginia Tech survey. The impact that public misperceptions have on the wood products industry and steps to remedy them are also examined. Research findings show that the forest products industry needs a coordinated and centralized public promotion campaign to inform the general public about wood’s attributes and environmental advantages.

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