



December 2008

The Year in Review

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This month marks the end of the third year for the Oregon Wood Innovation Center. That, combined with the fact that it's the end of the calendar year as well, makes this the opportune time to reflect on activities and accomplishments over the past year as well as where we are headed next year. We provide a brief summary here; our Annual Report will cover this in more detail.

This year we continued to emphasize 'connections' – connecting people with sources of information, providing tools to help connect buyers and sellers, and enabling those within the industry to network with one another. Our specific approach to making such connections is through offering workshops, web-based resources, and providing technical assistance. Some examples within each of these categories include:

Workshops

OWIC faculty offered 5 workshops this year for approximately 130 participants.

Topics included:

- Lumber Quality Control
- Lumber Quality Leadership
- Selling Forest Products
- How to Dry Lumber for Quality and Profit
- Advanced Wood Adhesives

In addition, we completed 3 modules for the *Wood-Based Composites Distance Learning Program*. The 3 modules include Wood Structure, Wood and Water Relationships, and Applied Statistical Methods. The first course offering is expected in April of 2009 and the complete 19-module course is expected to be complete by the end of 2010.

Web-Based Resources

We continue to develop and maintain electronic resources to help connect people with information and with one another. A few examples include our monthly newsletter, on-line *Ask the Expert* forum and the Oregon Forest Industry Directory.

Our newsletter this year in-

cluded a series of 6 articles on topics related to innovation in the forest industry. Of course, we also provided readers with updates on hot topics such as potential impacts to importers of recent changes in the Lacey Act, results of research on the tsunami resistance of wood structures, recent revisions to green building codes, and even ongoing research related to baseball bats.

We fielded numerous questions through our *Ask the Expert* forum this year. Topics included common questions such as 'where can I sell my black walnut trees?' to much less common topics such as use of wax from Douglas-fir bark, carbon dating in fossilized trees, Oregon's laws related to timber theft, how to set pitch in large Douglas-fir timbers in a dehumidification kiln, which oak species are good for the wine barrel of the future, and the list goes on!

Lastly, the Oregon Forest Industry Directory continues to be a popular tool to help connect buyers and sellers of Oregon forest products. The site registered nearly 2.5 million hits this year, and usage

The Year in Review cont.

of the more advanced features of the site increased significantly this year. For example, in prior years, the site has been used much the same as the yellow pages. That is while many visitors searched for companies, few registered to enter their company into the directory or used the more advanced features such as forms to contact companies or to post a classified ad. In 2008, over 200 new users signed up and nearly 100 classified ads were posted.

Technical Assistance

OWIC faculty are involved with hundreds of technical assistance efforts each year. Technical assistance efforts vary from relatively straightforward answers to questions about topics such as the natural durability of a particular wood species to more involved projects such as product testing or market assessments. Examples

of projects and their outcomes this year include:

- Mechanical properties testing – OWIC faculty Chris Knowles and students Kathryn Kamke and Jeff Vaughn conducted strength tests on black cottonwood for an Oregon firm. As a result, the company has experienced a tenfold increase in sales of this species.
- Prototype testing – OWIC faculty Rakesh Gupta and Milo Clauson and student Kenny Martin tested the seismic performance of a new wood wine rack design for an Oregon manufacturer of retail display fixtures. The company was interested in marketing racks with improved characteristics to Southern California retailers. The company is now using the results of the testing in their marketing literature.
- Market assessments – OWIC faculty Eric Hansen helped to connect an Oregon firm with his

student Jane Han to assess export market opportunities for the company's product. The firm is now negotiating with companies

Future Focus

This past year, we have also been involved in several collaborative efforts with other state agencies to chart the course for Oregon's forest cluster. We worked with the Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Economic & Community Development Department and Oregon Forest Resources Institute to develop the *Oregon Forest Cluster Economic Development Strategy*. One outcome of this effort was the development of a proposal to the Oregon Innovation Council's (Oregon InC) Established Industries Committee. The proposal was the only new initiative to be included in the Council's 2009 *Oregon Innovation Plan*.

Environmental Protection Agency to Investigate Formaldehyde Emissions from Wood Composites

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has launched an investigation into the potential health risks associated with the use of formaldehyde in pressed wood products. This investigation will include the development of risk assessments on potential adverse health effects, evaluating

the costs and benefits of possible control technologies and approaches, and determining if the EPA needs to address any identified risks.

An advanced notice of proposed rulemaking was issued by the EPA on November 25, 2008, (available

at <http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-TOX/2008/December/Day-03/t28585.htm>) which describes how EPA plans to investigate potential actions to protect against risks posed by formaldehyde emitted from pressed wood products used in manufactured homes and other places and requests

Formaldehyde Emissions cont.

comment, information and data relating to formaldehyde emissions from pressed wood products.

The EPA is following up on a citizens' petition requesting the national adoption of formaldehyde control regulations adopted by the state of California. Five public meetings have been scheduled for the purpose of

obtaining additional input from stakeholders. The public meetings will take place in the following locations:

- Research Triangle Park, N.C. - January 8, 2009.
- Portland, OR - January 13, 2009, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The meeting will be held at the State Public Health Building, 800 NE Oregon St., Room

1B, Portland, OR 97232.

- Chicago, IL - January 15, 2009.
- Dallas, TX - January 26, 2009.
- Washington, DC - January 29, 2009.

More information is available at <http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/chemtest/formaldehyde/index.htm>.

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The Oregon Wood Innovation Center

Connecting people, ideas, resources