

FACT SHEET

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Timber & Timber Harvesting in West Virginia

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Wood Industry, Secondary Manufacturing in West Virginia

Forestland is not vacant or underutilized land. If professionally managed, it represents a great natural resource that can support a great industry, which probably offers the only certain opportunity West Virginia has to fulfill basic economic and environmental needs for future generations.

The earlier settlers had to subdue the forest to live. They cleared land for crops and to provide wood for houses, barns, furniture, barrels and shipping crates, fuel, flatboats, charcoal and so on. By the late 1800's timbering was the dominant industry. West Virginia led the nation in the production of lumber in 1908. Unfortunately, a fungus introduced from Europe early in the 20th century had killed most American chestnuts by 1926. Consequently, one of the primary components of the renewing hardwood forest was essentially eliminated. The Dutch elm disease soon followed and has since removed most of the elms. The gypsy moth is the example of an insect that also gained a toe-hold in West Virginia. It will undoubtedly kill many acres of valuable oak-hickory timber. During the late 1940's through the 1970's, farming became less profitable and trees have reclaimed the fields.

The forests of West Virginia are much like an industrial plant, producing new materials each day of the growing season. In 1984, the gross value of products manufactured was 484 million dollars, the corresponding value in 1985 was 660 million, in 1986, 700 million, 1987 1.048 billion and in 1988 1 billion. A recent survey indicated a total of 502 commercial forest industrial operations. These included 181 sawmills, 58 kiln installations, 46 concentration yards, and et cetera.

These are all modern facilities with the latest up to date equipment and a highly skilled labor force.

In 1988, records show that West Virginia added or extensively modernized a wood products facility each week of the year. During a five year span at the end of the 1980's and early 1990's, West Virginia managed to attract six large forest product installations. These included the Bruce flooring plant at Beverly, Weyerhaeuser oriented strand board plant at Heaters, Trus-Joist-McMillan engineered lumber facility at Buckhannon, another large oriented strand board plant established by Georgia Pacific at

Mt. Hope, Columbia West Virginia's large plywood plant at Craigsville and the additional facilities of American Woodmark's cabinet facility at Moorefield.

It's also important to remember that the one billion board feet of logs produced each year is conservatively valued at \$300 million (2001) and the labor and transportation necessary to harvest these logs is conservatively valued at about \$200 million.

(Prepared by Edward C. Murriner)

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