

FACT SHEET

NO. 8

Timber & Timber Harvesting in West Virginia

Sawmills in West Virginia

The wood products industry is very important to West Virginia's economy. There are 181 sawmills, 3 veneer mills, 18 rustic fencing mills, 58 dry kilns, 11 pressure-treating plants, 3 engineered wood products plants, and several commercial firewood producers in the state. West Virginia sawmills produce around 800 million board feet of lumber annually. Overall, forestry and its related industries employ over 30,000 people in West Virginia contributing \$3.2 billion annually to the state's economy. Forestry provides jobs in every county in West Virginia. In some rural counties the timber industry is the only significant manufacturing industry. The forest industry pays over \$3.2 million in annual Severance Taxes. This timber specific tax is in addition to the personal income tax, workers' compensation, unemployment compensation, franchise and corporate income taxes.

Much of West Virginia's wood industry is comprised of small privately owned sawmills. Many of these mills are family owned and operated by committed family members. These mills tend to be very concerned with the availability of timber and their overall production costs. The owners and managers in order to be competitive with facilities in other states keep a keen interest in environmental regulations and West Virginia's relatively high Workers' Compensation costs. As responsible West Virginia citizens they are committed to sustainable forest practices and compliance with all federal and state regulations.

West Virginia's wood products mills convert the renewable timber resource into economical, natural, beautiful, strong lumber and wood products. Mills have become very productive and efficient in converting logs into various wood products. Hardwood logs are typically sawn into lumber and / or other products such as railroad ties, posts, fence rails, timbers, cants, or blocking. Mills use either a circular blade or band saw to cut the product. A growing number of smaller woodlot owners are using portable sawmills mounted on trailers to manufacture wood products from their own trees. The sawing process typically produces green lumber that is then placed in heated kilns to reduce moisture in the wood. This controlled drying process will result in more stable boards that reduce or eliminate shrinking, cracking and warping. This is especially important with hardwood lumber since much of it will be used for products inside homes such as furniture and flooring.

Today, there is very little waste in the wood products manufacturing process. Most mills utilize nearly everything in the manufacturing process. Lumber waste may be processed into edging, molding, handles, or flooring. Bark, sawdust, or shavings may be burned as fuel for drying wood in kilns. Lumber trimmings, ends, and log cut offs may be put in a grinder to

convert this waste into valuable landscape mulch. It can also be colored to add more value. Some mills process cull logs and log cutoffs into high value firewood using firewood processing machines that cut-to-length, split, and load the wood. Two electric power plants in West Virginia are beginning this year to burn sawdust along with coal as a way to reduce emissions including greenhouse gases. Five to ten percent of the plants energy needs will be met from this wood manufacturing byproduct.

The West Virginia forest products industry is continuing to utilize new technologies to operate more efficiently in an economic and environmentally sustainable way. Sawmills are a valuable partner in building our state's economy.

(Prepared by Steve Milauskas)

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