

Forest Products Utilization & Marketing Success Story: New York

Retaining Local Use of Softwoods -- a \$9 million industry.

The Challenge

In 2003, a new fire and building code was signed into law in New York that disallowed the long-time practice of small sawmills producing structural softwood dimension lumber for local residential and commercial use utilizing underutilized trees. The previous code provided local building inspectors the “local option” of requiring grade-stamped lumber or allowing the producing mill to certify that lumber produced met a certain minimum grade standard. Implementation of the new code would have severely affected the sales of many small sawmills (estimated at \$9 million), deprived rural residents of a source of low-cost lumber, reduced forest harvest and improvement opportunities, and reduced timber sale income to private forest owners.

The Solution

Working with various partners and many vocal sawmills, the New York Forest Utilization and Marketing Program worked to amend the newly introduced code through formal rulemaking reinstating the “local option” contained in the old code. Industry statistics and directories collected and maintained by the Forest Utilization Program were used to outline the economic importance of this little known rural industry and to contact mills about the imminent threat to their livelihood and culture. To encourage more local building inspectors to allow the use of locally produced lumber in their towns, the Forest Utilization Program recently assisted the Black River-St. Lawrence RC&D Council in obtaining a USFS State & Private Forestry Economic Action Program sub-grant provided by the Northern Forest Center and the Northeast State Foresters Association. The funding will provide resources for several workshops that will educate both sawmills and local building inspectors on the issue.



Resulting Benefits

- Increased awareness of the importance of the small forest products industry to rural economies at the state and local level.
- Maintained stewardship of privately owned forest, as well as important income stream for rural forest landowners.
- Promoted economic opportunity by maintaining the utilization of the underutilized softwood resource for softwood dimension lumber.

Sharing Success

Workshops will provide the many local building inspectors across the region with an awareness of the importance of continued local lumber production.

For more information, contact:

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