

EXTENSION FOREST RESOURCES

ANNUAL REPORT 1985-86

1. Changes in Service Environment

Extension and its clientele operated under a cloud of uncertainty throughout the year. The real value of the Extension budget continued to decrease, resulting in staff decreases at the county level; the Executive budget proposed massive federal cuts for Extension in 1987, including elimination of Renewable Resources Extension Act funds. Forest industries continued to face increasing competition from overseas in the lumber, furniture and pulp and paper markets, and many smaller companies have either gone out of business or face bankruptcy. Poor markets and proposed changes in federal tax incentives for forest management complicated decision making by forest landowners. Despite, or more likely because of these uncertainties, demands for Extension assistance continued to exceed our capacity to respond. It is expected that this situation will continue as more people become aware of their problems/opportunities and the ability of Extension to help address them.

IV. Extension and Public Service

The economic future of forest landowners and forest industry in North Carolina depends on maintaining or expanding markets for forest products and improving the profits from timber and forest products. These are the major areas of Extension programming.

Landowners and the forest industry have both suffered considerably in recent years because of poor or non-existent markets for some of their products. In 1980, Extension completed a study of the possibilities for expanding timber markets in the North Central Piedmont. The report concluded that the area would be excellent for a structural flakeboard plant. This information contributed to the recent location of a \$30 million plant in Person County

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which will produce a new composite lumber product from yellow poplar. There has also been some success in efforts to reestablish the use of this species for house framing. One sawmill is now producing yellow poplar framing after several Extension demonstrations and a regional workshop confirmed its technical and economic feasibility. The use of wood as an agricultural and commercial fuel is expected to increase as a result of distribution of a handbook, videotape and slide tape on the latest methods for using wood fuel. The project was funded by TVA who also supported a handbook on wood as a residential fuel. A pocket span guide for floor joists was developed and distributed to builders and building inspectors. It is designed to increase the use of southern pine compared to the weaker spruce-pine-fir imported from Canada. The guide is also resulting in improved enforcement of building codes.

The forest industry must become as efficient as possible if it is to survive the challenge of overseas competition. Programs for loggers have emphasized good business management procedures. The Carolina Log'N Demo cosponsored by the N. C. Forestry Association demonstrated the latest logging equipment to over 2,000 loggers, landowners and other forest industry representatives. Sawmill programs emphasized quality control in lumber production and drying. A handbook on Quality Control in Sawmills teaches sawmillers how to establish a QC program. Several companies are using associated microcomputer software also developed by the Department. Increasing dimension stock yields from lumber cut-up at furniture plants is another area where considerable savings are possible. Extension recommendations to one company recently resulted in annual savings of \$186,000 through yield improvement.

Improving management of, and income from privately owned forest land is a major objective of our program. A woodland management correspondence course developed and pilot tested last year has been adopted as a regional project by State Extension Services and Forest Farmers Association. The impact of efforts made by Extension, the N. C. Forest Service, forest industry and consultants to improve management have resulted in the N. C. reforestation acreage increasing from 1 in 9 acres to approximately 1 in 3 acres over the last 7 years. This is due to increased awareness of the benefits of forest management and the availability of various incentive programs. New income generating programs for landowners included sale of pine straw -there is the potential for this \$5 million industry to triple with current market demand; production of shiitake mushrooms, an exotic mushroom which grows on oak logs; and leasing of forestland for hunting.

Christmas tree growers received approximately \$37 million from the sale of 3.2 million Christmas trees. Tree quality is becoming increasingly important as the number of trees grown locally and nationally continues to expand. One grower increased his income by \$70,000 by following Extension recommendations to improve the quality of 10 acres of white pines. Extension programs are concentrating on reducing the time it takes to produce marketable trees by adopting best available technology in site preparation; nutrition; weed, insect and disease control; and shaping. One indicator of success is the continued rise in attendance at educational meetings -- 1500 growers (approximately 50 percent of all growers) attended summer cultural practice meetings held in 45 counties.

Attitudes towards forestry among future decisionmakers will depend to a

large extent on what they learn while young. Project Learning Tree (PLT) is an award winning environmental education program for educators and other adult leaders working with students K through 12. It uses the forest as a window into the natural world, helping young people gain an awareness and knowledge of the world around them. Extension is cosponsoring this program in North Carolina with the N. C. Forestry Association. It is anticipated that it will significantly increase both student's and teacher's knowledge of forestry.

This report summarizes major program thrusts. Program efforts have also continued in the areas of wildlife habitat management, urban forestry, pesticide education, outdoor recreation, wood products protection, and animal damage control. Teaching tools have included workshops, tours, demonstrations, publications, videotapes, slide tapes, and microcomputer software. Audiences have included landowners, professional foresters and wood technologists, industry and agency representatives, the general public, and youth.

VIII. Recommendations and Concerns for the Future

The mission of Extension Forest Resources is to improve the management and utilization of our forest resources. This can increase income to forest landowners and wood processors, improve the quality of life and our environment, and help assure continued availability of forest resources. Extension can play a major role in increasing forestry's already important economic and environmental contributions to state. To achieve this, the size of the specialist staff should be maintained and the number of forestry professionals at the county and area level increased.