

Montana Forest Products Marketing News

MSU Extension Forestry

August 2005

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Blackfoot Timber Products Reopens Sawmill

At a time when much of the Inland West's timber industry is in a slump, Lee Alt, who comes from a Drummond based timber family, has opened Blackfoot Timber Products in Lincoln, MT.

The old R&R mill just east of Lincoln has sat idle since the early 1990s, but today the sounds of heavy machinery, new and re-built equipment and large conveyers moving the fresh cut timber fill the air. With timber in his blood, it was a natural progression for Alt to open his own sawmill. His father owns and operates the Eagle Stud Mill in Drummond, MT and he has

a brother with North End Timber Products in Olney, MT.

Blackfoot Timber Products does most of its logging on private land, bidding on jobs throughout Western and Northern Montana. The sawmill cuts approximately 15,000 board feet a day, but with expectation of adding more equipment, Alt says he expects to begin moving 30,000 board feet per day. In the coming months he also expects to expand his employees from the current six to twenty.

"We can cut anything the customer needs," said Alt. "Beams small and large,

flooring-tongue and groove, we can do it." Most of the lumber available is Douglas fir and lodgepole pine with many custom orders going out to large building projects in Kalispell and Big Timber. Any parts of the log not used to make lumber are chipped and trucked to Missoula for use in the Smurfit-Stone paper mill. Alt encourages anyone in the market for building materials to check the prices of Blackfoot Timber Products at 406-362-4598 before heading out of the valley.

This story originally appeared in the Blackfoot Valley Dispatch, Lincoln, MT.

Western US Lumber Production hits 14 year high

In 2004, Western US lumber production hit a 14-year high.

According to the Western Wood Products Association, the 18.8 billion board feet produced at Western sawmills in 2004 was 6.6% above 2003 levels. It is also the highest volume reported since 1990, when 20.8 billion board feet was produced.

Oregon was the top lumber-producing state with 7.13 billion feet. Washington sawmills produced 5.46 billion board feet. Together, the two states accounted for 32% of total U.S. lumber output for the year. Montana mills, in contrast, produced about 700 million board feet in 2004—continuing the state's long-term de-

clining production trend that started in 1990.

Americans used 61.8 billion feet of lumber in 2004, up 8.4% from the 2003 total. Nearly 27 billion feet—an all time high—was used in new home construction. About 23.5 billion board feet, or 38% of the lumber used in the U.S. last year, came from a foreign country.

Check it Out:

[Most Oregonians want forests restored after wildfire](#)

[White House Lauds the Blackfoot Challenge](#)

[Boise Announces New, Stronger Particleboard](#)

Upcoming Workshops:

[Timber Sale Management](#)

Anyone interested in learning about the process of selling timber is encouraged to attend this workshop to be held October 13 and 14 at the Lubrecht Forest. Click here for more info.

[Dry Kiln Workshop](#)

Personnel in the forest products industry are invited to a workshop that addresses the science and profession of wood drying. October 3-6, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID. Click here for more info.

Woodstraw™ a new tool for dealing with post-fire erosion problems

According to the Northern Rockies Coordination Center, wildfires in Montana have burned over 53,000 acres so far in 2005. While fires are still burning in some areas, officials in other areas are beginning to assess the damage. A key component of such assessments is determining which areas are at risk for further damage.

How can a burned area be further damaged? In the aftermath of a fire, areas formerly covered by vegetation can be highly susceptible to soil erosion during rainstorms. In addition, rapid water runoff can lead to flooding in nearby streams. And third, heavy sediment loads may clog streams and reservoirs.

Fortunately, soil scientists and hydrologists have developed tools to manage areas susceptible to post-fire erosion. One of the most common is an agricultural straw mulch that is spread across an erodable area. The mulch intercepts rainfall and slows water runoff, thereby decreasing the chance for erosion. While agricultural straw is effective in controlling erosion it has some drawbacks—it can be blown off the site by wind, it decomposes quickly, and it may introduce noxious weeds into ecologically sensitive areas.

After recognizing the problems associated with agricultural straw, Forest Concepts of Federal Way Washington set

out to develop an alternate erosion control product. “We spent two years figuring out the science behind why agricultural straw does what it does and then created a substitute made from wood-based materials,” explains Jim Dooley, Forest Concepts, LLC executive manager.

The result is Woodstraw™ - a mix of long and short wood strands that can substituted for agricultural straw to control erosion. While Woodstraw™ costs more than agricultural straw, Dooley points out that it, “lasts longer, is inherently free of noxious weeds, and is less likely to blow away in the wind.”

Identifying the optimum strand size and best blend between long and short Woodstraw™ strands was a coopera-

tive effort between Forest Concepts and the USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station in Moscow, Idaho. Laboratory and field trials have shown that it is also more effective in controlling erosion than agricultural straw.

The Woodstraw™ product is made in a process similar to paper passing through a shredder. Forest Concept’s engineers developed a machine that “eats” sheets of wood veneer and spits out the Woodstraw™ strands on the other end.

For more information about Woodstraw™ contact [Jim Dooley](#) at Forest Concepts, LLC (253) 838-4759, or [Rich Lane](#) at Natural Resource Solutions in Missoula, MT (406) 721-2573.



No, these are not French Fries, they are Woodstraw™ strands—an erosion control product developed by Forest Concepts LLC. It is intended to be used as a substitute for agricultural straw.

Montana Tree Farm Annual Meeting set for October 1st



Montana Tree Farmers will hold their Annual Meeting and Forestry Tour on Saturday, October 1, 2005.

The day's activities will begin at the Lubrecht Forest headquarters with a presentation about the forest's history and an overview of research carried out at Lubrecht.

Later in the day, a field tour will visit the nearby E Bar L Ranch, which is owned by the

Potter Family. The E Bar L has been in the Potter family for three generations and in 1993 the Potters were Tree Farmers of the Year. Today, Bill and Betty Potter run a guest ranch and harvest timber on 2,000 acres along the Blackfoot River. Vacationers come to the E Bar L Ranch as much for the grandeur of the big open grown ponderosa pines as for the gourmet meals, horseback rides, and trout fishing.

Bill Potter, now in his 80's, performs much of the logging himself with a farm tractor and logging equipment that he designed and built. The equipment will be of interest to small and large landowners alike. The Potters have a detailed forest management plan that helps ensure a sustained yield of timber. They are working toward

converting many of the even-aged ponderosa pine stands into multiple-aged stands.

University of Montana Silviculture Professor Carl Fiedler has established and monitored permanent growth plots on the E Bar L Ranch to assess forest growth in multiple-aged forest management systems. Dr. Fiedler will tell the group what he has learned from his research.

Following the E Bar L tour, the group will return to Lubrecht Experimental Forest for a catered barbeque dinner and awards ceremony. Door prizes and mementos will be showered on those who attend.

All are welcome to attend, click [here](#) for registration info.

This article was adapted from the August 2005 issue of Montana Tree Farm News.

Reservoir Logs

Humans have been harnessing water power for thousands of years. In the last century, however, we figured out how to create electricity from water passing through turbines. As a result, hydroelectricity is now produced at over 2,000 sites distributed across all 50 US states.

One side-effect of hydroelectric power generation is that vast areas of forestland are now underwater. That flooding has covered an estimated 200 million trees worldwide. While divers and barges have been recovering sunken logs and trees for years, a newly developed technology has greatly increased the efficiency with which these "rediscovered" forests can be harvested.

[Triton Logging Inc.](#) of Saanichton, British Columbia has developed the *Sawfish*, a remotely operated submersible. The machine, which is capable of harvesting about 100 trees per day, first attaches a balloon to an underwater tree and then uses a 55 inch saw blade to sever the tree from the stump. The balloon then floats the log to the surface.

Cold temperatures and the absence of oxygen have preserved flooded trees from decay. The resulting lumber is highly sought after, especially by craft people who are interested in the wood's unique history.

A potential downside of underwater harvesting is that it might harm a reservoir's eco-

system. The machine's developers, however, point out that severing the trees is less disruptive than the conventional method of ripping them out by the roots. To back up their point, Triton has obtained a [Smartwood](#) "rediscovered wood" stamp of approval.



Triton Logging's *Sawfish*—an underwater timber harvesting machine.



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We're on the Web:

<http://www.forestry.umt.edu/hosting/forestproducts/index.htm>

Montana State University Extension Forestry is a branch of the MSU Extension Service and is housed cooperatively with College of Forestry and Conservation at the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana.

The mission of Extension Forestry is to provide education and outreach to non-industrial private forest landowners, forestry industry, and other forestry-related organizations in Montana.

Extension Forestry carries out its mission by providing its stakeholders with educational workshops, publications, news-releases, brochures, and videos. Common topics include forest stewardship planning, forest insect and disease, windbreaks/living snow fences, alternative forest management practices, wildfire hazard reduction, forest products marketing, and tree pruning & care.

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Do you have comments, story ideas, or other suggestions?

If so, send them to [Roy Anderson](#), newsletter editor

MSU Extension Forestry Educational Calendar

Forest Stewardship Workshop
September 15, 16, & 23
Hamilton

Montana Tree Farm Annual
Conference
October 1
Lubrecht Forest

Timber Sale Management
Workshop
October 13 and 14
Lubrecht Forest

Dry Kiln Workshop
October 3-6
University of Idaho, Moscow, ID
[click here for agenda](#)



For further information about any of these events contact:

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