Alaska’s Timber Harvest and Forest Products Industry, 2011

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Introduction:

The University of Montana’s Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) and the Pacific Northwest Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program have developed the Forest Industries Data Collection System (FIDACS) to collect, compile, and make available state and county-level information on the operations of the forest products industry. The FIDACS is based on a census of primary forest product manufacturers located in a given state. Through a written questionnaire or phone interview, the following information is collected for each active facility in a given calendar year:

- Plant production, capacity, and employment
- Volume of raw material received, by county and ownership
- Species of timber received and live/dead proportions
- Finished product volumes, types, sales value, and market locations
- Utilization and marketing of manufacturing residue

Results and Highlights:

- A total of 77 primary forest products facilities operated in Alaska during 2011:
  - 50 sawmills
  - 18 log home plants
  - 9 manufacturers that produced fuelwood products, cedar products, log furniture, tonewood, and novelty items.

- Alaska’s total timber harvest in 2011 was 175.3 million board feet (MMBF) Scribner, approximately 35 percent less than the 2005 timber harvest.

- Sawlogs made up nearly 97 percent of the total harvest. Southeast Alaska boroughs/census areas contributed more than 80 percent of this volume.

- Alaskan log exports increased more than 27 percent since 2005.

- Alaska sawmills recovered an average of 1.19 board feet per cubic foot Scribner of log input, a 9 percent decrease from 2005. This reduction in overrun parallels findings in other western states.

- Although the number of Alaska sawmills remained unchanged from 2005, 13 of the sawmills active in 2005 shuttered their facilities and became inactive, and 5 sawmills had closed permanently by 2011.

- Alaska’s pulpwood exports fell by more than 55 percent from 2005 to 2011.

- Timber processing capacity of active facilities in the sawmill sector fell by more than 40 percent since 2005 to 108.8 MMBF Scribner annually.

- Capacity utilization in Alaska’s sawmill and house log sectors fell to less than 16 percent in 2011, the lowest of any western state.

- Alaska’s primary forest products industry shipped products valued at $17.4 million (fob the producing mill) in 2011. Sawlog and pulpwood exports contributed an additional $115.8 million to sales.

- Fuelwood products (firewood and wood pellets) generated more than $3 million in sales in 2011. The majority of these products were sold in interior Alaska. Alaskans are progressively turning to wood as a primary heating fuel.

Funding provided by:
USDA, Forest Service,
Pacific Northwest Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program,
Portland, Oregon.

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