



Chair Chellie Pingree
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Wood Innovation: Sustainable Forest Products to Reinvigorate Rural Economies
Hearing
March 23, 2021

As Prepared

Our hearing today will address exciting developments in the forest products industry. This industry is the backbone of Maine's economy, supporting 1 out of every 24 jobs in the state. Innovations in sustainable, climate-friendly products could reinvigorate a sector hit hard by reduced demand for certain traditional wood products like pulp and paper. The emerging market for climate-friendly products is an opportunity to promote rural job growth.

We will explore the ways in which innovative new forest products could function as efficient alternatives to traditional materials while also being more climate friendly. And, we will discuss mass timber and how the widespread adoption of new timber products in the construction industry could have a major impact on the carbon footprint of the construction industry as a whole.

Research shows that wood products can have multiple layers of benefits. In an Agriculture Committee hearing last year, Michael Goergen of the Endowment for Forestry and Communities, testified about the potential for biodegradable and recyclable food packaging made from forest products. The University of Maine participated in this research and I am pleased that one of our witnesses today is from UMaine and can tell us more about projects like this. Last week, we held a hearing on plastic waste and recycling and learned that plastic pollution costs the global economy over \$1.5 trillion dollars a year due to impacts on a variety of sectors. Packaging alternatives like this created from forest products could help solve this crisis.

Much of the innovation in the wood industry is because of credited to the research and support provided by the Forest Service. In fiscal year 2021, we appropriated \$20.3 million for the forest products laboratory. FPL's research ranges from fiber and chemical science to composites and its work has allowed a wide range of wood products to emerge and develop into viable consumer products from nanocellulose-enhanced flooring to wood-cellulose supporting films in electronics to advanced composites and many things in between.

I look forward to hearing how we can continue to support progress and innovation in the wood products industry through support of the Forest Service.

To discuss this important issue, I am pleased to welcome:

- Dr. Cindi West from the U.S. Forest Service the Director of the Forest Products Laboratory and the Northern Research Station.

Joining Dr. West today are three witnesses with a deep knowledge of forest products development and research into emerging products and uses in construction:

- Dr. Stephen Shaler, Director and Professor at the School of Forest Resources at University of Maine representing FOR/Maine
- Marc Brinkmeyer, Owner of the Idaho Forest Group representing the Idaho Forest Products Commission
- Our final witness is Dean Peter MacKeith, and joining us this morning to introduce him is Rep. Womack.

I would now like to yield to our Ranking Member, Mr. Joyce, for his opening remarks.