RESEARCH in Progress

Coalition for Advanced Wood Structures
a university, industry, government partnership

Infrastructure Enhancements to Support Value-Added Bio-Product Recovery

Winds and flooding from hurricanes, derechos, nor'easters, and ice and snow storms cause unprecedented levels of disruption to forest ecosystems, communications, utilities, and transportation systems across the eastern United States. Many of the disruptions are due to uprooting and breakage of trees in forests, yards, urban areas, and along roadways. When this happens, landowners feel the need to act fast to clear the fallen trees. This hasty reaction does not lend itself to a coordinated effort to identify value-producing and cost-effective clean-up strategies. This is especially true if recovery options are not readily available and easily accessed.

Background

After Hurricane Katrina uprooted and broke thousands of trees in three states in 2005, demand for contact information and coordination of efforts led to the development of the Windwood Web Site by Mississippi State University (www.windwoodutilization.org). This web site includes some general information, but its extensive contact and communication information is developed *only for the southern states*. A retrospective on the Hurricane Katrina experience was provided by the principal organizer of the tree utilization response in Mississippi:

> *I started receiving phone calls the morning of Aug 29 from loggers offering clean-up help before the storm hit. At that point, we attempted to get a toll free number set-up through Bell South so that it would be in place. Although it took 3 weeks to become operational, we have had several hundred calls for and offers of help. We designed a Web site to serve as an avenue for communication for loggers and other contractors willing to offer their services. The site was designed so that landowners and companies could find loggers, loggers could find companies and landowners, and everyone benefits. A list of FAQs for landowners and loggers should be developed and maintained for future use. Additionally, materials for disaster recovery should be developed prior to the event—not in the immediate aftermath.* – L. Grace, Nov. 2005

Non-value-added processing of storm debris using a chipper to reduce tons of woody storm debris after heavy snows from Hurricane Sandy devastated forests in a several-county area of northern West Virginia and western Maryland. Photo credit: USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station, NRS-01, Parsons, WV.

Objective

The goal of this project is to identify, develop, and make available new and existing information that will facilitate more effective response by individuals, organizations, and government entities when storms and other forms of disturbance lead to unplanned influxes of downed timber and woody debris across the eastern United States.

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Approach

Decision makers from state forestry organizations, major tree companies, communities, utilities, and the Federal Emergency Management Administration will participate in focus groups and interviews concerning response to storm events. The needs, issues, experiences, and ideas for marshalling a more coordinated and productive response to storm events that have a significant forest impact will be compiled, prioritized, and investigated. A resource database for the eastern United States will be developed to include items identified in the 2010 Action Plan for Damaged Timber and Wood Debris. Value-added utilization options for woody storm debris will be elaborated along with points of contact that may assist in pursuing these options. Lessons learned from prior events will be developed. All these information resources will be made available through a web site.

Expected Outcomes

This effort will result in a web-based information clearinghouse that forest landowners, managers, and public officials in the eastern United States will rely on when unplanned large or small wood supply influxes occur.

Timeline

Knowledge gained from two focus group meetings will be used to develop an information collection strategy by December 2015. The content of the web site will be finalized and development will begin by June 2016. Web site beta testing will take place and data collection will be completed by December 2016. A webinar to introduce stakeholders to the information tool that has been developed will be presented in July 2017.

Cooperators

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