

## The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) at Virginia Tech and Virginia State University

RREA programs help prepare Virginia landowners to manage natural resources more effectively, and to keep the forest products industry profitable and viable. RREA funds are leveraged with state, private, and institutional funds, engaging numerous partners to deliver educational programs to landowners and land managers. In public educational programs conducted by Virginia Tech and Virginia State, each RREA dollar is typically leveraged with \$15 of state, private, and/or local funds. In recent years, RREA funds were used as described below:

- The Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program has reached over 2,000 private forest owners since its inception in 1997. These participants own or manage over 340,000 acres of forest land, and the educational programs have assisted them to better manage their land for forest products, wildlife, improved water resources, and other benefits. The owners themselves estimate that through the educational programs, they have been able to save or earn an additional \$44 per acre. One landowner stated that he received an additional \$40,000 for his timber after attending a workshop on Sustainable Timber Harvesting and Marketing.
- Logging is an inherently dangerous occupation, with annual workplace fatalities occurring at a rate 2.5 times the industrial average. Virginia Cooperative Extension personnel have designed, planned, and conducted 52 6-hour Logging Safety Workshops attended by over 2,000 participants at locations across the Commonwealth since 1996. 82 percent of the participating loggers made one or more changes to improve workplace safety in their operations as a direct result of attending the workshop. As a result, logging injuries in Virginia decreased 50% between 1996 and 2001, from 10.0 to 4.9 injuries per 100 workers per year, saving over \$12 million in medical costs and lost production.
- Virginia Cooperative Extension assisted in business and marketing plan development for Blue Ridge Wood Products in Bluefield, VA. This review and development helped secure additional state funding that allowed the reopening of a closed Laminated Veneer Lumber plant in 2004 that will employ 150 individuals in Southwest VA at an average starting wage rate of \$9.00/hour.

*“Over the past 7 years, I have had the opportunity to cooperate with VCE on a variety of projects of considerable value to the forestry community in Virginia. VCE is always professional, credible, and willing to work for the greater good of combined interests.” Executive Vice President, Virginia Forestry Association.*



Virginia landowners learn how to improve wildlife habitat.

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