



# WOOD SUPPLY RESEARCH INSTITUTE **UPDATE**

## *“Projects Underway, Projects Under Review, and WSRI in Transition”*

Wow! Jim Fendig is now enjoying a life of true retirement, and I am officially carrying the WSRI Executive Director's torch.

In early June, I began phoning our Board members with the goal of speaking one-on-one with all 27 by the end of the month. As of this writing, I have had informative discussions with about half, and I look forward to my conversations with the rest. In every conversation so far, the members of our WSRI Board have shared interesting personal and professional histories, detailed information about the companies they represent, insights about their reasons for participating in WSRI, and perspectives on how WSRI might become an even better organization in the future. I appreciate all that has been and will be shared. This is very helpful to me, and I believe the comments I am gathering will help guide WSRI as we go forward.

The two projects currently commissioned by WSRI are making progress.

Project One, led by Dr. Tom Gallagher of Auburn University, is testing the potential to use phone application technology to record log truck movements in the Southeast. This project grew out of WSRI's desire to build on the body of information about truck utilization and delays. It is widely recognized that trucking in our industry is facing a lot of challenges. In an effort to address, at low cost, the data collection challenges associated with quantifying truck utilization and qualifying delays, Auburn proposed exploring the potential to use smart phones—an item on board most trucks moving product in our industry today—to gather data. As of this writing, the phone application has been built, and it is being tested in three states: Alabama, South Carolina, and Ohio. (I have it installed on my phone, too, so I can also test drive it.) This project has the potential to dovetail with other important trucking-related initiatives, including one being sponsored by the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities and others by TEAM Safe Trucking.

Project Two, led by Dr. Shawn Baker with Forisk Consulting, is entitled Logger and Trucker Compensation Indices. This project will compare the *total compensation* paid to logging and trucking employees with that of employees in jobs from different industries that compete for the same labor pool. The study will combine publicly available data and wood supplier survey data to evaluate both wages and benefits. Dr. Baker gave a progress report at the WSRI annual meeting in May. A final report is expected later this summer.

In addition, after reviewing eight pre-proposals in March, the WSRI Technical Team has received three final research proposals and is in the process of reviewing those. The Team will present details about these potential research projects and recommendations to the Board later this summer, and the Board will then decide to fund, or not to fund, any or all of them.

I will close this, my first *WSRI Update*, by stating something that I believe is at the core of why WSRI exists. Information through research is our product, but fostering dialog across the wood supply chain is the reason why we do the research. The implementation of any opportunity exposed by the work WSRI funds is ultimately the responsibility of each individual member working within that member's own sphere of influence to facilitate change, adapt, etc. A key goal for me will be to keep all of you informed regarding all the activities of the Institute, encourage you to participate and be engaged, and do my best to foster communications across all our categories of membership.

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