



Penn State's New Forestry Building is a Hardwood Showcase

by Paul Lyskava, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Forest Products Association (PFPA)

photos courtesy of Pennsylvania State University

When the Pennsylvania Forest Products Association learned that Penn State University was planning the construction of a new building for its School of Forest Resources, it wanted to support the effort and ensure that students were reminded of the end product of forestry. It was also important to us to present an image of forestry and wood products as a modern, growth industry that is an important component of the economic future of Pennsylvania. We wanted to create an attractive and professional atmosphere that would help recruit the brightest students and best faculty. We fully expect many future industry leaders will be graduates of PSU.

Keith Atherholt, President of Lewis Lumber Products and a PFPA Board member, served as a project manager of the association's donation. Atherholt is an alumnus of the Penn State School of Forest Resources and was involved in the building from its early stages, and he worked with Penn State to educate the building's architects and contractors on how to best utilize and showcase hardwoods throughout the project. "Surprisingly, the architects were not all that familiar with the use of solid wood in institutional applications," explained Atherholt. "We had to educate them how

they could create a variety of different looks utilizing different hardwood species."

Several prominent PFPA members, including AgChoice Farm Credit, donated lumber that was then processed into the finished millwork by Lewis Lumber Products and additional members who specialize in secondary manufacturing.

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What resulted was a building that showcases the use of Pennsylvania-produced hardwood products and the transformation of a typical institutional structure into one of the most beautiful and inviting buildings on the Penn State campus.

PFPA worked with its member companies to donate an extensive package of Pennsylvania-produced interior paneling, columns, seating, moldings and trim in native

black cherry, red oak and ash hardwoods. The building's three-story atrium is topped with exposed glulam beams made from Pennsylvania red maple, also donated by PFPA member companies. All of the wood has a clear finish to allow for the natural beauty of the wood to show through. The result is an interior that is reminiscent of a corporate headquarters or professional conference center.

In total, more than 1,700 linear feet of solid wood wainscot paneling and over 14,000 linear feet of other millwork, molding and trim were liberally utilized in the public spaces, classrooms and administrative offices throughout the building. The total donation by PFPA members is conservatively estimated to be valued at more than \$670,000.

The 98,000 square foot facility brings together under one roof the three professional programs in the Penn State School of Forest Resources: forest science, wood products, and wildlife and fisheries. The building features four teaching laboratories, six research labs, two technology classrooms, a 150-seat auditorium, a video conference room, as well as smaller conference rooms, faculty and staff offices. The facility will serve nearly 500 graduate and undergraduate students.

At the formal dedication of the building in September, Penn State President Graham Spanier predicted that the building will have a profound impact on the students.

“This building is no ordinary classroom-laboratory facility,” said Spanier. “It is an outstanding example of a structure that was designed to stimulate learning and serve as an instructional tool itself. Exposed structural elements...demonstrate the uses of wood and the beauty of natural elements.”

In the late 1990’s, PFPA created a similar, but smaller, hardwood showcase at the General Aviation Terminal of the University Park Airport.

Other PFPA projects include a partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture’s Hardwoods Development Council to develop and operate the Pennsylvania WoodMobile, a mobile exhibit and educational program that delivers a message of sustainable forestry and wood product utilization to elementary school students and the public, and the creation of an environmental and ecology curriculum for middle and high school students.

Pennsylvania’s forest products industry is one of the state’s leading manufacturing sectors. The industry includes more than 2,600 establishments, employing over 82,000 Pennsylvanians and accounting for one of every nine manufacturing jobs in the state. The forest products industry in Pennsylvania manufactures products in excess of \$15 Billion annually. The total economic impact of Pennsylvania’s forest products industry is estimated to be over \$25 Billion annually.

Visit the PSU School of Forest Resources online at www.sfr.cas.psu.edu. ■

Pennsylvania Forest Products Association (PFPA) is the statewide trade association for all sectors of forest products industry, including sawmills, various secondary processors, foresters, loggers, and equipment and service suppliers. AgChoice Farm Credit is a member of PFPA and AgChoice associate Tom Gooch serves as the association’s Secretary/Treasurer.

