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Flagstaff Welcomes SmallWood 2012 – Forest Restoration for a New Economy

By: Scott Hunt, State Forester and SmallWood 2012 Steering Committee Chair

Arizona has more than 20 million acres of forest land. Forests have long contributed to Arizona's economy and quality of life. They provide an abundance of natural resources and remain the economic and aesthetic foundation of many rural communities.

On May 1st through May 3rd, Flagstaff will host the SmallWood 2012 Conference, a gathering of natural resource professionals and industry leaders coming together to share and learn about new advances in forest restoration and wood utilization. The conference is very appropriate for this region as we are on the cusp of implementing the largest landscape scale forest restoration project in the nation, known as the Four Forest Restoration Initiative or 4FRI.

Last summer's catastrophic wildfires that burned over one million acres in our great state bluntly demonstrate the need to accelerate forest restoration activities to increase our forests' resiliency to such events. However, the value of the small, woody material generated from many of these restoration projects does not cover the treatment costs, which often approach \$1,000 per acre, and government agency budgets simply cannot sustain large projects under this model.

Enormous quantities of woody biomass are continually generated from our forests through normal vegetative growth, forest treatment operations, and catastrophic events such as wildfires and insect infestations. These issues drive the need to create solutions for utilizing low-value and waste wood that will play a critical role in offsetting costs of fuels reduction and forest restoration treatments.

SmallWood 2012: Forest Restoration for a New Economy is co-sponsored by the Forest Products Society, the USDA Forest Service and the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition and will be held at Little America Hotel in Flagstaff, Ariz., May 1 - 3, 2012. The conference will provide information needed to adapt to changes and be successful in our current dynamic economy and industry.

By focusing on our forest resources as well as the forest products industry, we begin to understand key interactions and how to build a true forest restoration for a new economy. We welcome our Nation's Deputy Under Secretary of Natural Resources and the Environment, Arthur "Butch" Blazer, as well as a host of renowned speakers to our state. We also welcome all of you interested in participating, learning and helping build a new forest economy.

You can register or get more information at <http://www.forestprod.org/smallwood/>.