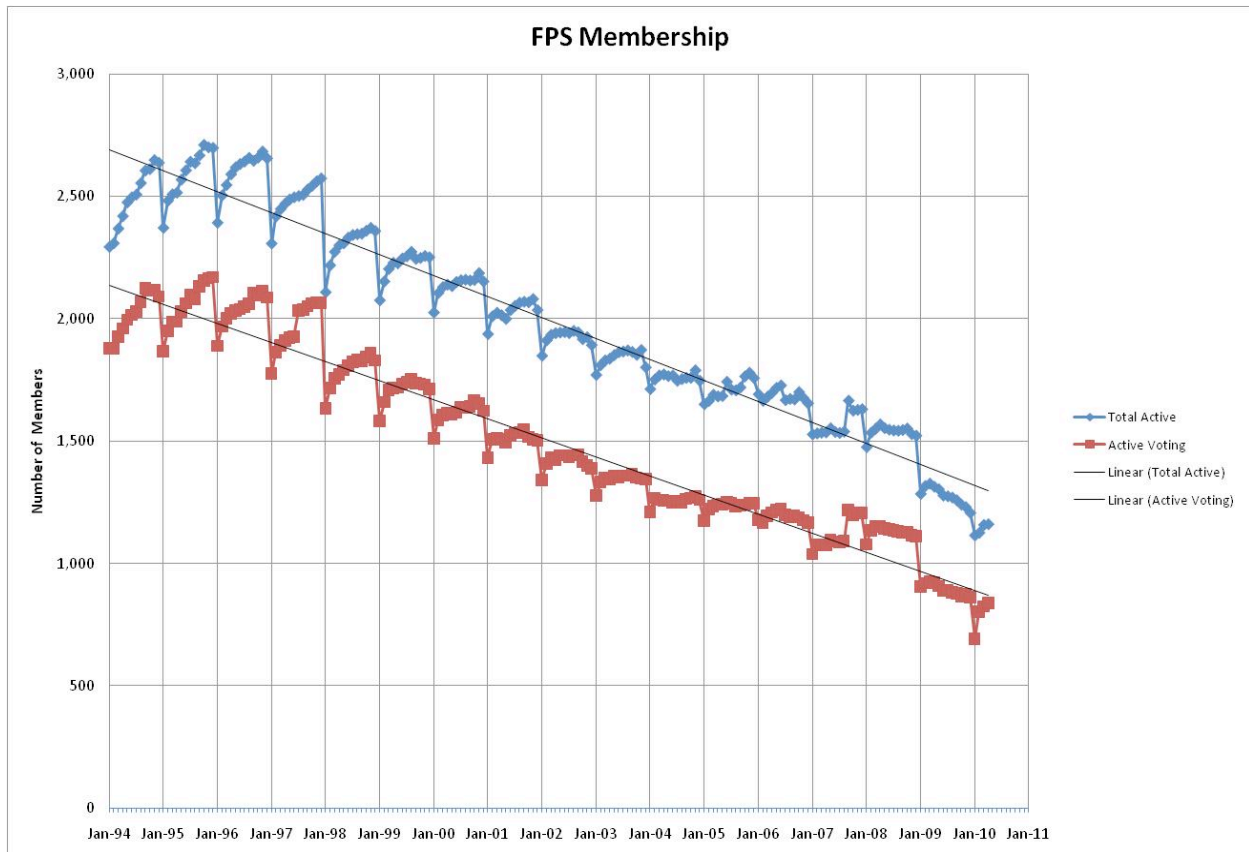


June 19, 2010

FPS President and EVP Message Regarding the Visioning/Strategic Planning Process

The Forest Products Society is embarking on a journey to redefine its mission and strategically position itself to maintain its status as a leader in the greater wood and biofiber community. Our organization is facing many challenges including steadily decreasing membership (see below) and changing customer priorities.



While we have cut back and stretched our resources in the near term to cope with a major economic recession, a sustainable future demands that we reexamine our priorities, organizational structure, goals, and financial commitments. The choices we make in coping with the near term must also position us to be able to continue our leadership to the forest products community. Although shrinkage in non-profit and professional organizations over the past decade is well documented, we must not accept that as the norm. Perhaps we have been slow to recognize the pace of change in the environment and the changing needs of members and potential members.

For example, much has been said about how our members no longer follow the traditional methods of communication, information gathering, and networking. While we have embraced some of these changes and provide services to support new directions, we must in fact do more. Regular electronic communication with members, an organizational web site, an interactive electronic database of our

published materials, and an electronic submission and review system for our journals are a start, but our immediate challenge is to continue to improve these services and grow our value to members with still limited resources. With electronic technology growing by leaps and bounds it is difficult to meet member expectations in the electronic age if our resources limit us to making only incremental changes. Setting priorities, realigning resources, and focusing efforts are the way forward.

The FPS founders envisioned an organization 64 years ago that would bring together science, research, industry, and other practitioners around the common theme of disseminating technical knowledge and encouraging technological improvements in the use of wood. Does that vision remain valid? Does it provide us a unique position in the forest products community? Are we effectively implementing the vision? Are we leading the discussion or reacting to it? Are we keeping up with the environmental (and structural) changes in industry and science? Do we need to do something different to appeal to new potential members? Are our delivery methods working well? None of these are new questions and we are not the first to bring them up, but we must recognize that the answers may be different this time. It is time to reexamine our objectives, goals, and vision and begin to plan strategically for the future.

Examine our Strengths – Since 2005, FPS has conducted three member surveys (two to the general membership and one to students only) and conducted a strategic visioning workshop. These efforts provided an excellent foundation to formulate a new strategic plan. From the surveys emerges the picture that our current, active members value the *Forest Products Journal*, the special technical publications, Member eUpdate, and the technical conferences. Are we doing enough to maintain these strengths? Are we missing opportunities? How can we use the information we've collected to set new priorities and strategies for sustainability? More detail about these survey results is available at www.forestprod.org/future.

Redefine our Goals – It is time to reexamine the founders' vision and determine what goals, objectives, and procedures we need to address to meet the needs of our members, future members, and partners. We are an organization of about 1,200 members with 19 technical interest groups, 14 regional sections and chapters, and 20 student chapters. Although the players have changed over the years, this basic structure has changed little. Is this structure the most effective way to engage our current members and reach out to new members? Does the current structure work to provide members with the opportunity to be engaged in FPS or is it counterproductive for an organization of our size? Could a different structure be more productive?

To start the process, we need to engage the membership – listening to your thoughts, priorities, and goals for FPS. Without diverse ideas, commitment, and support, we will fail to be the leaders for the forest products community that we strive to be. The first steps we take will be important. To change effectively, we must think strategically **and** create among our members a consensus for commitment to change.

The Visioning and Strategic Planning Process – We will kick off the Visioning/Strategic Planning Process during the listening session on June 19 in Madison, Wisconsin. The objective of the listening session is to engage a small group of interested Society leaders in identifying key elements of a future vision for the

Forest Products Society. The ideas gathered on June 19 will be presented during an informal session on June 20 open to all, immediately preceding the 64th International Convention. These first two sessions will assist the FPS Executive Board as it continues the Visioning/Strategic Planning Process.

Following the International Convention, we plan to distribute an online survey to members and non-members to gather input and to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing FPS. In-person and online (webinar) meetings over the course of the summer will be convened to solicit additional input from stakeholders. We will continue to use the LinkedIn discussion forum during this period to provide an ongoing mechanism for capturing a diversity of perspectives.

Based on the information and perspectives gathered throughout the process, the Executive Board will lead the development of proposed goals, objectives, and short and long term action plans. A process to vet the results publicly will be developed and implemented, followed by Executive Board review and ratification of the resulting strategic plan as early as fall 2010. We expect the strategic plan to inform 2011 work plans for the Executive Board, EVP, committees, and staff. Any changes to the FPS Constitution or Bylaws needed to implement the strategic plan will be presented to the membership during the 2011 International Convention.