



July 8, 2008

TO: Board of Directors, Forest Products Society
Board of Directors, Society of Wood Science and Technology

FROM: Paul Winistorfer, Professor and Head
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RE: Change and Innovation from Within: Creating Our Own Future

Dear Board Members:

Greetings to you. I hope your summer is going well. Thank you for your service as a Board member to FPS and SWST. Your engagement and service to these organizations is much needed and appreciated by the membership and those of us who are past officers and board members. I have been a member of both organizations for over 30 years and served as President of FPS in 2003-2004.

These organizations have served important roles throughout the past ½ century as a gathering place for professionals, industry and academics. We've been the vehicle to report on research, oversee our academic programs, foster student involvement, and meet annually in a way that is so very important to professional development and growth.

But, we face challenges today, some old and some new, if left unaddressed will lead to the dilution of these organizations and an uncertain future. The challenges are many and include, to name a few: declining and stagnant membership; considerable overlap in membership; sustainable finances; rising publication and meeting costs; competing venues and other organizations in the marketplace; challenges in engaging and capturing students and converting students to full membership; declining industry participation and our relevancy to the industry; diminishing participation by our own university programs and faculty, and; representing one of the many voices in the very clouded landscape today. Surely you can add to this list both big and small challenges that we face. At the time of our inception there were fewer organizations in the marketplace. As our industry has grown and matured, the number of organizations has increased dramatically to represent specific and niche interests; there are several hundred trade association organizations representing our industry. As our university faculty and federal and private research laboratory expertise has diversified to capture the necessary academic backgrounds needed in wood utilization (engineering disciplines and chemistry most notable), these individuals have often found their professional home in the American Chemical Society (ACS) or the one of the organizations representing the engineering disciplines.

Invent the Future

I reported on the association and organizations in the forest products arena in a *Forest Products Journal* feature article in 2003 (Winistorfer, P.M. 2003. Associations and organizations in the forest products arena: Understanding the landscape. *Forest Products Journal* 53(6):2-11). In 2004 we convened a visioning session for the Forest Products Society and brought together a host of key thinkers representing our universities, industry and FPS and SWST. The FPS executive committee reported on this visioning session in a *Forest Products Journal* feature article (Winistorfer, P.M., I. de la Roche, W. R. Smith, N. Kutscha and A.B. Brauner. 2004. Visioning for the future of the Forest Products Society. *Forest Products Journal* 54(7/8):8-17).

I am not of the belief today that we can move forward to a successful future for these two organizations neither by incremental or marginal change nor by remaining separate organizations. In the context of my own service to FPS culminating as President in 2003-2004 I'm struck by the very high caliber of individuals that have served in the leadership role of these organizations for the past decade, including:

President's Term	FPS	SWST
2000-2001	Daryle Layton	Ramsay Smith
2001-2002	Frank Beall	Mike Barnes
2002-2003	Norm Kutscha	Robert Rice
2003-2004	Paul Winistorfer	Doug Stokke
2004-2005	Ian de la Roche	Audrey Zink-Sharp
2005-2006	Ramsay Smith	Paul Smith
2006-2007	Robert Little	Doug Garnder
2007-2008	Mike Barnes	Jim Armstrong
2008-2009	Anthony Witherspoon	Jerry Winandy
2009-2010	John Shelly	James Funck
2010-2011	Barry Goodell	Susan Anagnost

These are trusted and respected colleagues who served (and will serve) us well. Three individuals during this past decade have served in the leadership role of both organizations, and if looking back farther you will find a number of individuals who have served both organizations as President. For most of this decade we have had the same two Executive Directors and only in the past two years has Art Brauner retired after 30+ years of service to FPS.

As Board members you will devote considerable time and resources to the intended betterment of each organization; the consequence in today's environment is sub-optimization of each organization. We are operating in a very small pool of 'disciplinary real estate' for these two organizations and incremental or marginal change will not result in significant progress that we all desire. On our own campus our discussion in the department reflects the

fact that we 'own' wood science at Virginia Tech, but this is a very narrow and small piece of the academic pie on our university campus and we must somehow grow the universe we own and increase our scope of influence and relevancy to other programs who can and should have interests in wood and wood utilization. If we don't own it now, for instance in engineering, building construction, chemistry, architecture and industrial design to name a few, how are we going to move forward with the existing 'real estate' we currently claim?

During this past decade we simply have not made progress in addressing key issues facing the future of both organizations and we continue to revisit nearly the same issues that we have talked about for ten years. We have made some change in programs and services and each new Board brings a refinement to each organization. Please don't consider my comments as derogatory or of a complaining or critical nature; we have not yet rediscovered a model or pathway forward for growth, relevancy, sustainability and overall engagement in the context of our world today. We talk of membership decline, aging membership demographics, publication sales, meeting venues, relevancy of accreditation, fostering student engagement, reaching our industry clientele and other key issues germane to each organization separately, as well as issues that overlap both organizations. And we face the long-standing issue of under-enrollment in our academic programs; our professional organizations have not provided the synergism with our academic programs to pull students into our discipline.

We have not changed within these organizations but the world around us has changed dramatically over the past decade; I feel as if we are being left behind with diminishing relevancy. Associations and industry mergers, strategic partnerships, take-overs, and buy-outs are all around us, University consolidation of academic programs and the very large changes in Canada to merge three former organizations into one new organization (FPInnovations) have impacted our landscape in the last five years.

These organizations belong to the membership and we as members have the responsibility to direct and shape these organizations to reflect our interests, vision and mission. It is time to embrace change and create our own future for FPS and SWST.

I purport that we can and should step up now as two organizations to capture the opportunities of our times to foster improved utilization of wood and fiber and to build a platform for enhanced human capital engagement and development so desperately needed, but so elusive to our sector in recent times.

This is not about looking back; this is all about looking forward and creating the opportunity to capture our mutual interests in becoming vibrant, relevant, meaningful and sustainable as one new organization. I believe the time is now to create a new organization and bring our mutual interests, capacity, finances, membership, products and services together in a new organization, and add to our portfolio in key strategic areas.

Why a new Organization?

Creating a new organization let's us create from the ground up and reflects a new entity, not a take-over of one of the existing organizations. Also, we create whatever Internal Revenue Code (IRC) designation we think will best suit us. The IRC 501(c)(3) versus 501(c)(6) designation continues to come up in discussion as the reason we can't or should not come together. Let's dissolve both organizations with respect and reincorporate as a new organization with a new name, with a chosen IRC not-for-profit educational organization designation.

What Would We Name It?

A new name creates a climate of change and a receptor to add to our portfolio of products and services. There is power in a new name and it alone would force us to think of our own future with a renewed sense of vigor. A new name would give us a sense of renewal and a new beginning, a fresh start for our discipline and our interests. A new name could result in an expanded scope of 'real estate' and the opportunity to expand our portfolio of offerings. There are many possibilities for a new name that would capture the former interests of both organizations. But we also need change in a name.

I've given this some thought and suggest a name like:

“The America's Society of Wood and Renewable Materials Science and Technology”

The acronym is not important to me or that the initials spell out some simple shorter name. Let's capture wood science and renewable materials science and technology and own it in the America's and work together in a new, invigorated way.

While we claim to be international organizations and for various reasons aspire to become more, I long for an organization that will represent our America's interest in the global marketplace today. Call it pride of ownership if you wish; we could and should band together in North and South America and create a vehicle for engagement as we address the challenges presented by the global climate. Ian de la Roche and I used to call this 'Fortress North America'. We need help right here on our own turf with identify, ownership, vision, relevancy and human capital recruitment. We need an organization at home on our turf that our students feel they are a part of and want to belong to. Being an international organization does not address our challenges at home. I want to belong to a 'winning' organization on our own turf to compete in the global marketplace and represent the interests of our sector. I want a North/South American organization that can step up in the global climate and be the organization of envy worldwide. Claiming the North and South American turf in our changing discipline is not 'putting our head in the sand' and walking away from international awareness and relevancy. Let's be the world leader and reap the benefits that would come with this recognition.

Organizational Structure

We can create a new structure to suit our vision and mission. We can do all of the things we currently do as separate organizations, but we would be more cost effective and efficient with financial and human resources. We could improve our publications quality, add to our publications portfolio, bring renewal to accreditation, hold one annual meeting of the membership, a single website, consolidate staff and executive directors, and reduce expenses that result from duplication of current programs and services, and yet have resources to expand and grow.

Perhaps most importantly we could add to our portfolio in key areas and better align ourselves with changes in federal and association programs, such as Agenda 2020, changes within USDA and the new Federal Institute of Food and Agriculture (FIFA). Over time we have lost significant voice at the national level.

We could allow our structure to embrace biofuels, biomaterials and nanoscience; distribution packaging; historic preservation, residential housing and non-residential wood building construction; architectural woodworking and wood design; timber and wood engineering; business systems, marketing and management, and; continuing and professional education and workforce development. I think there are significant opportunities for us in the continuing and professional education arenas. We should be partnered up with the national WoodLINKS movement to entice young people to get engaged with us. We would expand our portfolio and landscape if we aggressively pursued these topics above.

While long held up as the flagship of FPS, the *Forest Products Journal* is not a highly rated publication via the ISI Web of Knowledge journal ranking and this is a serious problem for academics. We can publish in *FPJ*, but it does us little good as a refereed publication in the promotion and tenure deliberation.

The current slate of TIGs in FPS is long overdue for significant overhaul. The recent meeting in St. Louis again revealed that some TIGs draw a very, very small level of interest at the annual meeting, and yet we continue to offer this venue of multiple TIGs, at an elevated cost for multiple meeting rooms in our conference venues. Unfortunately, the quality of many presentations this year was very poor and we seem to have lost our ability to provide quality control of topics and speakers.

I applaud SWST for taking a fresh approach to an annual meeting to be held in Chile and hope the venue is well attended and received. If this 'split' in annual meeting format continues, I suggest that this will further cannibalize our meeting attendee pool and will not result in growth for either organization.

Vision and Mission

We could embrace a new holistic vision and mission that would bring us together and allow us to grow our portfolio and ownership of an expanded landscape (as I have mentioned now many times). In the very crowded landscape of organizations today, we could come to the

table with a vision and mission that captures the former essence of both organizations today. Look at our current vision and mission statements for our organizations, in which I see duplication and limited vision and scope:

FPS

Vision - The Society's Vision is to be the world leader in technical information transfer to further the socially beneficial use of wood and fiber resources.

Mission - The Society's Mission is to foster innovation and research in the environmentally sound processing and use of wood and fiber resources by disseminating information and providing forums for networking and the exchange of knowledge.

SWST

Our Mission: To provide service to SWST members; to develop, maintain, and promulgate the educational, scientific, and ethical standards that define the profession; and to advocate the socially responsible production use of wood and lignocellulosic products

Our Vision: To be the world leader in advancing the profession of wood science.

Services and Products

I've touched a bit on services and products in comments above. I believe we would be a better and more efficient publisher and disseminator of technical information and increase the quality of our publications if we were a single organization. We could add to our publication products to better meet the needs of academics and industry. I personally like the monthly newspaper style Forestry Source published by the Society of American Foresters (SAF). SAF also publishes the Journal of Forestry as well as highly acclaimed regional peer-reviewed journals. Our current newsletters are similar in content and value and could easily be made one with better quality and more relevant content.

We should be offering webinars on contemporary topics, and offering continuing education credits as we try to reach engineers and architects. We should be offering new products for high school and university students such as pod casts and web based information. We must expand the products and services of our intellectual expertise to a wider audience or we will never grow beyond our current clientele. We should be providing a leadership tract for young professional in our profession; I've always felt that it was lack of leadership in our academic programs that has led to decline and elimination of smaller programs nationwide. We must be of value to academics and the industry practitioners.

The current accreditation process of our very limited number of university programs is of little value in my opinion. We don't train peer-visiting team members, the reports are of little value and the process is costly to the host institution. We think we do this because our

administration values the accreditation process. No one I've talked to in the last 5 years at a peer institution places any value on the process and yet we continue to believe this is an important service and product for our programs and hold this up as a major tenant of SWST. I suggest that we are not the 'world leader in advancing the profession of wood science'.

Annual Meeting Structure and Costs

Meetings are increasingly expensive to host and attend. Travel expenses are rapidly increasing. The current format for FPS requires a large number of meeting rooms. SWST has piggy-backed with FPS and combined for the Sunday technical interest groups and host reception on Sunday evening as this was more cost effective. There has been confusion the last two years over who 'owns' the fundamental disciplines and physics TIGs and when these are presented. And I think we cannibalize the membership of both organizations in our current joint meeting format; some come for SWST, some come for FPS. The experiment this year (SWST in Chile) will be important to watch and follow on. We have a history of meeting in the summer and creating a family venue; I've watched this change over time and see fewer families engaged in the annual meeting. Perhaps rising travel and lodging costs impact families abilities to attend and create a summer vacation. Many other organizations hold their annual meeting during the academic year and create an instant opportunity for students to participate. Or, maybe this is a reflection on our aging demographics in both organizations. While we have student participation in the summer, the majority of our university students are employed and unable to attend the meeting. Students are our future and yet we don't cater to them with the current annual meeting formats.

Volunteer Activism

We have a committed volunteer group of both organizations. But, with our small numbers we have frequent duplication of service on committees and boards. It is sometimes a 'hunt' to find willing members who can make the investment of several years to provide service on the executive boards and work effectively with the executive directors. There is a real cost to the home institution for this service and when our vision and mission are so close to duplication I question the sustainability of the volunteer pool to keep both organizations moving forward with effective leadership and volunteer service on the many committees that make up both organizations. By becoming a single organization we have removed duplication of service and relevancy of duplicate committees and boards. We've also removed competition in the marketplace from ourselves.

Reasons to Resist and the Cost of Doing Nothing

There are many reasons to resist such a dramatic change for these two valued organizations. A list of reasons/topics that frequently come into this discussion include:

- Internal Revenue Code regarding organizational structure

- Accreditation
- FPS is not a Professional organization – SWST is a professional organization
- Holding on for holding on sake
- The mindset and position that ‘no - we will not change’
- Individual positions that ‘I’ve been a member for 30 years and I do not want to change these organizations’
- ‘We won’t let ourselves be taken over by the other organization’
- We have two Executive Directors – someone will be without a job
- The way forward is not clear – this is too much change
- What about FPJ and W&FS publications?
- What do we do with the current Boards? How would we ever blend finances and products?

When I was in office with FPS I broached this subject in my feature article and talked with many members throughout the year. I ruffled quite a few feathers, but also had widespread response summarized as ‘it is long overdue – let’s do it’. That was in 2003-2004 and I suggest that our mutual positions have weakened overall for both organizations and that we have changed very little in the past five years.

Colleagues, let’s take control of our own future. Let’s create a new, vibrant organization with a new sense of purpose and mission. Let’s grow our real estate portfolio of what we own and who we interact with. Let’s be the vehicle for the America’s wood and renewable materials industry, government professionals, and university students and faculty. Let’s stretch beyond our current reach in the knowledge supply chain and grow our universe into allied and other disciplines. Let’s work together in synergism under a new umbrella and demonstrate that we do have a unified and relevant voice.

I offer my comments to you in the spirit of change and creating our own future. I welcome your comments and questions. I will continue to support both organizations into the future regardless of what position or action you take or do not take. Change is in the hands of the current Board of Directors first and foremost. I challenge you to think of our future from three perspectives: 1) if we do nothing and remain as is; and 2) if we make refinements, marginal or incremental change as two separate organizations, and; 3) embrace change, create a new organization and innovate from within.

Warm professional regards to you all,



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Professor and Department Head
Forest Products Society Past President 2003-2004