



SHAPING THE FUTURE OF FOREST PRODUCTS SOCIETY

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WHERE ARE WE AT?

This past year the Forest Products Society embarked on a **Strategic Planning and Visioning** effort to craft a pathway for our future. We held two open listening sessions; one in June 2010 associated with our International Convention, and another in November at the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin. These public sessions were attended by FPS members in person or via web and telephone.

The Executive Board is moving forward with seeking member input on new draft Vision and Mission statements during the next two months (see inside back cover for the new Vision and Mission statements). These statements reflect a future Society that will:

- » Focus broadly on wood, but also on other renewable materials
- » Be a more internationally active and engaged organization
- » Coordinate with other global organizations focused on wood and renewable resources to have greater impact on shaping public opinion and natural resource policy.

A future FPS will also provide greater leadership in the areas of science and engineering related to wood and other plant-based biomaterials. One of our goals will be to appeal more broadly to those interested in wood, fiber and renewable materials in general, leading to increased membership and a more vital Society that provides needed information to a broader base of stakeholders. We have listened to the membership as well as to non-members with allied interests. We now seek broader discussion by members through the rest of the winter and spring.



SNAP IT

Using your smartphone, snap this tag to find out more about the new FPS Vision and Mission.

FREE app at get.neoreader.com



AND NOW FUTURE.

IT is premature to speculate on our future and whether a new name will be appropriate for the Society. That said, we have run a couple of surveys to help identify terminology that resonates with key publics. In particular we targeted college-aged students because that demographic represents the future of any organization, and it is a demographic that FPS is positioning itself to attract.

Here are a few results from two informal surveys recently run. The first survey, an electronic survey (Goodell, M. 2010) canvassing approximately 500 students with 56 respondents in Connecticut, can be found at:

type in your browser >>> www.forestprod.org/students

(Make sure to browse the different worksheet tabs.) We think you will find it interesting to compare how the survey respondents felt about various terms that are often used to describe our field.

Some highlights

The terms “Forest Products” and “Wood Science” both rank very low on a scale of 1-5, with only a 2.8 average score for the former, and 2.1 for the later. Most terms incorporating the term “Forest” ranked low with student-aged respondents, even though the word itself does not have a negative connotation. Other surveys have shown similar results.

“Sustainable” is a very positive term, but “Renewable” ranks even higher, depending on what terms it is combined with.

Adding the term “Energy” or “Bioenergy” is sort of like adding sugar. Everything is better when it is added.

The second survey was conducted by Oregon State University as part of an analysis that led to transforming their undergraduate degree program to a Bachelor of Science in Renewable Materials:

type in your browser >>> www.forestprod.org/renew

OSU conducted four focus group sessions with high school seniors and college freshmen and found that they were most attracted to a major titled “Renewable Materials.” The focus group participants had strongly negative views of forestry and forest products as a career path.

Should FPS be using terminology that better fits the revised Mission and Vision, and has better public acceptance? For example, if the public predominately associates the field of “forest products” with being a lumberjack, then perhaps it is time to rebrand our field using terminology that resonates with the public and that better aligns with the diverse science, engineering, technology and business fields that we are about.

We offer this as food for thought as the FPS Executive Board continues to digest the input from the listening sessions and member comments. **We need to hear the views of a broad group of current and potential members.** Please feel free to call either of us, or send an email, or contact any member of the FPS Executive Board or our Executive Vice President in the next several months. Your input is critical as we look forward to an exciting new chapter in the life of FPS.

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