



Project Impacts

NSRC-FUNDED RESEARCH FINAL REPORT

Strengthening Logging Businesses in the Northern Forest - Innovation and Best Business Practices

PROJECT AWARD YEAR AND TITLE:
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Strengthening Logging Businesses in the Northern Forest - Assessment of Best Business Practices and Innovation Activities

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The forest products supply chain in the Northern Forest states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York includes many independent logging contractors. These loggers provide production services to a diverse group of landowners and mills by supplying raw material to multiple wood-using facilities. Loggers face an uncertain future with significant challenges aggravated by the most recent economic downturn. Yet, a select group of logging contractors maintains a competitive advantage. These innovative and resilient contractors are successful in the face of rising performance standards associated with Best Management Practices and various certification programs. They serve as valuable role models for the industry.

NSRC researchers interviewed 18 logging contractors (5 in Maine, 5 in New Hampshire, 2 in Vermont, and 6 in New York) to determine how they have maintained a competitive advantage during these difficult economic times. The Top Ten list of successful contractor traits includes: commitment to continuous improvement, maintaining equipment to avoid lost productivity, having pride in their work and confidence in their abilities, understanding key financial indicators, understanding the importance of diversification, hiring and rewarding good workers, developing long-lasting business relationships, managing stress and responsibilities, engaging in the industry and community, and valuing family.

Researchers also calibrated and improved a harvest planning model (PATH: Planning & Analysis in Timber Harvesting) with particular emphasis on hourly machine costs, harvest system balance and productivity indicators, and analysis of process improvement data. Finally, they delivered a series of workshops called SWAT (Strengthening What's Already There) to disseminate best business practices and innovation approaches to other logging contractors in the region.



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