Papers on Social Aspects of Forestry

The following papers will be presented at the 2002 meetings of the Rural Sociological Society in Chicago, 14-18 August 2002, and represent the collaborative efforts of faculty in Rural Sociology (College of Agriculture) and the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences at Auburn University. The work to be reported upon at these meetings is being supported by grants from the USDA-NRICGP and the USDA-Forest Service.

Characterization of underserved forest landowners in rural Alabama
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The plight of the underserved has long been of interest to the field of rural sociology. Recent history with African-American farmers demonstrates that withholding government support can lead to economic distress and land loss among this population. The question addressed here is whether the same concerns are applicable to African-American forest landowners. This paper will present preliminary findings from a study on underserved forest landowners conducted in rural Alabama. This study characterizes both African-American and women forest landowners in their land management practices and their accessibility to knowledge dealing with their land. The data will consist of information received from semi-structured personal interviews with landowners and key county stakeholders.

Migrant Workers and Forest Industries in AL: Social Networks and Economic Restructuring
Josh McDaniel and Vanessa Casanova
Auburn University

This study examines the participation of migrant workers in the forest industries in Alabama. Alabama is a relatively new destination for migrant workers, compared to other States, such as North Carolina and Georgia, which experienced tremendous growth in migrant populations during the 1990s (Engstrom 2001; Griffith 1995). The forest products industries also represent a relatively new labor market for migrants in the southern United States. The relative recent arrival of large numbers of migrants in the State, and recent participation of immigrants in the job market allows for the testing of hypotheses on the dynamics of social networks among migrant workers, linkages between migration and economic restructuring, and perceptions of and reactions to migrants in the host communities. We address three key questions: 1) what types of social capital are needed to move into new areas and industries, such as forestry in the rural Southeast? 2) How are these networks incorporated into the structure and management of the local economy? 3) What are the perceptions of migrants and their associated U.S. occupations, by associated groups in the industry and the local communities (employers, contractors, forest industry workers, and non-forest industry workers)?
Social Implications of Biotechnology in the Forestry Sector

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Peter R. Sinclair
Memorial University of Newfoundlan

Social scientists have devoted considerable attention to the social implications of biotechnology in agriculture. In contrast, little or no discussion has been directed at the social implications of biotechnology as it relates to the forest products sector. The paper includes a brief review of developments in the agricultural sector related to biotechnology. The following section will examine parallel developments in the forestry sector, focusing on motive factors behind such innovations (e.g., herbicide tolerance, improve growth and fiber quality) and the implications such innovations are likely to have on industry structure and forest dependent communities.

Quality of Life and Occupational Community of Mill Workers in Alabama's Pulp and Paper Industry

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Quality of life for Alabama residents has been shaped and reshaped by various industries entering and leaving the area. Over the past 50 years, the pulp and paper industry has become a dominant economic actor in rural Alabama, directly affecting the quality of life for many rural residents. Detailed semi-structured interviews with mill workers were used to explore their quality of life and sense of occupational community.

An Analysis of Alabama's Pulp and Paper Industry and the Policies that Govern their Water Usage

Shanna Thomas
Auburn University

The purpose of this study is to examine how the pulp and paper industry affects surface water usage in Alabama. The paper consists of a set of three case studies associated with controversies over water related issues that affect the pulp and paper and other water resource users. The first case study will examine dioxin standards in mill effluent. The second case study will examine industry's opposition to regulation from the EPA in the form of EPA's "cluster rules" which were designed to reduce chlorine use in pulp bleaching. The third case study will deal with the controversy over the proposal to declare the Alabama sturgeon endangered. These case studies are designed to illustrate the political ecology of water resource management, and specifically to examine interactions between a major industry and state and federal regulatory agencies as well as environmental organizations.
Non-Industrial Land Use Options in the Black Belt Counties of West Alabama

Dee Clifton, Mark Dubois, Conner Bailey
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The Black Belt counties of the American South have been and continue to be among the poorest counties in the nation. This region is rich in resources, most notably timber. The forest products industry in the Black Belt counties of West Alabama is based on large-scale mechanized harvesting of relatively large parcels of forest land. Owners of smaller parcels and workers without access to capital have become marginalized within an industry that is oriented towards serving regional, national, and global markets. In this paper we explore the viability of alternative paths for locality-based development. Specifically, we explore the options available to small-plot land owners (under 50 acres), and small scale woods workers in the Black Belt counties of West Alabama. Based on participatory observation and detailed semi-structured interviews, we examine a variety of land use options and the viability of small-scale activities (portable mills, non-wood products harvesting and processing) that provide both economic niches and utilize local resources to meet local needs.

Community Awareness Campaigns for Timber and Non-Timber Resources in Rural Romanian Villages

Laura Robinson, Kent Reid, Mark Dubois, Conner Bailey, and John Dunkelberger
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The government of Romania has initiated a restitution process of transferring state-controlled forestlands to private ownership. There is concern on the part of the State, however, on how forested land will be managed under new private ownership. This concern is based on potential widespread removal of timber and its economic, social and environmental impacts. Before forest operations can be initiated on private forests, the property is required to be under a forest management plan developed by the State. Because of strict regulations on forest management, emphasis has been placed on non-timber resources such as berries, nuts, mushrooms, etc. Thus, the main goal of this project is to create awareness campaigns to educate the villages about extractive and non-extractive timber resources. These awareness campaigns will educate local communities about environmentally sound forest practices. This paper will focus on effective ways of communicating these ideas to various stakeholders in rural communities and identify key elements associated with the successful adoption of practices in their forest management plans. Participant observation will be used to gather data for this study.