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West Virginia Logger Travel Distance and Wood Supply Zone Opportunities

Authors: Ben D. Spong & Shawn T. Grushecky

West Virginia University, USA, Ben.Spong@mail.wvu.edu

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West Virginia is one of the most forested states in the United States, with timber harvesting in every region and forest products industry facilities well distributed throughout. In 2013, the West Virginia State Division of Forestry implemented a new online system that tracks all timber harvesting jobs around the state. Using the spatial and tabular data in this system and GIS analysis tools, the actual distances from a logger's place of business address to the harvesting location as well as the distance from the harvest site to the purchasing mill can be determined. These data are then compared with a scenario where travel and haul distances are minimized. This scenario would assign a logger to the closest harvest area and the timber would be sent to mills that are the shortest distance away.

The results of this project will provide the first ever statewide snapshot of the existing travel and haul distances. This will then be followed by a more optimized allocation of harvest locations and mill destinations. The difference between the existing and the potential scenarios will provide the forest industry with initial metrics to better understand the magnitude of potential cost and time savings associated with improved travel and haul distances. Currently, one year of harvesting data has been collected, however all new operations continue to be tracked in the West Virginia Division of Forestry's system, providing the opportunity to re-run these analysis for future years or other time scales and identify improvements or other trends.