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Opportunities for Foresters are Plentiful Survey shows employment opportunity over the next 10 years

St. Paul – Minnesota students interested in a career in forestry will find great opportunity in that field over the next ten years. That's according to a survey conducted by the state's paper and wood products manufacturers.

The survey results were announced today by Wayne Brandt, executive vice president of Minnesota Forest Industries (MFI), a trade organization that represents the state's paper and wood manufacturers. Brandt made the announcement at the Minnesota Environmental Initiative's policy forum Transforming the University of Minnesota: What does it mean for Minnesota's environment? The University has the state's largest forestry program.

The survey, conducted by MFI, shows 400 foresters will be needed in Minnesota and Wisconsin to fill positions through 2016. Most of these positions will become open through retirements, but some agencies also project increasing their staffing over the next 10 years.

"This presents a great opportunity for students who are looking for rewarding careers," Brandt said. "Professionals who are skilled in taking care of the forest are crucial to ensuring Minnesota's forests remain healthy and its forests products industry remains a major contributor to the state's economy."

"It also shows the critical need for the University of Minnesota to strengthen forestry programs at the new College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Sciences," Brandt said. "Employers need skilled foresters and the U of M has a proud tradition of leadership in providing them."

Currently, the University graduates 12 foresters per year.

Foresters work for both government and private industry. They manage and protect the forests, direct harvests, and supervise the planting and growing of new trees.

A knowledge of and expertise in silvicultural activities is the most important skill for prospective hires, according to survey respondents. Timber sale design/harvesting systems, GIS/information systems, and inventory were other skills cited by companies and agencies expecting to hire foresters.

"Foresters are important for the effectiveness of not only forest products companies, but also of the Department of Natural Resources, the Forest Service and other agencies," Brandt said.

MFI surveyed 69 companies and agencies that hire foresters and asked them to project their needs over the next ten years based on factors such as organizational structure and planned retirements.

Participants at today's forum included University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks, as well as a panel of diverse stakeholders. They discussed the changes taking place at the University and the implications of the new College of Food,

Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) and the Institute on the Environment for the public and private sectors.

Minnesota Forest Industries is a trade association representing private forest products companies. Members include: Ainsworth Engineered (USA), LLC; Boise Cascade; Hedstrom Lumber Company; iLevel by Weyerhaeuser; Louisiana Pacific; Norbord Minnesota; Potlatch Corporation; Sappi Fine Paper; Stora Enso; UPM Blandin Paper Mill; Verso Paper, Sartell Mill.

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