SUMMARY OF THE WORKSHOP AND THE ROLE OF THE
HARVESTING AND TRAINING CENTER IN THE 1980'S

by

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This SOFEW workshop has resulted in an unusual blend
of people and I commend Tom Hart and SOFEW, not only for
the timeliness of the subject, but also the program that
has been held here.

The 123 registrants represent academia, industry,
equipment suppliers, and the financial community. We have
heard from biologists, harvesting specialists, equipment
designers, and resource and financial analysts. We haven't
resolved the issues surrounding thinning, but we have a better
understanding of the conditions we can expect in the 80's
and we have focused on the challenges ahead in a highly
interactive way. I believe the interactions developed here
will serve all of us well in dealing with the 500,000 acres
plus of plantations that will be eligible for treatment in
each year of the present decade.

Perhaps the only point of view not represented was that
of other sectors of society that impact on the forest land
base and its capability. Virtually every analysis of future
demands from southern forests project major increases in
the goods and services expected from this shrinking land
base. How will these pressures, some of which will be
incompatible with maximum fiber production, affect the
treatment of plantations. We cannot afford the luxury of
considering the thinning decision in a vacuum.

Few subjects in southern forestry have received more attention than that of thinning. In the 50's and 60's much of the southern forest seemed destined for maximum fiber production under short rotations. But when the value differential between pulp and solid-wood markets continued to be strong, we began to see a revival of interest in the way in which growth was distributed on stems. Mr. Heist has clearly defined the complexity of the contemporary situation. The concept of merchandising each stem for its highest value and the unsettling implications of energy constraints add new dimensions to the old debate about the nature and frequency of thinning.

Over the past two days we have heard excellent statements on the future of the resource, the critical parameters in stand dynamics, log utilization, and the state-of-the-art in harvesting systems. We were told that the forests of the 80's will likely be harvested with the equipment that is now in the woods. Innovation in design during the decade will be minimal, at least at the operating level.
At the risk of omitting some important points, I would offer the following statements as a summary of the discussions:

1. Larger trees will continue to have greater unit values and provide more flexibility in the marketing and allocation process.

2. The current impetus for thinning is the increase in value associated with solid wood use of the final harvest.

3. Potential energy values offer an opportunity to maximize site utilization throughout stand life.

4. Wood costs will continue to increase, probably at a more rapid rate than in the recent past.

5. Thinning decisions in the 80's will be constrained by past planting decisions and current harvesting equipment.

6. The capital/labor ratio for harvesting is receiving new attention because of energy concerns.

7. The diversity of landowner and organizational goals suggests the need for a continuing diversity of approaches to thinning.

8. We are making substantial progress in integrating biological, harvesting, and economic factors into a systems approach to maximize stand values.

9. There is both an economic and a biological rationale for maintaining flexibility in stands and in hardware to deal with the uncertainty of the future.

Much useful information has been presented here over the past two days, information that can be useful to a very diverse audience across the southern United States. How do we transfer the outcome of deliberations such as this to the forestry and equipment community in the region?
That question serves to illustrate the role of the Forestry and Harvesting Training Center in the 80's. The Center is a consortium of four southern forestry schools, (Clemson, Mississippi State, Louisiana State, and Texas A&M) and nineteen forest product firms working together to improve the human resource component of the forest products industry.

The Center was initiated in 1973 and has been characterized by rapid growth and impact in its mission. The three major objectives of the Center are:

1. Continuing education in harvesting and forest operations.

2. Stimulation of interest in forest operations by forestry schools across the South.

3. Research and technical assistance.

The Center currently conducts approximately 18 workshops per year, usually here at Gulf Park or on the Clemson University campus. The attendees include employees of the member companies and other firms, with job assignments ranging from field supervisors to vice-presidents. State and federal agencies are frequently represented, as are universities, equipment suppliers and designers. Academic credit is provided for university students who participate in courses taught at the Center each summer.

The program emphasis for the Center is based on the provisions for quick responses to changing conditions in harvesting and forest operations. State-of-the-art training is provided in subjects ranging from the maintenance of equipment to the financial management of woodland operations.
The faculty is drawn from institutions across the country, from forest industry, from government, from industry suppliers, and from trade and technical associations. Instructors can participate without feeling threatened by the typical academic environment; indeed, both instructors and students appreciate the comfortable environment.

The Center serves as a forum for forestry and harvesting concerns. It is unique in the breadth of inputs available. It serves as a focal point for defining problems and for the transfer of relevant, practical information. It also serves as a catalyst to draw the attention of allied interests such as the universities and equipment suppliers to the problems of the industry.

The Center has been a significant factor in improving the human resource in the southern forest products industry. The 80's will see new challenges to the effective utilization of labor, capital, land, and technology. The Center will continue to be responsive to these challenges and the resolution of those challenges through the manpower development process.

The historical emphasis on continuing education will be continued and expanded to include new subject areas and courses will be offered at locations across the region. The future is also likely to see a broader array of services, including equipment evaluation activities, and technical and consultative assistance to member companies. The Center will seek new
opportunities to influence educational programs in forest operations across the region, possibly including the videotaping of Center programs for use in classrooms. Opportunities for graduate students to be associated with the Center can enhance the development of badly needed expertise for research on problems specific to harvesting and engineering.

The short history of the Center is marked with accomplishment. It is now entering a second phase of its development, nurtured by its member companies and schools, with the potential to make an even greater contribution to the technical and managerial base upon which the southern forest products industry expects to prosper in the 1980's.