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DULUTH--A gradual rise in the export of forest products from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan ports via the St. Lawrence Seaway and an apparent high-quality labor potential in Northeastern Minnesota highlight two research reports released today by the Lake States Forest Experiment Station at the University of Minnesota, Duluth(UMD).

Seven research studies eventually will be completed aimed at stimulating new and expanded forest product activity in the five counties of Northeastern Minnesota, according to Dr. Dean Quinney, project leader of the UMD-based wood products marketing research center.

This preliminary study of Seaway trade by Eugene M. Carpenter of the marketing research staff showed that imports of wood products to Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan rose from 27.3 thousand short tons in 1957 to 75.6 in 1959, then dropped to 33.9 tons in 1961.

Exports rose from a low of 200 short tons in 1957 to a high of 13.6 thousand tons in 1960, then dropped to two thousand tons in 1961.

"We feel that while the import-export picture for wood products via the Seaway still is irregular, the opportunity for a marked expansion in this trade should not be overlooked," Quinney said.

As part of a labor resource study, a survey of job applicants in October, 1962 from Pine, Carlton, St. Louis, Lake and Cook counties showed that 4,764 persons were registered with the Minnesota State Employment offices. One-half of them lived in the Duluth area and more than 85 % in St. Louis county.

The report jointly authored by James E. Blyth of the marketing research staff and Glenn D. Gronseth of the Minnesota Department of Employment Security, Duluth, showed that more than two-fifths of the jobless were under 35 years of age. Five per cent were in the professional, technical and managerial categories; 18 % were skilled workers; 17 % were in the clerical and sales fields; and the remaining 60 % were in the service, semi-skilled and unskilled categories.

"We found that more than 40 % have high school diplomas or college training," Dr. Quinney added. "This means that there not only is an ample labor supply in this area but that it also appears to be a high quality source of employable talent. We need to study further the effect on production costs of prevailing labor rates and the efficiency of labor in logging and the wood products industry in Northeastern Minnesota as compared with other competitive wood manufacturing areas of the nation. If we are to plan ways to improve our efficiency and boost our output we must know where we stand in terms of costs of production in respect to the south and west."

Already underway is a third research project on the present and future availability of timber supplies in northern Minnesota. This study is being made in cooperation with the Iron Range Resources Rehabilitation Commission and the Superior National Forest.

Other research projects will provide information on availability of water resources in the area for use by wood-using plants; the effect of local institutions---taxes, zoning ordinances, water pollution laws---on proposals for new or expanded plants; area transportation facilities; and an appraisal of the potential demand for and probable competitive position of wood and wood-derived products which could be manufactured in the area.

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A final, seventh report will summarize all the data in order to appraise the types, sizes and locations for possible new or expanded wood-using industries in the five county area.

"Our big hope is that by gathering and presenting all this information we can better evaluate the prospects for small wood-using firms and also convince major firms considering sites for expanding present plants or building new ones to take a long look at Minnesota's potential," Quinney declared.

Future research will include additional studies in northern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan as well as follow-up research on Minnesota marketing problems. All the work will be carried out from the UMD office.

While most of the activity at the UMD center will be devoted to research, Dr. Quinney noted that he and his two assistants are always available to aid any person or firm interested in the marketing of forest products.

Recent inquiries have included the feasibility of manufacturing wooden step ladders, or producing poultry litter from wood chips, and of producing treated fence posts from aspen. The UMD marketing research office opened in June and is operated by the Lake States Forest Experiment Station whose headquarters are located on the University's St. Paul campus. Both stations are part of the regional research organization of the U.S. Forest Service.