

PROFILE: MASSACHUSETTS WOODLANDS COOPERATIVE

Eighteen landowners in Western Massachusetts began meeting informally in 1999 to discuss the possibility of forming a forest cooperative. By the fall of 2001, the cooperative had been incorporated as the Massachusetts Woodlands Cooperative, LLC.

The mission of the Cooperative is *to maintain the environment and character of Western Massachusetts through the protection, enhancement, and careful economic development of one of the region's most plentiful resources, the forest.*

The Cooperative has expanded to 48 members who collectively manage 8,000 acres. Eligibility for membership includes landowners with a minimum of 10 acres, who either have or are willing to develop a forest management plan that meets Forest Stewardship Council certification standards.

The Cooperative maintains a database with detailed information on forest material that is available for harvesting from members. The database also tracks forest materials as they are transformed into value-added products and organizes information needed for the Cooperative to

function as a business (cost of goods purchased, inventory, sales, marketing, etc.). The database is linked with the Cooperative's website.

Through collaboration with a local non-profit interested in improving the region's forests through removal of low-grade material and increasing landowner cooperation, the Cooperative members have an opportunity to use a firewood processor and provide feedback about their experience. The processor handles between one and one-and-a-half cords per hour.

The principal marketing activities of the Cooperative include:

- The marketing of individual members' green-certified firewood on the Cooperative's website, www.masswoodlands.coop;
- The marketing of branded lumber products (HomeGrown Wood) on the Cooperative's website including: rough-sawn and kiln dried lumber; and,
- Connection with local forest-based businesses owned by Cooperative members.