

Mississippi Development Authority  
P.O. Box 849  
Jackson, MS 39205

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Sherry R. Vance, director of communications, 601.359.3041  
Cell: 955.3041

**Date:** December 18, 2002

**MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY ANNOUNCES  
RESULTS OF FOREST PRODUCTS CLUSTER STUDY**

JACKSON, Miss., - The Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) announced today the results of a study of the forest products cluster in Mississippi. Earlier this year, MDA secured a team lead by the College of Forest Resources, Mississippi State University and Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., Carrboro, North Carolina to conduct the analysis and to examine the labor needs and skills for Mississippi's forest products and furniture cluster.

Mississippi State University and Regional Technologies staff presented the results of the study that analyzed the micro economic environment and labor needs of the forestry cluster for a group comprised of the state's forest products and furniture industry leaders, and university and government personnel in Tully Auditorium of Thompson Hall on the Mississippi State University campus in Starkville, Mississippi.

"As Mississippi strives to create new opportunities, it is important to understand how industry clusters can and will impact the state's economy," said Robert J. Rohrlack, Jr., executive director, Mississippi Development Authority. "Armed with the results of this study, the state of Mississippi can more effectively strengthen our efforts to create a business-friendly and competitive environment that appeals to the forest product and furniture industry."

The study was conducted over the period of May – November 2002. Some 200 firms representing the diversity of the state's forest products and furniture industry responded to the survey. Additionally, a number of key industry leaders, trade associations, educational institution, and governmental officials participated in focus group sessions, or supplied insight into the industry's structure through personal interviews.