PhD/MS Assistantship – Economic Tradeoffs of Prescribed Fire

Contact: Mike Saunders, Associate Professor of Hardwood Silviculture (msaunder@purdue.edu; 765-430-1440)

Purdue University’s Department of Forestry and Natural Resources in West Lafayette, Indiana, is seeking applicants for a Ph.D. or M.S. assistantship in silviculture or fire ecology starting either in January or August 2019. This project, funded by the Joint Fire Sciences Program, is being conducted in cooperation with the Northern Research Station, of the U.S. Forest Service. The project’s goals are to quantify the economic effects of prescribed fire on residual timber values in the Central Hardwood Forest region, when fire is applied at the end of rotation in order to regenerate oak species.

Specifically, the successful candidate will conduct a lumber recovery study on over 100 logs collected from sites across four national forests in the region. Data from this study will be merged with forest inventory data from 150+ stands to estimate economic costs of prescribed fire in terms of timber damage, as well as the economic benefits of producing advanced oak regeneration naturally (i.e., avoiding planting). Results from these analyses will be incorporated into existing forest growth and yield models or incorporated into a web-based application. Additionally, the candidate will help maintain a long-term timber damage study that was installed 2-5 years ago across 20+ sites in southern Indiana.

Department assistantships are awarded at $23,420 (PhD) or $20,410 (MS) per year and include a subsidized insurance plan. The position will be based at Purdue University’s West Lafayette campus, while fieldwork will be at mills and at various field locations throughout southern Indiana. The individual will occasionally be expected to assist others on the project to collect field data in adverse environmental conditions typical of southern Indiana.

Qualifications:
1. M.S. or B.S. in Forestry, Fire Ecology or closely-related field 2. Minimum GPA of 3.2 3. GRE scores above the 50th percentile on verbal and quantitative sections and above 4.0 on the writing section 4. Research field work experience 5. Familiarity or proficiency with forest growth and yield models, such as FVS 6. Familiarity with timber and log grading 7. Strong oral and written communication skills 8. Possess or quickly obtain a valid driver’s license and have a good driving record 9. Demonstrated technical and scientific writing (i.e., management plans, reports or manuscripts)

Interested individuals should contact Dr. Mike Saunders before submitting a formal application to Purdue’s Graduate School (http://www.purdue.edu/gradschool/). Application deadline is September 15, 2018 for a January 2019 start or January 15, 2019 for an August 2019 start.

Purdue University is an equal opportunity/equal access/affirmative action employer, fully committed to achieving a diverse workforce.