

Tree: Invasive western juniper becomes new wood product

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nization that helped coordinate the tests.

As the tree invaded sagebrush areas, it depleted groundwater and changed the hydrology of watersheds, drying up springs and altering plant communities.

Despite the potential of an increasing supply, the lack of design standards meant that wood milled from the tree had limited commercial use.

“Western juniper has been the black sheep of the wood products industry,” Kruse said. “Our goal is to get it on people’s radar. This could be a great cottage industry for rural Oregon.”



Students prepare to saw a western juniper 4x4 at the Oregon State University Forest Products Lab.

Courtesy OSU

Recent efforts to spur a western juniper wood products industry stem from the creation of the Western Juniper Alliance in 2013. Members of the alliance, including Kruse, found that the wood

had not gone through the same rigorous testing procedures as softwoods such as Douglas fir, hemlock, ponderosa pine and western red cedar.

Starting in 2015, Byrne Miyamoto, an Oregon State master’s student, began testing western juniper wood under the direction of Arijit Sinha, professor of renewable materials in the College of Forestry.

“The biggest challenge was going through the wood to find pieces that had straight grain, no knots or defects and no visible bark,” said Miyamoto, who grew up in Ventu-

ra, California.

“Western juniper tends to have a twisted, gnarly grain. So in an 8-foot post, you might only find 1 foot of wood that met the testing specifications,” Miyamoto said.

It’s unlikely that consumers will find 2x4s made of western juniper at their local lumber yard, but since the wood is colorful and rot resistant, it has potential for siding, decking, garden boxes and other outdoor applications.

Western juniper bends more easily under pressure than other softwoods, but also is stronger under compression than most, a quality likely related to the cellular properties of the growing tree.

That makes the wood particularly useful for a structural component known as a sill plate, which typically supports the weight of a building and is in contact with the foundation.

Support for the testing was provided by Sustainable Northwest, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, ODOT and Business Oregon.

Highway 26 crash kills 2

Two Portland-area drivers were killed on Highway 26 Sunday morning when one of them lost control and struck the other head-on, the Oregon State Police reported.

The crash occurred about 9 a.m. 13 miles east of the Highway 101 junction, an area with two lanes in each direction.

Jesus M. Ramirez-Cortes, 19, of Milwaukie was headed west in a 2006 Audi when it crossed into the eastbound lanes and struck an oncoming 2009 Jeep Cherokee driven by Sylvia L. Kearns, 63, of Vancouver, Wash.

Both drivers were alone in their vehicles and each was wearing their seatbelt.

Ramirez-Cortes was pronounced dead at the scene. A press release from OSP does not say whether Kearns died at the scene or died shortly thereafter.

The highway was closed for an hour and then restricted for three hours afterward during the OSP investigation.

PUBLIC NOTICE WORK SESSION

The Warrenton City Commission will hold a work session at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 17, 2018. The purpose of the work session is to review the Capital Improvement Program. The meeting location is Warrenton City Hall, Commission Chambers, 225 S. Main, Warrenton, Oregon. Work Sessions are open to the public.

The meeting location is accessible to the disabled. An interpreter for the hearing impaired may be requested under the terms of ORS 192.630 by contacting Dawne Shaw, Deputy City Recorder, at 503-861-2233 at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting so appropriate assistance can be provided.


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