



RESERVE WASTE STOCKPILE—Waste wood fuel users need to maintain reserve stockpiles as a hedge against supply disruptions. While most reserves are stored in covered buildings—such as above—bins and silos, open air storage is not rare.

Industrial Wood Fuel Alabama's Growing Energy Resource

by Phillip C. Badger and C. David Stephenson

Forestry's contributions to the economy of Alabama, and indeed to the rest of the nation and world, are well known. Less appreciated but rapidly achieving recognition is the use of two industry "leftovers," sawdust and tree bark, as fuel to heat the boilers that provide an energy source to operate production-line equipment.

The forest products industry produces large amounts of what used to be called "waste," but actually is a high-quality wood fuel. In fact, in 1987 over six million tons of the fuel were used in Alabama, ranking it second in the nation utilizing this growing energy resource.

Today, more than 120 manufacturing facilities in Alabama use such "waste" wood fuels. The largest, Scott Paper in Mobile, burns over 3,000 tons a day to produce "process heat." Like many other

forest industries, Scott turned to burning the wood as a disposal option and because it's an environmentally clean fuel.

Russell Corp., the United States' largest manufacturer of sportswear, in 1976 became the first major domestic nonwood products industry to use wood. Russell installed two 60,000-pound-per-hour wood-fired steam boilers at their 6,000-employee textile mill in Alexander City.

Low Cost, Clean

As with many other nonforest product industry users since, the company was attracted to wood fuel because of its low cost, clean emissions and local availability. In fact, Russell first began to look at alternative fuels as a result of the oil crises of the 1970s. The sportswear manufacturer found wood fuels could provide

energy security in terms of price and supply because wood was renewable, locally grown and could be obtained from a number of sources.

In 1988 Russell doubled its wood fuel use from 200 to 400 tons per day. The company sees the use of wood fuels a fixture in its future. In fact, it has established ECON, a subsidiary company to broker wood fuel supplies for other wood fuel users.

The State of Alabama, building on the many successful prison projects of Georgia, has installed a wood-fired boiler

Phillip Badger and David Stephenson, TVA employees, manage the Southeastern Regional Biomass Energy Program in Muscle Shoals for the U.S. Department of Energy.
