

Editor's Note: For a small sample of Norway Spruce, please contact Kim Drew.



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**NELMA ANNOUNCES ADDITION OF NEW SPECIES TO SPF'S GROUPING
Norway Spruce Inclusion Represents Industry Firsts**

(Cumberland, ME) – Effective immediately, Norway Spruce will join NELMA's SPF's (spruce-pine-fir south) grade grouping, marking a lumber industry first: Norway Spruce is the first new, major, U.S.-grown, softwood species to be fully tested for strength values since the initial process for assigning design values by way of lumber testing of wood samples began in the 1920s. The inclusion of Norway Spruce was approved by the American Lumber Standards Committee (ALSC) on October 20, 2016. Complete information on Norway Spruce may be found at www.nelma.org/norwayspruce.

“This is a momentous occasion for the building industry,” said Jeff Easterling, president of NELMA. “The addition of a new species hasn't happened in almost a century, and it's been a very exciting year as we've worked to shepherd it through testing and bring it into the mainstream.” Easterling estimates upward of 1,000 man hours of staff time has been spent on this important effort.

Testing

Norway Spruce strength value testing was completed in partnership with the University of Maine's Advanced Structures & Composites Center, and lasted from October 21, 2015, to February 2, 2016. A total of 1,320 full-size pieces of 2x4s, 2x6s and 2x8s were tested in the process. The testing results were submitted to the ALSC beginning in early 2016 for review. The Norway Spruce samples were destructively-tested and lumber strength data calculated for the entire spectrum of design values:

Modulus of Elasticity (MOE), Fiber Stress in Bending, Tension Parallel to Grain, Horizontal Shear, and Compression Parallel and Perpendicular to Grain.

The Look

In the forest, Norway Spruce is easily recognizable by its large, drooping “branchlets.” Fun fact: the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree has been a Norway Spruce the vast majority of times over the last several decades, including the 2015 tree, a 78-footer from Gardiner, New York.

Once cut into logs, Norway Spruce is virtually indistinguishable from native eastern spruce species, with even the most experienced of graders not able to discern one species from the other. Grade-wise, approximately 65% of Norway Spruce is expected to be graded at #2 and above, making it a strong, promising addition to the SPFs category. The primary market focus for the lumber will be on home construction applications such as wall studs, floor and ceiling joists, and industrial applications.

History

In the 1930s, FDR’s Civilian Conservation Corps was tasked with planting Norway Spruce across the northeast on abandoned agricultural properties for the purpose of soil stabilization. More than 113 million seedlings were provided by state nurseries for this government project. Looking back even earlier, a Harvard University study on Norway Spruce, authored in 1936, recorded evidence of the first Norway Spruce plantings at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, in 1860 by immigrants who brought stock from Europe.

Fast-forward to 2014, when NELMA members began to ask in earnest about the procedures necessary to gain acceptance of the species for use as a resource to manufacture construction lumber. Recognizing a need, the association began the process of identifying locations where the Norway Spruce was growing, cutting test logs from a broad geographic area, then testing the lumber to determine its appropriate strength values for proper end-use applications.

Who’s Affected and How

While the vast majority (upwards of 50%) of Norway Spruce is located throughout New York state, the species can also be found in Maine, down into New England, and as far west as Wisconsin.

Introducing Norway Spruce into the SPF's category will benefit everyone along the chain, from landowners to loggers (additional markets for their trees and logs), lumber mills (an added log resource), to retailers and builders (increased inventory of a locally grown, strong building product).

Economic Impact

The economic impact of Norway Spruce will be felt throughout all levels of the forestry industry. The state of New York will benefit from the 900 million board feet of Norway Spruce waiting to be harvested around the state, while NELMA dimension mills in New England anticipate impacts as strong as the potential need for a second shift with the added resource, as markets dictate.

The Future

“As strange as it may sound, our goal for Norway Spruce is for it to simply disappear as a singular species name,” concluded Easterling. “Once it’s in a dimension mill, it’s simply part of the SPF's group. Introducing a new species is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but our goal is for it to blend seamlessly with the other wood in its category, benefitting our industry all the way down the line.”

Founded in 1933, [NELMA](http://www.nelma.org) (Northeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association) is the not-for-profit rules writing agency for Eastern White Pine lumber and the steward of the lumber industry in the Northeast. NELMA is also the grading authority for Eastern Spruce, Balsam Fir, the Spruce-Pine-Fir (SPF's) grouping, and other commercially important eastern softwood lumber species. For more information, please visit www.easternwhitepine.org and www.nelma.org. Find NELMA on Facebook at NELMA (Northeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association) and on twitter @inelma.

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