

JULY **2021** ISSUE
VA Loggers Association
NEWS & UPDATES



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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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JULY 28 Buffalo Soldiers Day
SEPT 6 Labor Day

AUG 5-8 VLA Annual Conference
AUG 6 Morning Legal Training
OCT 7-9 ALC Annual Meeting
NOV 5 Legal and Safety Training

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DRINK PLENTY OF
FLUIDS AND STAY
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July						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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August						
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19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

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2021

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Frank Myers

I had the opportunity to review Ron Jenkins' article for this edition of our newsletter, and he was right on target. We

have so many people to thank for helping us get the Virginia Loggers Association to where it is today. He mentioned only a few of the people that have gone the extra mile in support of our Association, as there have been many. Moving forward, we are going to start recognizing some of these key people in our newsletter. The edition after our annual meeting every year will feature someone who supported the VLA, so those of you who were not involved early on, will know some of VLA'S early history. I believe history is a great teacher, and we should take advantage of it at every opportunity.

This is our last newsletter before our annual meeting in August. I encourage each of you to plan on attending our meeting at the Hotel Roanoke. Ron has done a great job putting this meeting together, with most of the planning having to be done with uncertain COVID-19 restrictions. We have tried to have an agenda this year that has something for everyone to use in their business, while at the same time, concentrating on markets which we all know we so desperately need. When you get a chance, review the agenda, and come join us in Roanoke.

In closing, I would like to thank all of you, especially the Board of Directors', for allowing me to be your representative on the Board of Forestry. This group is an advisory Board for the State Forester of Virginia, and I have had the opportunity to be a part of this Board at the discretion of Virginia's last three Governors. I have also had the chance to work with Virginia's last three State Foresters. This board during my tenure has helped the Department of Forestry receive badly needed funding for equipment, more funding for RT and Virginia's landowners, and start a hardwood initiative, that while still in its infancy stage, will hopefully one day have the success of the RT program. I will miss working with a great group of people, who have a passion for the forest industry, but I am sure the next representative from the VLA will do a great job protecting your interests. Thanks again for allowing me to be your representative and I will see you in Roanoke.



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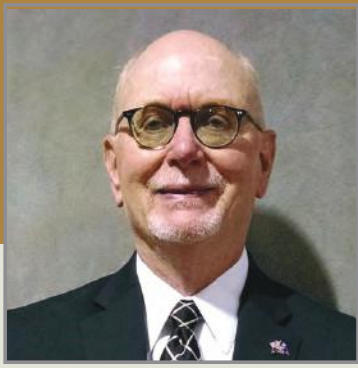
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Ron Jenkins

Whose Foundation Do You Stand Upon?

Virginia Loggers Association is a trade association (501C 6) created to meet the business needs of logging, mill operators, and the forest products industry. The industry ranked as Virginia's third largest economic contributor when the Weldon Cooper Center conducted an economic study of Virginia's agriculture & forestry sectors in 2017. How did we get here and who helped us along our journey?

This issue explores who helped VLA to grow and become a VOICE for the logging sector, forest products markets, and for professionalism! First, we want to recognize the founders who started their new venture with an idea that organizing was good for everyone.

Daily business challenges keep most business owners close to their office and crews. There just isn't enough time for much more than taking care of business and putting out the proverbial "fires" that always occur. No one individual has the time to run a business as demanding as forest products and keep up on the many regulatory and legislative changes.

A handful of families engaged in logging agreed to create the VLA. Jim Mooney was among the group and helped guide the process. Members still on the board that helped with VLA's creation include Judd & Carmen Smith, Ronnie Wright, Binky Tapscott,

Starting an association is not easy and any of the founders can tell you better than me. Stories about families taking money out of their pockets to pay the executive director echo in my mind. As I think about that fact, it makes me more appreciative of the many blessings I get to enjoy today in VLA.

These families had true grit and determination to stay focused on their goal. They never lost sight of their goal and kept working through the toughest times during the startup with a strong faith of succeeding. During the evolution of VLA, another partner stepped in and offered a helping hand to VLA. Forestry Mutual Insurance suggested a partnership in which they would pay membership dues of those who took out a workers compensation policy with them. This gave VLA a "shot" in the arm and helped raise VLA to a new level. This partnership is still strong today and serves as a win-win for both organizations. VLA members now total 195 through Forestry Mutual Insurance, and celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2021!

During the process of organizing, growing, and maturing VLA found another partner and advocate in the public sector. Virginia State Forester Jim Garner realized the importance of the business owners who harvested and hauled raw forest materials (whole trees, logs, chips) from the lands of privately owned forests to the processing mills that turned the raw materials into finished and interim products. Jim became a friend, ally, and supporter of the VLA and helped it navigate the legislative and regulatory waters that would challenge our Virginia loggers. Jim continues to advocate for VLA and provides helpful advice.

VLA is also thankful to another 145 business owners who have voluntarily made VLA membership a priority. They faithfully continue to renew, and new ones begin to help create a diverse and very strong trade association. You are so important to our continued success and offer additional benefits.

We are also thankful for our membership and association with the American Loggers Council and the Virginia Agribusiness Council. Through these fine organizations, VLA members are supported by talented people on the federal and state levels. Through them, VLA is grateful for the extra "political muscle" on issues near and dear to members.

Last but not least, VLA had the great privilege of having Setliff Law become its General Counsel. With the great legal partner, VLA can be a better association, while members can also receive legal counsel to help with business issues.

Each person and organization recognized so far have helped VLA to move to a new level and they came at the perfect time. Amazingly as VLA grew and others joined us a clearer picture started to take shape. Some of the organizational goals have been achieved. But VLA is still growing, changing, and evolving.

We are grateful for those who have helped us reach our goals and look forward to new ones!





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LUMBER GOLD



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The hottest discussion these days is skyrocketing lumber and wood composite prices. Prices that have home builders and weekend DIY-ers reconsidering. Prices that have standard home building costs 3 times higher than the finished appraisal value of the home. Prices that have lumber gold social media memes beating out the latest political blunders or Bernie Sanders' inauguration day mitten meme blitz. All riches are to the chagrin of forest landowners and logging contractors who continue being paid at the same rates they have been in the last 10 + years. Today's peeling the layers off this onion to understand SOME of what is going on in today's US softwood markets.

It must be price gouging, you often hear. It must be continued suppression of raw material and logging rates to fatten the pockets of the sawmill owners. It must be! It must! I say unfortunately in the complex world of forest management, marketing, and the trade of forest products it is never as simple as pointing the blame to one cause. Today's scenarios are even more complex than usual for the traditional consumer driven supply and demand cycle of the forest products market. Somewhat of a perfect storm across the world.

Where shall we begin? Let us start back in the 1970's and 1980's when forest

quicker reforestation after harvest, shorter rotations yielding quicker financial returns, greater volumes per acre, and bold claims that there will always be a demand for softwood construction materials. Pine plantations in the US South could give relief to the environmentalist ridden, wildfire prone, and insect attacked softwoods of the US Pacific West. Continued reasoning for the initiative to convert crop lands over to subsidized pine plantations was the decreasing trend in tobacco use. Declining tobacco farms needed a new cash crop to invest on their acreage.

In an October 10, 2018, article written by Ryan December for The Wall Street Journal; Ryan gives his interpretation regarding the status of the southern pine markets. The article titled Thousands of Southerners Planted Trees for Retirement. It Didn't work. Ryan travels through the US pine south talking with landowners, loggers, and saw millers about their experiences in the pine forest management business. Ryan subtitled his article with this statement: "Too many pines and not enough sawmills spell years of depressed prices for plantations." That 2018 WSJ article seems to be ringing true in 2021.

However, to truly understand the real state of timber supply in the US, we need to look internationally, as well.

Let's discuss our neighbours to the north. The US - Canada softwood lumber disputes have been going on since 1982. Canada is a major exporter of softwood products around the world. So much so, that the US imports of Canadian wood reached their peak in 2015 at 69% of the Canadian export volumes. This relationship has caused significant losses to businesses in the US pine regions. Why is this possible since the US has their own pine forest inventories? Truth is we do not have enough manufacturing capacity and standing volumes to solely support the US building demands. Import trade agreements must be made from Canada, Asia, and other forest regions around the world to supplement the US consumer demand.



management programs targeted landowners in the US South with government subsidized campaigns to convert hardwood and crop lands into pine plantations. These forest marketing initiatives pushed the benefits of

In the US, 50% of all forestlands are privately owned and this 50% private ownership contributes to nearly 95% of all US timber harvest productions. In Canada, this is not the case. In Canada, 90% of all Canadian timber harvest productions come from government owned lands. This results in the Canadian government setting their own product sales rates, government subsidizing of the lumber industry, and ultimately delivering their product to market well under traditional private business competition rates. This forest ownership model allowed Canada to gain export volume advantages across the globe for their softwood products. The US markets could not compete with value suppressed products from Canada being “dumped” into the US market. Canada was able to supply the US market with cheaper but quality SPF (Spruce, Pine, Fir) goods. US consumers valued the cheaper materials causing the combination to deplete US pine manufacturing in the south.

Over the years, several disputes were brought to Canada through the US Department of Commerce on behalf of the US softwood lumber industry. These petitions hoped to restrict Canada’s import volumes to the US and address what was seen as unfair government subsidized market goods. US negotiations and trade manoeuvres to place import tariffs and anti-dumping duties on Canada’s softwood imports to the US resulted in continued disputes between the 2 countries. Lawsuits on behalf of both countries were brought before the World Trade Organization with minimal advantage gained to the US industry. In 2006, a mutual Softwood Lumber Agreement (SLA) was put in place narrowing the Canadian advantage to the US and worked to provide stability to both country’s industries. SLA expired in 2015, as both countries continue to negotiate softwood trade agreements between each other. The Trump administrations USMCA agreement, replacing NAFTA, failed to truly address the lumber trade relationship between the member countries.

Currently, there are several factors that are causing a decline in Canada's timber industry. From various reports it seems that their forests have been affected by years of intense harvesting causing necessary reductions in yearly harvest plans for growth to balance. This means significantly less of their cheaper volume to the world market, less export revenue for the country, and less job opportunities within their industry. In addition, they have been devastated by wildfire and insect attacks. Wikipedia states 2017 was a record-breaking wildfire year for British Columbia burning over 1,216,053 hectares (3,004,930 acres) of productive forests. The Wikipedia listing also states that 2018 broke that record with 1,351,314 hectares (3,339,170 acres) burned in British Columbia. Five out of the 10 worst wildfire years

for British Columbia have occurred since 2010. As a result, Canada’s supply of cheaper softwood products to the world has taken significant hits.

Are you saying it is because Canada must reduce their export volumes of cheaper goods to the market? Partly, but remember this is complex so let’s continue.

I hate to continue talking about Canada, but sorry we aren’t finished just yet. During the years of the Softwood Dispute several things were occurring. To “level the playing field,” the US started to enact tariffs and duty fees to Canadian softwood imports. These “penalty” fees began affecting Canadian business profits and ultimately stimulated executives to consider investing in business operations within the US. Investors found a depleted US softwood manufacturing sector limping because of Canadian oversupply, manufacturing businesses barely holding on and willing to sell at any reasonable or even unreasonable offer, and operations that did not have the capital to update their equipment. Canadian companies such as Canfor, West Fraser Timber, Interfor, Conifex Timber, and others began purchasing idle and limping operations in the US pine south. Investing millions of dollars in the region to close smaller operations and expand strategic locations into higher production, highly efficient manufacturing facilities. The burst of investment interest did boost the limping US softwood timber industry but resulted in a negative effect to traditional competition-driven raw material purchase rates.

In a February 24, 2021, print article in the Wall Street Journal written by Ryan Dezember titled “Lumber



Prices Are Soaring. Why are Tree Growers Miserable?” he explains the viewpoint on this very issue.

“Meanwhile, it’s a buyer’s market for log down South, said Don Kayne Canfor’s chief executive. We try to be fair, he said.” In the article Ryan also writes: “Whatever Interfor pays, that’s what everybody else pays,” said Billy Humphries, who advises on timber sales around Macon, GA., and grows trees himself in Twiggs County. “They moved to the South in pretty tough times. They could

be pretty ruthless.”

Okay, are you saying it is because foreign investors have reduced the number of softwood manufacturing operations in the US South, investing in higher efficient facilities ultimately reducing competition for standing raw volumes? Partly, but remember this is complex so let's continue.

In preparation for this article, I asked several questions around the industry. An old college buddy brought additional light to the lumber gold saga. Jonathan Spink, Timber Marketing Manager for the Greater Georgia Resource Unit of Rayonier, Inc. brought up some very important circumstances. Mr. Spink writes, “The demand for lumber has outpaced supply of lumber. However, the demand for logs...has not outgained the supply.” Jon continues to explain to me, “Today, the wood basket of many of the mills in the south are full of CNS (Chip n Saw) and Sawtimber...the inventory has continued to grow since the housing crash in 2008. In 2008-09, housing starts plummeted and, with it, lumber and stumpage prices dropped as well. As a result, many NIPF landowners (who own the majority of private forestland) and in some cases industry, withheld harvesting grade sales.”

I started this article off by laying the foundation for the pine plantation conversion initiatives and then followed that up with the US-Canada softwood lumber dispute. I did that to illustrate planting initiatives significantly increased pine forest volumes in the US South. Soon thereafter, import dumping cut the throats of US pine harvest production causing standing volumes to continue growing under reduced US raw material supply demands. As Jon brings up, the 2008-2009 housing bubble burst set softwood productions back on their knees after some increases due to the SLA in 2006. Once again, landowners are at a negotiating disadvantage due to oversupply of mature standing raw volumes across the region. These production setbacks are not the only situation causing the current oversupply of standing volumes to the market.

Urban sprawl is affecting land management and natural resources in much of the US. Population growth and expansion of residential neighbourhoods outside of what is understood as overpopulated urban centers continues to convert natural lands over to residential and commercially developed areas. The US South has many larger urban centers and the abundance of gentle topography is causing urban sprawl to go unrestricted.

In a US Forest Service publication dated August 2010 titled, “Area Changes in U.S. Forests and Other Major

Land Uses, 1982 to 2002, With Projections to 2062” the authors layout out historical US regional land use changes and then project those trends in future years. On page 41 of the publication and illustrated in Table 11 (pictured within this article) the publication tabulates out land use changes. What is concerning is the prediction of Urban acreage changes over time to that of Crop/Pasture/Forest acreages over that same time.

In this discussion of raw material oversupply the loss of forested acreage is a contributor to suppressed landowner rates. From the USFS south region prediction between 2012 – 2022 a loss of 1.6 million acres of forest land or 160,000 acres each year. Their prediction for the 2022 – 2032 period is even greater at

Table 11—Historical areas, 1982 to 2002, and projections to 2062 for land uses on nonfederal land in the South region

Year	Land uses					Range	Total area
	Crop	Pasture	Forest	Urban	CRP ^a		
Million acres							
1982	106.6	64.9	179.9	19.7	0	116.3	487.4 ^b
1987	99.8	64.7	180.8	22.7	3.7	114.7	486.5 ^b
1992	90.9	65.0	180.8	26.3	8.9	113.3	485.1 ^b
1997	86.7	62.8	181.1	31.6	8.6	113.4	484.2 ^b
2002	83.6	61.0	181.4	36.2	7.9	113.2	483.4
2012	83.3	53.8	180.8	42.7	7.4	115.5	483.4
2022	82.3	49.0	179.2	48.8	7.1	117.0	483.4
2032	80.9	45.7	177.0	54.7	6.9	118.1	483.4
2042	79.4	43.5	174.3	60.5	6.7	119.1	483.4
2052	77.7	41.9	171.4	66.0	6.6	119.8	483.4
2062	76.1	40.8	168.4	71.4	6.4	120.4	483.4

Note: Data may not add to totals because of rounding.

^a CRP = Conservation Reserve Program.

^b Totals are not constant owing to omission of “other” category from historical data.

2.2 million acres or 220,000 acres each year. We could discuss these losses in many environmental affects but let us discuss that acreage as; these trees are in our way of developing this land. We need to get rid of them now. Developing land costs money and trees often cost more to remove from those lands due to stumping and debris clean up. Many developers will negotiate low to even no cost agreements to have the trees harvested and removed from the site. Ultimately putting 10 – 20 + million tons of raw materials to market each year at low rates. Manufacturing companies in their strategic locations know and utilize this supply of cheaper raw materials to their business advantage.

Okay, now I see. Oversupply of mature raw volumes, a significant supply of cheaper raw volumes, and the centralization of highly efficient manufacturing facilities are contributing to landowner negotiation disadvantages and raw material rate suppression. But why are lumber prices skyrocketing if there is an oversupply of raw materials?

Initially we discussed that the US consumer valued the cheaper softwood construction materials imported from Canada for so many years. Canada's resulting factors have caused less volume of their cheaper goods to hit

the world market ultimately flipping the supply obligation to higher cost goods of the US and other world providers. This affects cost of goods not only by the increased manufacturing expenses, but also reduction in supply not able to satisfy demand. These factors contribute to raising the price of finished goods, but not solely to the level we are seeing today.

April 30, 2021, Hardwood Market Report states New Home Starts for the month of March at +37.0% over March 2020. This stat is important but combined with the March 12, 2021, Hardwood Market Report cover page illustration showing Estimated Annual Rates of Sawmill Production for Eastern US Hardwoods. Yes, our focus has been softwood productions in the US south, but this Eastern US Hardwoods graphic, in the 2020 year, can be duplicated across all US regions. During COVID lockdowns lumber production slowed causing demands to



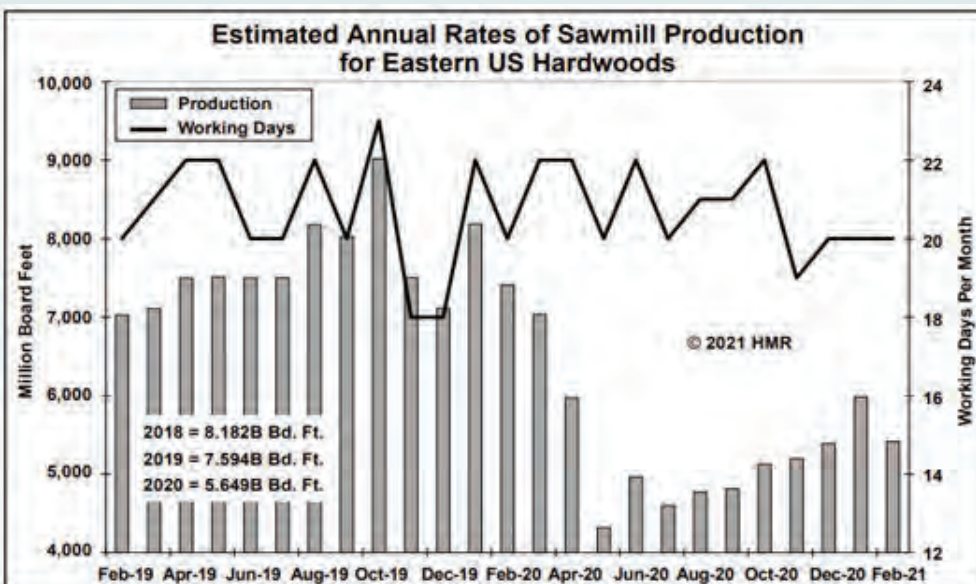
liquidate lumber storages. Liquidated lumber storages and hampered productions were and are faced with jumps in home remodel and new home construction. COVID Lockdown circumstances and out-migration from cities have triggered rural real-estate sales records. This panic home construction and purchasing of properties over appraisal value is very concerning. Record demands came during times of limited lumber supplies causing

consumers to willingly pay irrational product prices.

Worker shortages have also contributed to a bottleneck in the supply chain during COVID pandemic. The trucking industry is begging for drivers just as every other employment sector these days! Mr. Spink also explained the trucking shortages to me this way, **“Log truck drivers are either finding more attractive opportunities elsewhere and/or facing increased costs (like insurance). They are either leaving the business--quitting or retiring--or requiring higher pay to offset increased costs.”** “Mills realize, too, that they can't just throw money at their suppliers and expect the wood to show up. If the loggers/suppliers cannot truck the wood to the mill, the extra money is wasted.”

OKAY, OKAY so I understand now! Canada is not able to supply \$2.963 2x4 studs to the US consumer anymore because of their own forest management concerns. The US has a lot of mature timber that needs harvested. We have a new business model in US pine south that has reduced competition for standing forest volumes. We have a system dependent on trucking. We have a highly technical system that is very sensitive to variations in raw materials. AND in 2020 we had millions of office workers now required to work from home and considering remodelling their home to meet their needs. This then caused record lumber supply store sales and liquidated US lumber storages. We have a climate in our urban areas that is pushing migrations of urban populations to the suburbs. States incentivizing this migration by marketing their broadband speeds and tax incentives to move and work from a distance. The migration is coming from a cost-of-living area that is 3 – 5 times higher than the rural area they are moving to. Personal budgets are familiar with these high living costs such that they are willing to purchase at a per square foot rate 3 times higher than regional appraisal averages, but still yet under what they are used to. **Yes, this is a “perfect storm” scenario.**

Lumber prices will drop once a balance is reached between supply **and demand**. They will drop when the urban migration subsides. They will drop when the unemployed population **returns** to work. But they will not drop down to prices we once saw. Canadian cheaper imports that ultimately **suppressed** the US pine manufacturing for so many years will return in the future, but not to the same rates as before. **Once this storm passes, the US landowner will see better negotiation advantage, the customer sectors will be satisfied, and proper forest management will be achieved in the US pine south.**





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VIRGINIA IS BLESSED

David Abbott, Managing Editor, Southern Loggin' Times

As I've traveled around the country in my career with Southern Loggin' Times over the last 16 years, I can honestly say that one my favorite destinations to visit has always been Virginia.

I've gotten some of my best logging stories from the Commonwealth. I generally make a trip that way at least once just about every year.

In May I had another opportunity, after having missed Virginia in 2020 following the cancellation of the Richmond Expo last year due to coronavirus. I think I have been to about all the Richmond shows since 2008, and it was great to be back at the Raceway, and to have a chance to see many of the loggers I've gotten to know in Virginia over the years. In fact it was nice just to be at a large event again after having socially distanced so much last year and the first half of this year.

As far as I know, this was the first large scale event of this kind in our industry since March of the year before, so this Expo wasn't just another Expo; it took on a special kind of significance, symbolic that we are coming out on the other side of this thing and getting back to normal. My feeling on site was that the show was, all things considered, a real success. Crowds weren't quite as big as normal but, given some ongoing travel restrictions from Canada and gas shortages in some areas, probably bigger than some might have expected. Moreover, both attendees and exhibitors with whom I spoke seemed upbeat and positive. I think everyone appreciated the chance to get out and make connections with colleagues and sales leads face-to-face again.


In the days leading up to the show, and on my way up to Virginia from Alabama, I also stopped to interview several sawmills and loggers for upcoming stories in Southern Loggin' Times and other Hatton-Brown publications. Among them was Donnie Reaves, who took me to lunch for some of the best barbecue I think I've tried. It was a real treat all around.

I was reminded on this trip of something that I have noticed for a long time about your state and its logging industry: you have a lot of great loggers who take on a very active role. There are great loggers and industry leaders in every Southern state, of course, but Virginia, it has long


seemed to me, has been especially blessed in this regard. To name just a few off the top of my head, in addition to the aforementioned Mr. Reaves: Binky and Guke Tapscott, Buck Morris, C.K. Greene, Vance Wright, Chad Shelton, and Frank Myers and his brother-in-law Stephen Wright. Most of these guys serve on the VLA Board, and I've interviewed all of them for one story or another over the years. Frank and Stephen's company, M.M. Wright, were the Timber Harvesting Logging Business of the Year in 2016, and I visited them for that article after Expo Richmond that year. I've done hundreds of logger profiles and, to be honest, I don't really remember all of them; some blur together after a while. But all of these guys I listed above have stood out in my memory as especially noteworthy.

With that many superstar loggers in your state, it's no wonder I've always enjoyed visiting it so much. Looking forward to next year's Expo and to many more good visits to come.

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Tom Garrett

Projects Director NCRE, Former State Senator

former Republican member of the Virginia State Senate and of the U.S. House of Representatives. Tom now works with NCRE, a renewable energy firm focusing on solar development in the Southeast. He connected with NCRE when he was researching solar development companies for a solar farm on his own family's land and was recommended NCRE as a trustworthy and competent firm. If you, your family, or your business has any questions, you're welcome to text, email, or call Tom at (540)223-2877 or at tom@ncre.solar.

1. Talking about renewable energy, is biomass a renewable energy source? How does it fit in the energy production paradigm? How does solar energy fit into "big picture" energy policy?

Not only is biomass renewable energy, its arguably the "original renewable energy". When looking to future energy policy, I tend to lean towards an "all of the above" strategy. Biomass was the single largest source of energy through the mid-19th century. As the industrial revolution swept the world, other combustible sources, first coal, and then oil and gas because primary energy sources. This points to an inescapable fact, change is inevitable.

As the 21st Century unfolds, we see movement towards energy sources that do not emit carbon. This clean energy came first as hydro power and is trending towards wind and solar. The goal is to meet our energy needs while minimizing harmful unintended consequences. These can range from pollution and carbon emissions to the loss of agricultural and silvicultural lands or impacts on birds and bats. In short, the solar industry does not oppose biomass, but believes biomass can exist in balance alongside emerging technologies such as solar where each brings certain benefits under various circumstances.

The question of the role played by solar energy comes down to cost-benefit analysis. If we have plentiful land, sufficient grid capacity, and areas with significant annual sunshine, we are nearing a point where the cost of solar production combined with the fact that it does not emit carbon or air pollution makes sense. As energy storage technology improves, it mitigates the undeniable fact that the sun isn't always out. This is making solar more viable in the big picture. In short, while solar isn't the immediate solution to all of our energy challenges, it is a growing part of that answer in years to come. In the interim, biomass

and fossil fuels inevitably continue to play a role.

2. Is there sufficient infrastructure to support solar energy, particularly transmission capacity?

The short answer is that there is sufficient line capacity to support all the solar energy production that is being approved. Essentially, there is a waiting list to bring solar projects online. A large project may be submitted to get into this queue twice annually to the controlling entity who monitors the capacity available on each transmission line. The next such window in Virginia is this September. They only approve projects where there is sufficient capacity. Once the line is full, there will be no more projects on that line unless capacity is increased. This means that a piece of property that may be a prime site for a solar project in 2021 may not be viable at all in 2022. It also creates urgency for anyone who wishes to benefit from the significant and predictable annual monetary returns that solar provides. Unlike traditional commodities like gold and silver which appreciate over time, land suitable for solar development today may be useless for solar tomorrow. In Virginia in particular, the actions of the General Assembly the last few years mean that it may well be getting close to a proverbial "now-or-never," point.

3. What are the lessons learned from the recent Texas mass power outage, and how do these apply to solar energy? In reviewing the lessons learned from the recent mass outages in Texas, I will also consider lessons from the cyberattack on the Colonial Pipeline. This is because interruptions in distribution take many forms. In the case of Texas, infrastructure simply wasn't hardened to survive weather conditions. Temperatures of -2F in the Dallas area were not considered sufficiently likely to winterize the wind and natural gas turbines that provided much of the power to Texas. The cost to do so was deemed too high in



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relation to the probability that such an event would occur. Additionally, regulatory reforms created a lack of central control of the grid. Further, many Texas homes are not insulated to deal with such temperature extremes and use electric heat as a primary heat source. These facts meant that as supply dropped, demand spiked. The Colonial Pipeline cyberattack showed what can happen when we depend too heavily on a single source for a commodity whether it be electricity or gasoline.

In these circumstances, redundancy is insurance. Solar power and commensurate battery storage capacity would have helped alleviate the problem, not exacerbated it. This is because redundancy hardens infrastructure and so in an “all-of-the-above” energy scenario, the loss from something like a wind turbine shutdown is offset by other available options. Additionally, solar does not have the moving parts that wind has and does not require the same hardening for temperature extremes. Finally, those of you who live in the Shenandoah Valley and Southwest Virginia may have noticed that your gas supply was not as impacted as those in other parts of Virginia. This is in large part due to a second pipeline that services that part of Virginia, which again indicates the importance of redundant and diverse options to supply commodities.

4. How can Virginia loggers recoup expensive investments made in biomass processing equipment such as chippers and related transportation equipment given current energy trends both federally and in Virginia?

If there is a question, I am unable to answer, this maybe



it. National logging advocacy groups as well as the VLA should continue to make their voices heard both in Washington and Richmond. It is consistent with the missions of land grant universities like Virginia Tech to research ways to ensure that biomass is a viable part of energy policy going forward, and as stated, redundancy and diversity in energy production is in our national interest. In the meantime, political trends make solar projects more appealing, but the time is closing when capacity will cease to exist. This political reality and lease templates that are often twenty-plus years help provide a predictable annual income in an unpredictable world. In other words, a risk taken to invest in one area like biomass might be offset by other diverse investments like land committed to solar. Like with the previous question, the key may be to avoid putting all of your eggs into a single

basket.

5. Why is solar an option you may wish to consider, and if you do, what should you look for in a solar firm?

If you're wondering whether solar is a good fit for you, the first and easiest thing to do is to reach out directly to me



via phone, text or email at (540)223-2877 or at tom@ncre.solar.

There are dozens of outfits currently working solar development in Virginia. “Bait-and-switch” schemes where developers promise landowners one price, and then once the capacity of a transmission line is full, return and tell the landowners that the price is no longer viable is so common that it's tragic. The axiom “if it looks too good to be true, it probably is” applies here like so many other places. The reason I personally am working with NCRE is because we never intentionally do that. We will offer prices that we anticipate, absent extraordinary circumstances, we will be able to deliver, and do so over an extended time frame. This makes NCRE different, and the time line and predictability make solar a very good option to diversify an income portfolio. Further, a predictable annual return on investment may fit well into a business with staggered returns stretched out over an extended time period.

There is no doubt that we will need a healthy logging industry for generations to come. We are not advocating that anyone abandon this important industry. That would be a calamity, making the US dependent of foreign production of one more vital resource. Instead, I am suggesting that where conditions are right, solar production and a healthy logging business may go hand-in-hand.

Furthermore, like you, we are strong believers in property rights. It is your land, and no government or business should tell you how to use it. In short, we don't need to do business with anyone who doesn't want to, but we want to do business with everyone who does. In 2021, solar is a seller's market, but the door is closing, and based on your questions, you all know this. With this in mind, if you are interested in exploring available solar opportunities, I look forward to hearing from you and creating a scenario where everyone wins.

Tom Garrett
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The Tree

Author Mackenzie Fleming

Leaves jump out of the way of my shuffling feet, sounding like the smattering of lazy and fairly disappointed applause. The chill from the breeze snakes it's way through my clothes that have become damp from the mist gently falling from the roiling clouds above. Callused fingers desperately grasp at the cloth of my jacket to tug it tighter against me and ward out the persistent wind. My hat was lost long ago to a well-placed tree branch and determined gale, aided by my having a spirit too weak with despair and impatience to go after it. Still, I continue further into the slowly stripping trees. Bright orange, yellow, red, and various hues of the colors are littered across the forest floor like some gaudy afghan.

"Cheerful colors," I murmur with a curled lip, "to whom? Red for blood, yellow for puss, orange..." I falter as I realize I can't think of anything rotten that's orange. "Orange...for prison uniforms!" I snarl victoriously and stumble on a root protruding from the dark earth. "Now nature even has it out for me. Of course." Grumbling and staring accusingly at the offender, I step around it only to run into a bushel of thorns.

"Ah!" My hands lift and unthinkingly wrap around the suffocating vines only to become pin cushions for the little thorns. Slipping and sliding on the damp leaves, hands raised and frantically pulling at the startlingly green briars, I no longer have any idea where I'm going. "Goodness! Why...is...this...happening...to me?" I shout and glance up to see a murder of crows taking flight from the bare tops of the trees. My balance is thrown off the moment my eyes trail up and I crash in a heap on the ground. Groaning, I sit up and turn towards the new territory.

Pale yellow grass stretches across a large clearing with only one tree in the very center. Its' gnarled limbs stretch out all around it's thick trunk like a lightning strike on a golf course. Speaking of lightning, the wood itself looks charred and black. Finally working my way free of the briars, I stand and stumble towards the strange tree. Clothes wet and ripped, small cuts stinging in the sharp wind, and spirits significantly low, I arrive at what looks like an old oak.

"Life has taken it's toll on you as well it seems." My voice is quiet and soft as my fingers graze the rough bark.

"Is that all you see?" A voice whispers and my eyes widen.

"Hello?" I ask, turning in a circle.

"I am here. I asked you a question." The voice responds, this time with a twinkle of humor within the tone. I blink.

"Uh...I'm sorry. Who...who are you?"

"I asked you a question first."

"Right." Flabbergasted, and almost sure I'm hallucinating, I think back.

"Is...what all I see?"

"The charred bark and bare branches." It responds and my eyes slowly return to the tall tree in front of me. "Is the damage all that you see?" Softly, it asks me again.

"Well, I...yes? Am I not supposed to?"

"Two questions at once. You certainly are lost, aren't you?" Laughter dances within the voice and slight indignation rises up in me. I won't be laughed at by a stranger.

"Who are you to say anything about me? Who are you?" More laughter drifts down from the sky.

"Calm yourself, young one, and listen. People don't usually see what things actually are. They see what they are, reflected back at them. When you look ahead of you, you see a deformed tree with scars and marks and burns and think only of the pain it must have gone through. I invite you to look closer." Pouting, I listen to all of this and gradually begin to walk around the large circumference of trunk. My eyes find etchings of past lovers and the remnants of a botched rope swing derailed by time and use. A gaping hole in the middle of the tree reveals a sliver of metal that most likely attracted the lightning to it.

"What is this?" I ask, knocking lightly on it with a fingernail.

"When I was young, my branches became too heavy for me to hold. Those who planted me thought to help by tying me to a metal pole until my trunk was strong enough."

I blink. "You...you're the tree? You're a talking tree?" Laughter again. "Perhaps."

It answers cryptically. Dismissing the sentience of trees for now, my thoughts return to the pole. "Why didn't you grow away from it? Or why did the people not remove it?"

"They knew not when I stopped needing it and so did I. I grew around it and it became a part of me."

"But isn't it what called the lightning to you?"

"Perhaps. Yet I would have kept it all the same. We do not always get to choose what or whom helps us, only the place they will have in our lives afterwards. I chose to hold on and that may have allowed me to grow so large, but it may have also brought the lightning upon me. I leave a chasm so others may see I am unashamed of it. People needn't be ashamed of a crutch, nor am I." Humming in thought, my feet continue carrying me around the trunk.

"And what of these silly hearts and initials carved into you? Didn't that hurt? Did their love even last?"

"Hurt is inevitable, young one. I am happy to have been hurt in the pursuit of displaying other's love. Love is worth all pain." The voice responds patiently and I scoff.

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"And if their love wasn't even true?"

"It doesn't matter. It was true then. Are all things set in stone? Change is the only thing that remains the same." My brows furrow further and further as the voice speaks and I come to a stop where I started. My eyes are dragged to the unsightly sight of the tattered rope swing.

"What about the swing? To be polluted for others enjoyment and not even cared for afterward?"

"I still hold the memories of the laughter from children on that swing. The smiles of their parents watching them play is etched in my mind. Happiness is not indestructible, but memories are." It answers. I huff, confused and still chilled with the wind at my back.

"And you're saying what I'm seeing reflects myself? That doesn't seem very kind." This time, laughter rumbles through the very earth under my feet.

"Is the solution truly so far from your reach, young one?" The voice asks amusedly and I immediately start to think. What I see reflects myself...so I must...

"Change my point of view?" I finish aloud but receive no answer. Brows furrowed, I walk to the tree and I allow my hand to trickle down the cold metal in the heart of the tree. We cannot erase the things that make us nor should we be ashamed of them. Next, a finger traces one of the hearts there. R.J. and N.H. The smallest of smiles tugs at the corner of my lips as I imagine a young couple curled underneath this towering oak, but in my mind it's covered in green leaves and the bark is brown instead of black. Love is a treasure, no matter how deep or how lasting, all love is sacred. Chuckling quietly to myself, I run at the swing and grab onto the rough rope, feeling it chafe and scrub at my hands. Happiness is sometimes temporary, but the joy of others brings memories that last forever. Suddenly, the rope breaks and I crash to the ground. Laughter bursts out of me and I hug my stomach as it shakes itself out of me. My eyes close as I let the bubbly feeling fill me, but snap open when I hear a strange sound.

Green bursts above me like fireworks off the quickly browning tree branches. I'm quick to hop to my feet and sprint a couple meters away so I can properly take in the sight. Leaves, green as a four-leaf clover, sprout out of the twisted branches like water spouts. The bark slowly fades back to when it was only a half a century old tree, looking fresh and no doubt feeling as sprightly as it looks. All

the etchings stand more starkly against the grey bark and the rope suddenly turns the color of old hay as if just bought. The final change is a ripple coming out from where the trunk meets the earth. Green echoes out into the tall pale grass, changing it back to a healthy green. I blink as the breeze battering me turns bracing instead of spiteful and relish the feeling on my face.

"See, young one?" The voice returns, glowing with pride and amusement. "Things are never as bad as they seem. Even better, things are nearly always better than you assume." I falter at the words and wring my hands while slowly returning to where I first stood.

"You have spoken of love, but...I'm still alone. So are you." My words are tentative, but still aren't answered with contempt.

"We are never alone. We have one another. Besides, do you truly not know of any who love you?" The voice asks and I get the distinct feeling it already knows.

"Do you know of any?" I ask, a smile already turning up my lips with the mere thought of them.

When the voice speaks again, I can hear the smile in its voice. "Your family loves you with all that they have." My eyes crinkle at the sides as I hear a laugh to my left. A young girl stands at the edge of the woods with hand upraised and a bright smile on her face. "But none more so than your granddaughter; who treasures you like honey on the tongue of a man who has eaten none but stale bread all his life. Treasure them, as I shall treasure you."

And I shall.

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THE DECLINE OF VA FOREST PRODUCTS EXPORTS



FOREST PRODUCTS AND MARKETS VIRGINIA WOOD PRODUCTS UPDATE

Henry Quesada

Associate Professor
and Extension
Specialist

Department of
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If you have any
questions about this
topic, please contact
Dr. Henry Quesada at
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Between May 2016 and April 2017, Virginia (VA) exported over \$406 million in Forest Products. For that period, hardwood lumber, wood pellets, and hardwood logs represented 46%, 28%, and 12% of total exports respectively. See Figure 1. From May 2020 to April 2021, VA exported \$211 million of Forest Products, a 48% decline from 5 years ago. For this period, hardwood lumber, hardwood logs, hardwood veneer, and southern yellow pine represents 58%, 15%, 7% and 5% of total exports. The most dramatic decrease in exports was for wood pellets which went from \$109 million to only \$1 million between 2016 to 2021.

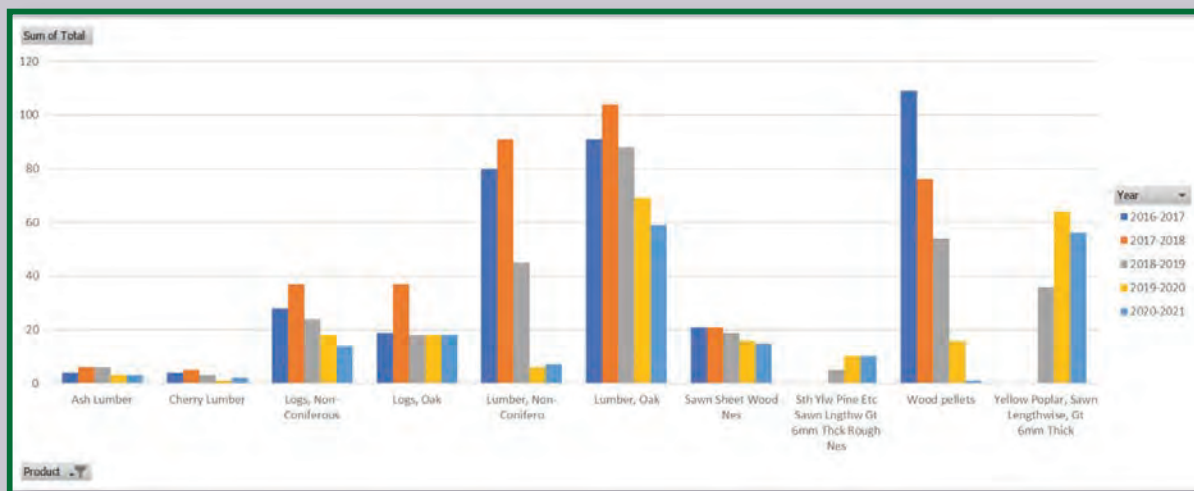


Figure 1. Figure 1. VA Forest products exports from 2016 to 2021. Source: USDA/FAS.

The highest amount of exports of forest products was achieved in 2017-2018, with \$434 million. After that year, VA forest products exports started declining. What are the reasons for this decline in exports of VA forest products?

This decline is not exactly a product of the COVID 19 pandemic. As the data shows, the decline started in the period 2018-2019 and continues until today. The largest markets for VA forest products from May 2020 to April 2021 were China, Vietnam, Canada, the United Kingdom and Italy with a 74% market share of total exports. For 2017-2018, the largest markets were China, United Kingdom, Vietnam, Canada, and Italy in that order with an 84% of the market share. As the data indicates, the destination of VA forest products has not really changed over the last 5 years. However, China's demand for VA forest products changed from \$190 million in 2016-2017 to \$65 million in 2019-2020. Many industry analysts believe that changes in export tariffs were the main reasons for this dramatic decline. As the pandemic hit the World after March 2020, production of forest products started to decline in the US and Chinese buyers also began to search for forest products supplies in other markets. It would be very difficult to recover this export market share because production of VA forest products is well behind demand.

An interesting case is wood pellets. Demand of VA wood pellets in the export market in 2017-2018 was \$75.6 million, with \$67 million going to the United Kingdom (UK). In 2019-2020 the amount of VA wood pellets exported was only \$16 million, a 472% drop in market share. The specific demand for VA wood pellets in the UK for 2019-2020 was \$10 million. The UK did not stop consumption of wood pellets, it just switched to a different supplier. This market's dynamic has severely impacted wood pellet production in VA and local suppliers of residues.



CHANGING OF THE GUARD



Daniel J. Dructor – Executive Vice President

If someone would have told me back in 1975 that my decision to major in Forestry would have lead me to walking the halls of Congress in Washington, DC and attempting to educate our lawmakers on not only the forest products industry but in particular from a logging business perspective, I think I would have changed my major! All I wanted to do was to figure out how to make a living spending time in the woods and fishing and hunting on the weekends!

Life is full of interesting twists and turns, and if we are open to change, there is never a dull moment in the paths or directions that we may travel.

It has been an absolute pleasure to not only be a logger during the course of my career, but to also represent the hard-working, honest, professional timber harvesting and timber hauling businesses throughout the United States over these past 20 years. The relationships and friendships that have formed across the country mean more to me than any credentials that I might have received from any University. From the bottom of my heart, I wish to thank all of the volunteers who have, over the past 27 years helped the American Loggers Council (ALC) to put a face on the timber harvesting industry not only in DC but across the nation. Your voices are being heard, and while oftentimes change is slow to develop, change is happening.

I would like to thank the members of the ALC for spending the time to work with professionals to recruit a successor to my position. Over the past 18 months, they have vetted out applications and candidates from across the country and made the decision to retain the services of Scott Dane, from Gilbert, Minnesota, to take the reins.

Scott has spent considerable time working with loggers and log haulers in Minnesota as the Executive Director for the Associated Logging Contractors and Truckers of Minnesota and has been a passionate spokesperson for the industry, including much work in Washington, DC. I use the word “passion” because that is what is needed to successfully represent this profession that we call logging.

There will be highs and lows in Scott’s future with the ALC, but with the continued support of the many volunteers who offer guidance, there is no doubt in my mind that Scott is the right choice to take the American Loggers Council to the next level. I ask that you please welcome Scott as the new Executive Director for the American Loggers Council and support him, as you have me for the past twenty years.

It is time for me to go fishing, and with that I wish all of you a safe, productive and happy future in this profession we call logging.

Tight lines! – Danny Dructor

The American Loggers Council is an 501(c)(6) not for profit trade association representing professional timber harvesters throughout the United States. For more information please contact the American Loggers Council at 409-625-0206, or americanlogger@aol.com, or visit our website at www.amloggers.com



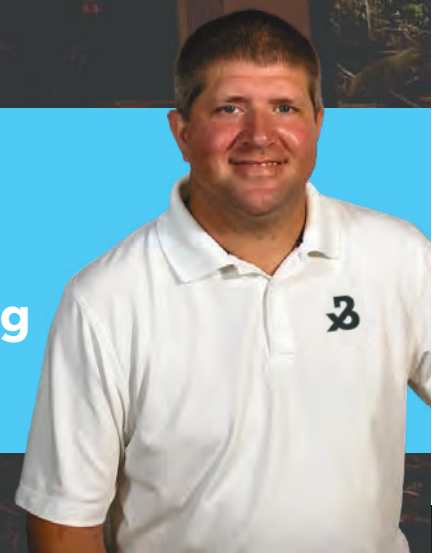
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ADJUSTING TO CHANGING MARKETS

A PROCESSOR EXAMPLE FROM GEORGIA



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HOW CHANGING MARKETS AFFECT LOGGERS

Changes in forest products markets usually affect logging businesses in one of three ways:

- 1) changes in the amount of timber demanded,
- 2) changes in the specifications of timber demanded, and/or
- 3) changes in customers for timber.

Recessions and mill closures often reduce the amount of timber demanded, whereas a growing economy, new mill openings, or expansions of existing mills increase the amount of timber demanded. Changes in market conditions may change the relative volumes of pulpwood, chip-n-saw, sawtimber, and biomass demanded. New markets or new customers may result in changes in the specifications of timber that loggers deliver to mills. For example, new sawmill owners or export markets may have different product specifications than have been typical in the South. I will discuss this scenario here.

RATIONALE FOR PROCESSORS

For the past 30+ years, most southern pine sawmills have purchased tree-length sawtimber (i.e., random lengths with minimum large- and small-end diameters). This approach worked well when integrated forest products companies owned pulp mills and sawmills. Unfortunately, tree-length sawtimber can reduce sawmill efficiency by creating bottlenecks and excessive residual materials because log lengths do not correspond with finished lumber lengths. Consequently, some sawmills have begun purchasing sawtimber in precise lengths that correspond to the lengths of finished lumber. Some export markets have very specific length requirements as well.

Conventional logging equipment (i.e., feller-bunchers, grapple skidders, pull-through delimiters, and slasher saws) is ideally suited to producing tree-length sawtimber. Problems arise when precise measurements of length and/or diameter are needed. Conventional systems rely on ocular estimates of diameters and lengths, perhaps with the aid of lengths painted on a slasher saw. While experienced operators are capable of very good estimates,

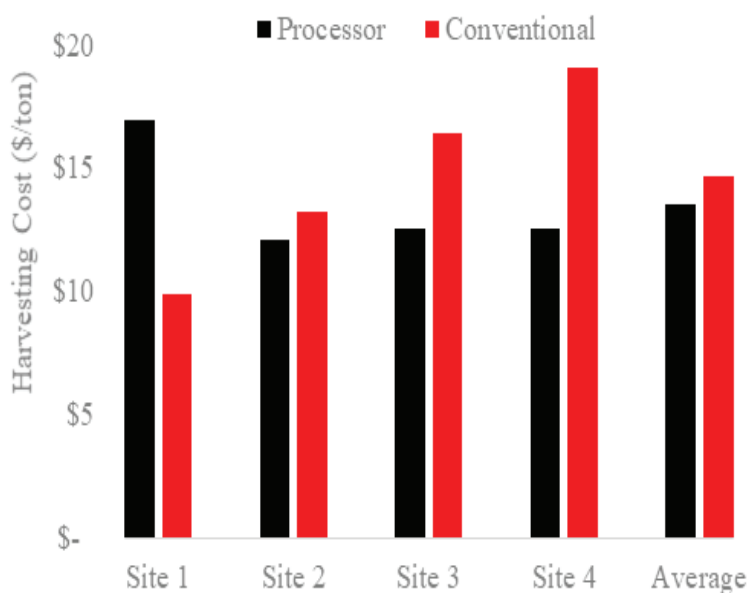
they are generally unable to obtain the precision demanded by some markets without slowing production substantially. Likewise, when sawlogs are bucked into lengths corresponding to the lengths of finished lumber, additional bucking cuts must be made, which reduces productivity. Consequently, several companies have incentivized logging businesses to adopt processors (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Processor operating in central Georgia. Processors are capable of quickly making bucking cuts with precise measurements of lengths and diameters. Unfortunately, a new processor can cost over \$500,000. Logging businesses must make informed decisions about whether this investment is worthwhile. Several years ago, I and several UGA colleagues conducted a study that measured the productivity and cost of processors operating in southern sawtimber stands.



The study was conducted on four sites in the Piedmont and Upper Coastal Plain of Georgia. The four stands were split, with half of each site harvested by a processor crew and the other half by a conventional crew. Both the processor crews and conventional crews used rubber-tired feller-bunchers, grapple skidders, and trailer-mounted loaders. The processor crews used a processor for delimbing and bucking, whereas these functions were performed by a loader, pull-through delimiter, and slasher saw on the conventional crews.

PRODUCTIVITY AND COST OF PROCESSORS

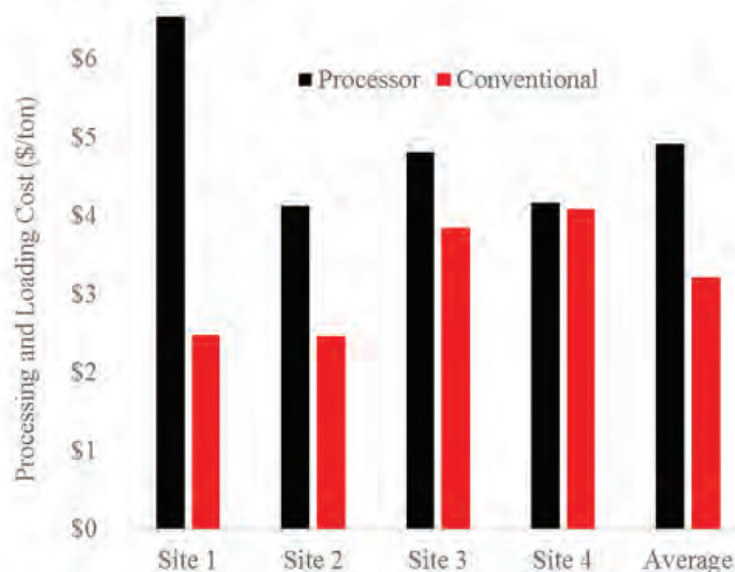


Harvesting costs (cut-and-load) were lower for the processor crews than the conventional crews on three of the four sites (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Harvesting costs per ton.

These findings suggest that loggers with processors can produce timber at a competitive cost. However, this does not imply that every logger should invest in a processor. The reason that conventional crews had higher logging costs than processor crews is that the processor crews did a better job with harvest planning.

Except for site 1, the processor crews used a reasonable number of landings, kept skidding distance reasonable, and balanced the productivity of felling, skidding, processing, and loading. Several conventional crews chose to use too few landings and consequently, the skidders could not keep up with the rest of the system, causing costly delays. This demonstrates that regardless of the equipment used, harvesting fundamentals still apply. Planning landing



locations and balancing the productivity of the felling, skidding, processing, and loading machines is critical to

minimize harvesting costs.

Processing and loading costs were higher on the processor crews on every site (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3: Processing and loading costs.

Productivity was not high enough to offset the ~\$500K cost of the processor. For a processor crew to be cost-competitive, it must achieve high production levels. In most cases, for processor crews to be cost-competitive, they should produce a minimum of 100 loads per week. The processor crews recovered more volume and value per acre and delivered timber with fewer defects than conventional crews. Processors demonstrated their ability to make precise measurements of length and diameter. For mills or export markets, having loggers use processors certainly makes sense. Likewise, for loggers delivering to mills that require precise lengths and/or diameters, processors can produce these dimensions while delivering high productivity. Producing precise diameters and lengths with conventional equipment is possible, but it can reduce productivity, especially if each log requires multiple precise bucking cuts.

KEY FINDINGS

- System balance and harvest planning are more important determinants of harvesting costs than whether a processor is used.
- Processor crews were capable of producing timber at a competitive cost, as long as they achieved high production levels.
- Processor crews recovered greater volume and value per acre than conventional crews.
- Processor crews delivered fewer logs with defects and received fewer load deductions than conventional crews.
- Processor crews' harvesting costs were more sensitive to quotas than conventional crews.

NEGOTIATING FOR A WIN-WIN

It is in some mills' best interest to have loggers use processors. However, investing in a processor represents a financial risk for loggers because of the up-front cost and the vulnerability to quotas. As economists say, risk requires compensation. For this to be a win-win, processor crews should receive higher quotas and/or higher logging rates than conventional crews.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Interfor Corporation for supporting this research. If you would like to learn more about study results, please consult the following resources.

Bell, J., J.L. Conrad IV, and J. Dahlen. 2019. Productivity and cost comparison of processor and conventional harvesting systems in the U.S. South. Forest Resources Association Technical Release 19-R-25. Rockville, MD. 2 p

Conrad, J.L., IV and J. Dahlen. 2019. Productivity and cost of processors in whole-tree harvesting systems in southern pine stands. Forest Science 65(6):767-775.

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LOGGER SAFETY TRAINING

FORESTRY MUTUAL INSURANCE
BRYAN WAGNER

Our jobs in the forest industry require us to work in all types of weather conditions, year-round. Today we will talk about heat and the summer logging woods. OSHA has an annual training requirement that is the Heat Stress Management Program. This program is intended to educate your employees on how to prevent heat related illnesses and to ultimately avoid the possibility of suffering a heat stroke. Heat stroke is a life-threatening illness with a very high death rate. If honest to goodness heat stroke is diagnosed, the chance of survival is slim. The goal of the training is to educate our people on the different stages of heat sickness to avoid the risk of a heat stroke.

- Heat Cramps are the first signs of the body getting over-heated. Heat cramps are muscle spasms that affect the legs, arms and sometimes the stomach. Heat cramps can be painful; they are caused by excessive sweating. Water and sports drinks that contain electrolytes are suggested to help the body. Fruits such as bananas and grapes help to replace lost potassium in the system. While heat cramps are not considered serious, we must take note of these early signs of a heat problem. Workers should drink 5 – 7 ounces of water every 20 minutes while exposed to excessive heat conditions.

- Heat Exhaustion occurs when the internal cooling system is over-worked. This serious phase occurs when the body sweats more liquid than is being replaced. Symptoms of heat exhaustion are fatigue; dizziness; clumsiness; headache; nausea; hyperventilation; clammy skin; loss of appetite; weak and rapid pulse and possibly low to normal blood pressure. Trained employees can recognize and help other employees that may be having a problem. If heat exhaustion is present, we must cool the core temperature down. Get the employee to a cool area, the air-conditioned cabs of logging equipment or service trucks can be of great help. The worker should lie down, with the feet slightly elevated. Applying cool water and fanning the victim will help get the core temperature lowered. Encourage the worker to drink water or sports drinks. If cooling measures are not working, medical help should be sought. Again, it is very important to get the core body temperature lowered!

- Heat Stroke --- Call 911!! Heat Stroke happens when the core temperature reaches deadly extremes, often 103 – 108 degrees. When these levels are met, the body starts shutting down! Sweating has usually stopped and your body temperature becomes too high; body temperatures can reach as high as 106 degrees in 15 minutes. Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition and you should seek immediate medical attention if you or someone you know is suffering from heat stroke. Second's count! Get the body cool, while waiting for the EMT's to arrive! Trained employees can save lives.



TIPS FOR HOT WEATHER LOGGIN

- Drink plenty of water before, during and after exposure to the heat. Dark yellow colored urine is a sign of not enough water being consumed.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks; they tend to make you thirstier.
- Keep in the shade as much as possible. The deck or landing areas are noted "hot-spots" on a logging job. Lunch or break areas are well suited inside the tree line, off the landing or deck site. (Be sure to check for OVERHEAD HAZARDS before choosing the cooler lunch area.)
- Wear light colored, loose fitting clothing.
- Doctors recommend at least 8 glasses of water on a normal day, twice that should be consumed during high heat periods.
- Work smart, the brain can save a lot of footsteps, less footsteps, less fatigue.
- If possible, do most of the manual felling during the early morning to avoid the heat of the day.
- If possible, toppers should be stationed in a shaded "safe zone" from the skidders.
- Limit the time your toppers are exposed to the direct sun. Make one trip out of the safe zone to top 3 or 4 drags, rather than running out to top single drags of wood.

- Timber cutters can cut their whole drag, before going down to top the timber. Limit your trips up and down the slope.
- Timber cutters and saw-hands can be outfitted with hydration bags or "camel packs" to have easy access to much needed water during the workday. Typically, this equipment holds 64 ounces of water, and is worn in the middle of the upper back, they are not bulky, and the weight is a non-issue. These bags are equipped with a "bite-tube" to allow access to water, even while sawing. I started wearing this system about three years ago and wish I had discovered this equipment sooner!
- Equipment operators should keep a "trained eye" on ground personnel for signs of heat stress.

Ultimately, we must work in the heat to feed our families and pay the bills. If we pay attention to keeping enough water in, and thinking through our work plans, fatigue and heat stress can be reduced. We must remember that fatigue breaks down the thought process. A sharp and alert mind will conquer risk by employing a proper technique or a correct decision. We can beat the summer heat by working smarter, not harder; keep an eye on each other!



NEWS AND UPDATES FROM VIRGINIA TECH FOREST OPERATIONS EXTENSION

Scott Barrett, PhD,
Extension Specialist,
Forest Operations

Coordinator for the VA
SHARP Logger Program

VA Tech Department of
Forest Resources &
Environmental
Conservation

SAFETY AWARENESS WITH NEW EMPLOYEES

It was great to see many of you at the Richmond EXPO in May. For the first time in a long while, we were able to offer in-person logger trainings. We offered two SHARP Logger Update classes at the EXPO. It was also a great opportunity to catch up with many loggers and others in the forest industry that we haven't seen in a while. I really enjoyed getting out and talking to everyone and finding out what was going on in their world. Some of the most common things I heard about was the struggle with finding good employees, and the struggles associated with trucking and finding truck drivers. It seems as though almost everyone has challenges with finding employees. It's not just logging, the struggles with finding labor has hit a number of industries across the nation. Regardless of the causes, it is a real issue that the logging industry and many others have to deal with.

If you are fortunate enough right now to find new employees to hire, it is important to remember to focus on safety training for those new employees. Studies in the past have shown that almost half of all logging injuries occurred to employees with less than a year on the job. Whether it is a completely new employee who has never worked in logging before, an employee coming in from another logging company, or maybe even an employee returning to work for you that hasn't been on the job for a while, it is important to make sure they are properly trained and that they are closely supervised as they are integrated into your operation in a new role. If you don't already have a training program for new employees, the Forest Resources Association has a sample program you can use for working with new employees during their first year on the job. You can find it along with many other safety resources at www.loggingsafety.com. Also, if you don't already use the Logging Safety Checklist Booklet for documenting your company training, you can also find it at the VA Cooperative Extension Website at [https://](https://resources.ext.vt.edu)

resources.ext.vt.edu. Working closely with new employees is important not just to ensure safety, but also to ensure they understand the requirements specific to your operation and hopefully they develop into valuable employees that will stay around for the long term.

Trucking also seems to be a constant challenge for many logging businesses and that is not likely to get better in the near future as there is a nationwide shortage of commercial drivers across almost all industries. Just like new employees working in the woods on a logging operation, new drivers can be a safety concern as well. Even experienced drivers who are not used to pulling log trailers or driving on woods roads to pick up loads can find that it is much different than other types of cargo. That's why TEAM SAFE Trucking worked to put together log truck driver safety refresher trainings as well as a new program focused on entry level driver training. Beginning in early 2022, new commercial drivers will be required to complete an entry level driver training program in addition to over the road training before they can get their commercial driver's license. Team safe trucking has developed an online training program specific to log trucking that would meet the new requirements. To complete the entry level training for new drivers, you must be associated with an educational sponsor, but several of the refresher modules for current drivers are openly available for anyone to use. You just have to set up a free account to access them. Go to www.TEAMsafetrucking.com to find out more.

I hope everyone's summer is off to a great start so far and I hope to see many of you in Roanoke at the annual meeting and look forward to talking with you in person!



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GLADE SPRING OFFICIALLY WELCOMES SPEYSIDE BOURBON STAVE MILL



(L-R) Randall Blevins, Chair, SWIFA, Delegate Israel O'Quinn, Virginia House of Delegates, Bettina Ring, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Dwayne Ball, Chair, Washington County VA Board of Supervisors, Chris Bailey, Mill Manager, Speyside Bourbon Stave Mill, Tony Gibson, Manager of Stave Mill Operations, Speyside Bourbon Cooperage, Inc., Jason Berry, County Administrator, County of Washington, VA

**Speyside Bourbon
Cooperage, Inc**



Most companies celebrate the opening of their new business with a ribbon cutting. But, when a worldwide pandemic hits two weeks after you start production, your ribbon cutting gets delayed-- a year or so. That is exactly what happened to the Speyside Bourbon Stave Mill in Glade Spring, VA where production began March 2, 2020. So, it was with great enthusiasm this past June 10th, that the

Speyside Bourbon Stave Mill Manager Chris Bailey surrounded by employees as well as state and local officials was finally able to cut that red ribbon in honor (not of their first day) but of their one year-plus anniversary.

Welcoming invited guests and employee's Chris Bailey, Mill Manager, said "It means a lot to us to have you all come out today and formally welcome us to the Highland Park here in Glade Spring. It has been more than two years since our ground breaking event but I happy to stand here before you today to say we are up and running."

"We are Speyside Bourbon Stave Mill, part of the Speyside Bourbon Cooperage family with headquarters in Jackson, OH., explained Bailey. "We are an international company with roots in both Scotland and France. Here in Virginia, we have two additional facilities. A sister stave mill in Millboro, VA and our cooperage just up the road in Atkins. This stave mill supplies the staves for Atkins" he noted.

"Out there you see the log yard filled with beautiful Virginia White Oak, which we use exclusively in the manufacture of our bourbon barrels", Bailey continued. "We produce staves and headers. A stave is a narrow piece of wood with a slightly beveled edge that is used to form the sides of a barrel. A header is the top and bottom of the barrel. It takes 33 staves to make a barrel. We produce on average 12,000 staves a day. We produce 700 barrels a day at the Cooperage", he explained. So, you see we will busy making staves for a very long time!

Chairman Dwayne Ball, Washington County Board of Supervisors in his remarks prior to the ribbon cutting said, "I know the work is hard, but you do a very neat craft here."

Delegate Israel O'Quinn (R) Bristol, prefaced his remarks by saying that it was a rarity for one company [Speyside] to bring projects that impact 2 counties simultaneously; noting that between Atkins and Glade Spring 160 new jobs have been created. "I am grateful Speyside had the foresight to locate here." O'Quinn concluded.

Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring praised Speyside for overcoming the challenges of the pandemic. She stated that agriculture is the Commonwealth's number one industry and forestry is number three. Noting that Speyside's stave mill and cooperage were "tremendous wins for the region". She acknowledged that white oak, the only wood that can be used in the manufacture of bourbon barrels, is sustainably managed by Speyside. She further explained that Speyside has been awarded the Appalachian Hardwood Manufacturers, "Certified Legal and Sustainable" designation for its sustainable log buy practices and is an active participant in the White Oak Initiative. Bailey further explained some of Speyside's environmental and sustainability principles by stating, "We collect the dust and chips (an inevitable byproduct of a sawmill) and sell them to landscapers, to large companies for their biomass programs or to composite furniture makers to be used in the production of their products. We use the remainder of that dust in our own boiler system for heat. Nothing is wasted."

The ribbon cutting ceremony followed formal remarks. Guests were then toured through the mill to watch staves actually being produced.

Highlands Park, home of the Glade Spring facility, is a partnership of Smyth and Washington counties which is owned and managed by SWIFA (Smyth Washington Industrial Facilities Authority).



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VIRGINIA'S WATER QUALITY PROGRAM - HOW WE GOT HERE

Virginia has a long history of protecting water quality. Some say it began with the passage of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948 that was amended in 1972 and became the Clean Water Act (CWA). The CWA required states to control pollution that impacted navigable waters and to protect those waters for the benefit of all citizens. The CWA became the driving force behind the development and implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) across the nation as each state became responsible for the creation of programs for the protection of water quality for each sector of its economy. This included BMPs for "point sources" of pollution, those being that are discharges from the end of a pipe and are highly regulated and "non-point sources" of pollution that originate from land disturbing activities. So BMPs were created for land development activities, agricultural operations and the forestry sector. The U. S. Forest Service had been working on research at the watershed level at Forest Service Research Stations such as Coweeta in South Carolina, Hubbard Brooke in New Hampshire and the Fernow Forest in West Virginia. At those facilities, the research leads to the development of practices that could be utilized by forestry practitioners during their operations to protect water quality by restricting the movement of sediment that could ultimately degrade water quality. These practices became known as Best Management Practices for the Forestry Sector. These practices were tested for design and effectiveness over time and across various physiographic regions of the country and have been proven effective in the prevention of sedimentation.

Now to Virginia's program and the causal effects of its development. In 1973, then State Forester Wally Custard appointed Charlie Witter to oversee the development of the first set of BMPs for the forestry sector in Virginia. Charlie began the process of educating the Virginia Division of Forestry (which became the Virginia Department of Forestry in 1987) staff on the use of BMPs so that when they interacted with landowners, consulting foresters, and the timber harvesting workforce they could promote the use of BMPs to protect the water resource. Concurrently, there were various BMP effectiveness studies underway in Virginia through the efforts of the Department of Forestry at Virginia Tech to show that the BMPs that were developed for the forestry sector worked well in the Virginias physiographic regions. When Jim Garner became State Forester in 1983 he hired Sam Austin as the Agency's first forest hydrologist and charged Sam with the development of a water quality program that included the inspection of harvest sites for BMP implementation. It was during this time that the Chesapeake Bay Cleanup Initiative got underway and all types of land uses were being scrutinized for their impacts to the health of the aquatic

systems associated with the Bay. Mr. Garner had the foresight to create a task force composed of representatives of state government environmental agencies, forest products companies, the Virginia Forestry Association, the Virginia Loggers Association, various environmental groups, landowners, loggers and a host of other groups that had interests in forestry operations. The task force met frequently and when the likes of Jim Mooney, Bob Schaffer and Danny Goodbar began "discussing" the issues, things got entertaining. But out of this group came a consensus among the forestry community that water quality coming from forestry operations had to be dealt with in a proactive manner to keep the business of timber harvesting as uncomplicated as possible. The approach undertaken was one of a "voluntary" BMP Program with an enforceable mechanism that would take effect when a problem or a potential problem occurred on a harvest operation. That was when the Silvicultural Water Quality Law was passed by the General Assembly and went into effect on July 1, 1993. This law was supported by the State Foresters Water Quality Task Force that helped write the law. The Department of Forestry (VDOF) hired two forest engineers to oversee the education and enforcement of the law and to assist harvest operators with harvest planning. A vigorous harvest inspection program became part of VDOF agency operations and is still the backbone



of the agencies water quality program today. Mandatory notification of harvesting operations became part of the law in 1998.

During the mid-1990s, VDOF also began tracking the use of BMPs on randomly selected harvest sites and adopted a protocol for evaluating the implementation of BMPs developed by the Southern Group of State Foresters Water Resources Committee. The early period of BMP implementation in the 1990s showed that BMPs were being

put in place on approximately 70% of the time with only around 10% of the sites having all of the BMPs put in place on any one tract. Compare that to where we have come as an industry in the year 2020, with a pandemic underway: forest harvesting professionals implemented BMPs statewide correctly with a median tract score of 95%. This is an outstanding accomplishment. Figure 1 shows the scores of the various BMP categories that were evaluated in the 2020 BMP Audit

Table 1 – Statewide data for the BMP audit by BMP category. These data represent statewide averages for Virginia for the 2020 audit cycle.

BMP Category	Number of Tracts	Percent Yes	Margin of Error (%)
Chemicals	8	100.00	+/-0
Crossings	107	95.46	+/-4
Decks	239	96.55	+/-2.4
Fires	3	90.00	+/-34.6
Mech_SP	2	92.86	+/-36.4
Planning	239	94.73	+/-2.9
Roads	193	89.89	+/-4.3
Skidding	238	90.14	+/-3.9
SMZs	181	93.12	+/-3.8
Wetlands	9	90.20	+/-19.8
Grand Total	240	92.66	+/-3.4
Logging	240	92.65	+/-3.4

There is still work to be done on roads and skidding, but overall the numbers are outstanding. The SHARP Logger Program that started at the Virginia Forestry Association with Jim Kykendahl and moved to Virginia Tech under Dr. Scott Barrett in the late 1990s has been the driving force in educating loggers about BMPs and how to implement their use. The program complements VDOF's efforts and together they play a significant part in the success of Virginia's water quality program for forestry. Through the SHARP Logger Program, VDOF has educated over 10,000 timber harvesting professionals in 347 classes on BMPs since 1997.

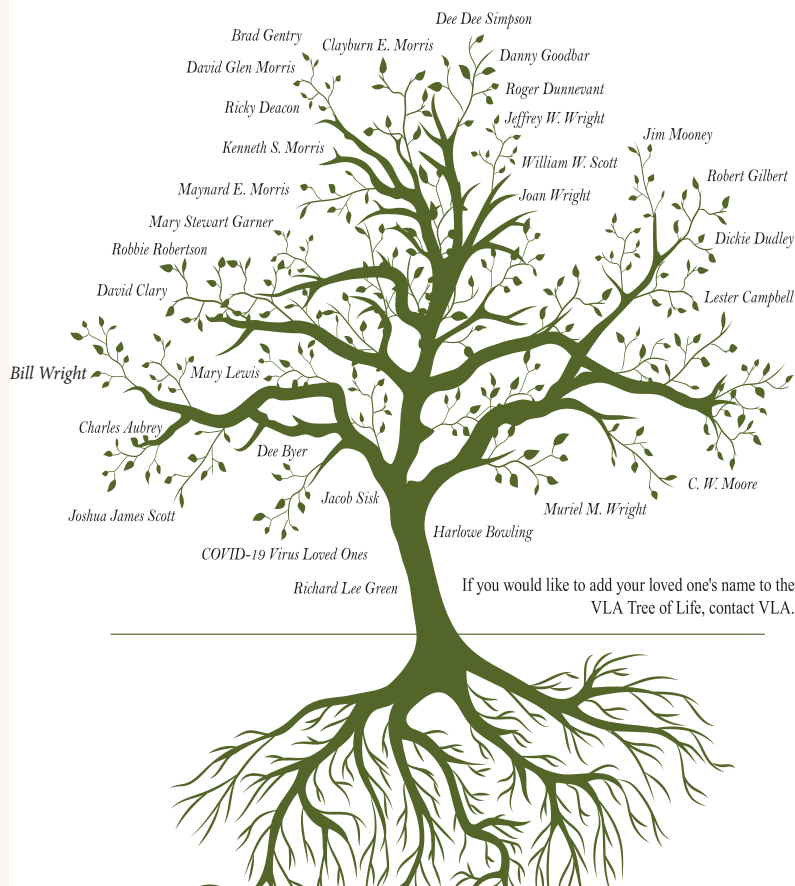
With the assistance from VLA's Jim Mooney, VDOF was able to develop a program to assist loggers with thinning small pine acreages by providing cost –share assistance directly to the logger to get the work done. VDOF has also been able to procure funding to assist loggers with a unique program to provide cost-share funds to implement BMPs at stream crossings, including the purchase of a portable bridge if one is required. New funding for this program is available for 2021; details will be coming out shortly.

Virginia has one of the premier water quality programs in the nation for forest water quality protection. The Virginia program has been showcased at hearings at the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, DC as a success due to the cooperation that has occurred between a government agency and the forestry community, and specifically the forest operators.

By: Matt Poirot
Water Quality Program Manager

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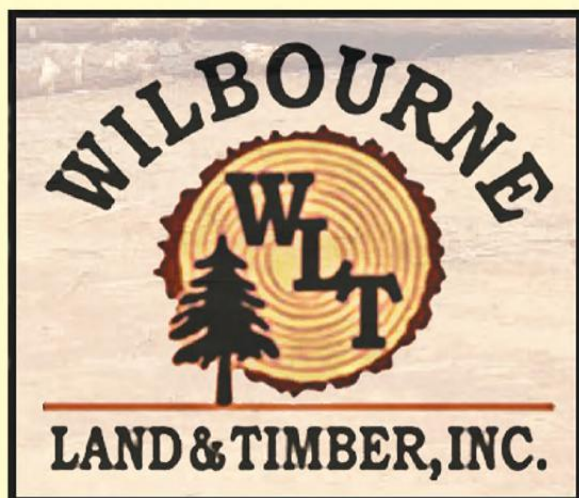


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LOG-A-LOAD FOR KIDS

We would like to thank all the participants and the volunteers that helped at the Log A Load For Kids booth at the Richmond Expo. A special thanks to the Deffenbaugh family, Iva Dene, Cary, Samantha and Elizabeth who worked both days. Also Ervin Bielmyer, Brandon Young, EE Talbott and Ron & Nannette Jenkins.

SAVE THE DATE

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Winner of Stihl Chainsaw
Donnie Reaves
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G&G Ace Hardware
Will Gravatt

Winner of metal toy truck
Stuart Deacon's grandsons
Ty and Vince

The winner of guess the weight of
the logs Dexter Tapscott

We gave away many wooden toy
log trucks during each day!

We are still selling tickets for the
Ride a Long with Ken Morgan and
that prize will be drawn at the VFPA
convention in September. This will
be a package overnight stay and
ride on the track.

Donnie Reaves has donated the
Stihl Chainsaw back to Log A Load
For Kids and we are selling tickets.
\$2.00 each or 3 for \$5.00 and
this will be drawn at the logger
convention in August. You can call
Nikki Robertson for tickets or
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Thank you Donnie Reaves!



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Predatory Towing -Is There a Fix?

Predatory Towing -Is There a Fix?

According to a survey by The American Trucking

Associations, truckers in some states are experiencing a rise in excessive overages for non-consensual or “predatory” tows following the scene of a crash. These predatory practices wreak havoc on motor carries and insurance companies who are responsible for paying these outrageous towing and storage charges.

Since there is no federal law on this issue, this area is left open for state regulation; however, many states lack legislation (or have significant shortfalls) to curb these abusive towing practices.

Generally, a non-consensual tow occurs when an officer calls a tow or wrecker company after an accident to remove a disabled vehicle. Typically, the tow company will arrive at the scene, pull and tow the disabled rig, and will present the motor carrier with an inflated final bill. Many times, the final bill has excessive or miscellaneous fees (i.e., excessive base rates, charges for personnel, unused equipment, and storage fees). Additionally, it is not uncommon for tow companies to charge fees for services not rendered or to even keep the trailer as leverage until the invoice is paid. <https://www.ttnews.com/articles/ata-task-force-pursue-predatory-towing-crashscenes>.

Predatory towing companies also target “illegally parked” rigs as well. For example, in Charlotte, NC, the owner of a Kentucky based trucking company reports that the company had one of its trailer’s “booted” in a Walmart parking lot. The towing company demanded that \$3,500 be paid within one hour or the company would increase the towing and recovery charge to \$8,000. Another Tennessee

based trucking company was hit with an excessive bill after the towing company alleges the rig was parked illegally at a gas station for four hours. The tow truck company subsequently demanded \$3,000 to have the boot removed and warned the towing and recovery charge could go as high as \$10,000 if not paid within an hour.

Many trucking companies are seeking protections from these abusive towing practices. However, is there currently an adequate fix? In Virginia at least, the short answer is no.

Although there are some limitations on charges for towing and storage of certain vehicles in Virginia, there are no set rates or caps in many localities. Va. Code § 46.2-1233.1. As a result, predatory towing companies have a leg up over trucking companies when it comes to negotiating these excessive bills.

While it is true that Va. Code § 46.2-118(11) prohibits tow companies from knowingly charging excessive fees for towing, storage,



and administrative services (and prohibits companies from charging fees for services not rendered), the statute does not create a private cause of action for consumers to enforce statute violations. The statute only allows the aggrieved party to “file a complaint with the . . . Office of the Attorney General.” Va. Code § 46.2-119. However, even then, the Attorney

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General has pure discretion over whether to pursue the cause of action to enjoin the violation. This clearly leaves trucking companies in the dark. Setting rates would certainly work to ensure predictability and to curb predatory practices.

Prevention Although there is no “adequate remedy” at law in Virginia, if your rig becomes disabled and you are presented with an excessive towing bill, we recommend the following:

- Request estimates upfront. Always have a relationship with and contact information for a local towing company on hand. It is not uncommon for predatory towing companies to frequent high accident areas. Having a relationship with a local company minimizes the risk of an officer dispatching a random tow company after an accident.
- In the event you need a tow following a crash, and where applicable, let the officer know you will be dispatching your own tow/wrecker company.
- Always have a plan in place to deal with cargo that has the potential of spoiling.
- Consider parking alternatives when there are no open truck stops.
- Do not pay the inflated bill. Call your attorney immediately.



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