



Virginia Loggers Association
Voice of Virginia Loggers
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VLA in Review 2015

We've just experienced an interesting and very good year by all accounts. Members' spirits seemed high despite rainy weather, volatile markets, quota limits on wood and inappropriate enforcement of overweight permit statutes. The logging community has a resilient and adaptive spirit to face each challenge.

Membership is a good indicator of the economy and in 2015 we've seen an increase in members. Twenty five new members joined the Virginia Loggers Association in 2015. However, each of us should seek to add one new member to VLA in 2016.

The following is a brief review of VLA in 2015 to date.

Legislation:



VLA was fully involved in the development and passage of two important statutory changes in the Virginia General Assembly in 2015. The truck weight law was amended to allow a gross weight of 90,000 pounds of forest products to be hauled on Virginia highways. Governor McAuliffe signed the new legislation and it became effective July 1, 2015.

The Forest Product Tax statutes were also amended providing greater clarification that logging operations chipping trees in the woods does not make the logger responsible for paying the forest products tax. Effective July 1, 2015, the first manufacturer using, consuming, or processing forest products is liable for the Forest Products Tax unless the tax has been previously paid by the severer of the forest products. The first manufacturer storing forest products for sale or shipment out of state also is liable for the Forest Products Tax unless the tax has been previously paid by the severer.

If there is no manufacturer, or the manufacturer is not registered for the Forest Products Tax, the severer is liable for the tax.

Projects of Importance to Industry:

Bridge Postings - VLA members identified recent bridge postings in areas with significant forest logging activity that reduced the gross weight to 80,000 pounds. We sent our letter to the Secretary of Transportation and members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board explaining how the postings

negatively impact the overweight permit and requesting their help to prioritize for maintenance and reestablishing their non-posted status. VDOT Commissioner responded with a full status report. Contact me for a copy of VDOT's letter.

Increased Truck Weight Permits - Following the effective date of the 2015 overweight permit for forest products, VLA helped members to speed up their online applications and answered questions about the new law. VLA leadership was actively involved with opposing permit citations from DMV and State Police enforcement agencies. VLA leadership met with Deputy Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry and other associations to clarify hauling trees and logs unloaded off on a wood yard, reloaded and carried to the mill were also eligible for the new permit.



VLA set up an exhibit at the **Mid Atlantic Logging & Biomass Expo** in Smithfield, NC in September. Over 2500 visitors attended the exhibits and live demonstrations. Several VLA members (and board directors) attended with families and employees. For the executive director, this was a fascinating and absolutely great opportunity for meeting a lot of people in the business. We gave out information, new member applications, sold T-shirts and talked a lot about VLA!

Virginia Forest Products Association annual meeting - VLA also presented at the annual VFPA meeting in September. The meeting was held at the Homestead and well attended by members representing mills. The VLA presentation covered the truck overweight coalition and common goals of our two organizations.

Virginia Tech - VLA was invited and accepted Virginia Tech's request to meet each new prospect applying for the Department Head of the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation. VLA got involved in the process and provided input to the Dean for his final decision.

Meetings:

Numerous enforcement issues arose over the new changes in the law and created painful experiences for our members. Not only could loggers haul 90,000 pounds with the right truck length and axle profile, but the new permit legally permitted round wood, chips, sawdust and residuals to be included under the new permit. The Department of Motor Vehicles (Wayne Davis) worked with VLA and others in an effective and proactive manner nullify improper tickets given to loggers.

Deputy Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry Sam Towell was willing to facilitate and mediate the discussions necessary to resolve the different interpretations on wood yards or holding yards. Originally, enforcement agencies took the position that the new overweight permit did not apply when hauling trees or logs from holding yards. Fortunately, the legislative language was clear enough to be unarguable that the entire haul from forest to holding yard to mill should be included in the new permit. In the end, the logging community came out ahead on this issue and now the issue is behind us.

VLA joined VFA, VFPA, and others to meet with the Virginia Departments of State Police and Transportation. Our goal was simply to build better relationships with these state organizations. We used our time to explain the nature of the logging business, its many challenges on the highways, and in particular the hauling of forest products on Virginia and interstate highways. Both state agencies were represented by people who understood and managed the programs and laws that impact our industry. We left each meeting feeling as if we had made progress in our effort to educate our enforcement agencies.

VLA also met with Dominion Resources to educate them about our logging capacity and to be educated about Dominion's biomass needs in the future. The meeting was considered to be productive and helpful in building an effective supply/demand relationship. Although the agreements are between a few major suppliers and Dominion, we must be diligent to ensure our logging businesses are used in an effective manner and paid well for its services.

VLA members met with Eldon Burton, Legislative Aide to Senator Mark Warner. Vance Wright and Frank Myers discussed the importance of the logging industry, the challenges ahead and the willingness to help our congressional representatives to see forestry in action and discuss the industry. We also discussed our concerns over the hauling of forest products on Virginia interstate highway systems.

VLA also was represented at Board of Forestry meetings. The most recent meeting was held at Morgan Lumber Company in Red Oak, VA. Frank Myers was appointed by Governor McAuliffe to the board representing our harvesting industry.

VLA spoke before Emporia City Council on December 1st and requested an extension to continue allowing loggers to haul forest products through the City. Council unanimously approved amending City Statute 74-13 during its December 15th meeting, allowing forest products to be hauled through the City until December 31, 2016.



Recognition and Awards:

Two VLA members and directors were recognized for their hard work and dedication to their businesses and the industry. C K Greene, owner of Virginia Custom Thinning & Chipping LLC, was recognized by Forestry Mutual Insurance as the 2015 Logger of the Year.



Frank Myers, owner of M. M. Wright Logging Inc. and other companies, was selected as the 2015 National Logger Activist of the Year by the American Logger Council.

VLA is so proud of both and how they represent VLA, the logging industry and Virginia. Congratulations and Thank YOU!

Annual Meeting:

The 2015 VLA annual meeting was held on August 28 & 29 at the Wintergreen Resort. Over 150 people attended the two day meeting during absolutely beautiful weather. We offered four expert speakers on the transportation and hauling regulations on Friday and seven speakers presented on logging markets on Saturday. Eight Legislators attended the Friday evening reception. Everyone enjoyed and celebrated the life of Jim Mooney on Saturday evening! The meeting received great compliments from many.



Newsletters:

Four newsletters were published since April, 2015. Enhancements were made to the newsletter and so far comments have been favorable. Now is a great time to consider your advertisement, or an article in the VLA newsletter.

VLA 2016 Annual Meeting will be held at the Hotel Roanoke on August 25 – 28, 2016. You may call now and book your lodging. Call (540) 985 – 5900 and use Group Code (VLO).

Please contact Ron Jenkins, VLA Executive Director, if you would like to join the VLA, advertise in the VLA newsletter, or sponsor a future event. Contact me at info@valoggers.org or VALoggersAssoc@aol.com or by phone at 804 677 – 4290

2016 Resolutions:

1. Invite someone to join VLA.
2. Meet your congressman by joining VLA and ALC on April 15 – 16, 2016 during the ALC Spring Fly-In and ALC Board of Directors Meeting.
3. Attend the VLA annual meeting on August 25 -28, 2016.
4. Get involved with issues impacting our industry

The Virginia Loggers Association proudly endorses Forestry Mutual Insurance Company as the preferred provider for Virginia's Workers Compensation coverage.