



Taking Action to Improve Forest Management - No. 3 June 19, 2014

How can we sustain a vital forest products industry?

All of us who depend on logging and useful wood products can help promote the positive side of responsible timber harvesting. We need to change the public perception that harvesting mature trees is bad, when in fact, it promotes regeneration. Simply stated, selective harvesting of mature trees is good for the forest – and our economy.

What can we do right now?

Invite US Forest Service staff and other professional foresters to speak to your area civic groups about the need for responsible timber harvesting. Tout the beauty, value and sustainability of wood products whenever you can. Help distribute factual information to your customers and to the general public. Post pertinent facts on your website or include them with invoices. Educate our friends, neighbors, community leaders and especially our young people about how timber can be harvested responsibly and in a way that will actually improve the health of our forests.

Buy wood products from businesses and companies that support sustainable, forest management practices and are affiliated with organizations such as the Forest Stewardship Council, Rain Forest Alliance, and Trees for Tomorrow. Signs at recently cut areas or on logs or products in transport could easily promote our commitment to sustainable forestry practices. We should be sensitive to roadside views of timber harvesting operations. Visual barriers help show our commitment to sustainable, well-managed forests. When harvesting areas where trees have been blown down due to high winds, let the public know what happened and how we are putting the downed timber to productive use while aiding the reforestation process.

Vote for government leaders who are willing to take a balanced approach to forest management and ensure that our woodlands are accessible for multiple uses.

Contact your senators in Washington, D.C. and urge them to pass H.R. 1526, the Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act, which passed the House of Representatives last September and now sits idly in the Senate. The purpose of the bill is “to restore employment and educational opportunities in, and improve the economic stability of, counties containing National Forest System land, while also reducing Forest Service management costs, by ensuring that such counties have a dependable source of revenue from National Forest System land, to provide a temporary extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, and for other purposes.”

It’s time to reduce regulations and restrictions on logging, not add more.

Right now, there’s a proposed bill circulating in Washington to shut down responsible timber harvesting in all of our national forests during the summer months because environmentalists are concerned the Northern Long-Eared Bat (NLEB) may become extinct due to white-nose syndrome that effects the bats in hibernation. Timber harvesting is not the cause of the disease, which was first found in New York in 2006 and has spread westward. Yes, we should help preserve the Northern Long-Eared Bat and other animal and plant species, but does that really require a blanket rule

against summer timber harvesting in every national forest?

The US Fish and Wildlife Service in its January 6, 2014 Northern Long-Eared Bat Interim Conference and Planning Guidance noted: "Although many types of timber management, when properly designed, will not impact (or may improve) NLEB habitat, some types of timber management (e.g. clear-cutting) can reduce the viability of NLEB populations if key areas of a home range are removed."

The Hardwood Federation is actively engaged with other impacted trade associations to push the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Fish and Wildlife Service to develop more reasonable and economically responsible guidelines that offer science-based protections to the bat population without placing undue hardships on our industry. Doesn't it make more sense to work together to develop a plan that both protects the NLEB's roosting, foraging, swarming, and hibernation habitat, and allows a long tradition of responsible, selective hardwood harvesting in the summer months to continue in our National Forests? Preventing access to loggers during summer months would be a crucial blow to the logging businesses in the northern lake states and jeopardize jobs of hardworking families that depend on responsible management of our northern public forestlands. Write your Congressional representatives and ask them to stop putting unreasonable restrictions and limitations on responsible logging operations.

What happens if we cannot change the perception of harvesting?

In 2012, only 9,315 acres of the 1.3 million total acres were selectively harvested in the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests in Wisconsin. That's just 0.7%! And much of the harvest included overly mature trees that should have been harvested earlier to maximize value and forest regeneration. Nationally, in the 1970s-1990s, the U.S. Forest Service allowed 80% harvesting of forest growth, and that kept healthy forests growing at a rate of 20%. Today, these forests are being harvested at 20% of the growth. As a result, many trees are rotting, dying and falling over--making our forests more vulnerable to forest fires and insect infestation.

We shouldn't be hampering our logging businesses and sawmills with needless regulations that hinder their ability to harvest timber responsibly year-round. Nor should we continue to decrease harvest percentages. It's not healthy for the forests or our economy. During the past decade, a significant number of sawmills have closed, and in the past 7 years the number of loggers in the northern region has declined by approximately 35%. Increased regulation and shorter harvest seasons will further challenge our logging businesses resulting in more job losses and higher prices.

Can any "grassroots" effort be effective?

We think so. Vote for people who support responsible timber harvesting, not for those who want to restrict it even more. Write your elected leaders today and tell them to support sound forest management and responsible timber harvests. Help communicate how our economy benefits when logging operations and sawmills are allowed to harvest timber according to sound forestry management practices. If we all start speaking up loudly and frequently, our collective voice will be heard. And our forests and economy will thrive again.



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Did you know?

- Vital funding for local schools and county governments suffers when timber harvesting revenues decline.
- Reforestation and Timber Sale Improvement Reports were completed annually by the U.S. Forest Service until 2004. Reports for 2005-2012 are “being prepared,” according to the U.S. Forest Service website (see Forest Management) <http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/silviculture/reforest-tsi.shtml>
- According to the American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA), the U.S. forest products industry employs about one million workers and accounts for approximately six percent of the total U.S. manufacturing GDP, placing it roughly on par with the automotive and plastics industry. The forest products industry is among the top ten manufacturing sector employers in 48 states and generates over \$200 billion a year in sales and about \$54 billion in annual payroll. In 2011, it recovered 66.8% of paper consumed and is the leading generator and user of renewable energy.
- Countries with large steady quantities of industrial wood use are more likely to maintain their forest base. Forest products research promotes responsible use of wood. Forest managers and land owners can recover management costs from revenues generated by selling wood. This will incentivize forest land owners to maintain their forest base and prevent them from converting forest land to other use. New products and technology from forest products research will also create jobs, especially in rural communities and stimulate economic growth. Source: U.S. Forest Service <http://www.fs.fed.us/research/forest-products/>

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