

THE MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF TIMBERMEN

SEPTEMBER 2025

TIMBER TALK

DEDICATED TO REPRESENTING THE NEEDS OF SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE FOREST PRODUCT INDUSTRY

INSIDE

- Member Mills Celebrate Anniversaries and Expansions
- Master Logger Program offers \$500 for Audits
- Great Northern Fueling Cooperative Launches in Quinnesec

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MAT Board Members

OUR MISSION

The Michigan Association of Timbermen is dedicated to the practice of sustainable forestry which provides the goods and services we demand without compromising the opportunity to provide the same goods and services for future generations.

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STAFF

Justin Knepper, Executive Director,
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PRESIDENT

Vaughn West

Michigan Association of Timbermen

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello to all our Members & Followers,

Well, we are in August already the year is flying by. Just a quick positive note - we have a new family member at the Timbermen's office. Executive Director Justin Knepper and his wife Caryn had a beautiful baby boy in August, Everett Tullus Knepper. (All are well -baby and momma.)

In other news, the Timbermen staff and Board are well into planning for the 2026 Michigan Forest Products Show, to be held again in Gaylord, Michigan. We are also working on a Legislative day to bring politicians from Lansing up to see the aftermath of the ice storm and then coordinate a mill tour for them. That's a challenging process to coordinate!

Separately, Logging Congress (The Great Lakes Logging & Heavy Equipment Expo) is coming soon in Escanaba this year and we will have a presence there; If you see any board members, please feel free to stop and chat and ask us to look into issues you may be having.

Our staff is always working on training and promoting our industry at events across the state. Please talk to them when you see them and get to know Justin and Julianne. They are a good team and are doing a great job of growing and promoting our industry.

Looking forward to meeting all of you and promoting the forest industry.

Thanks,
Vaughn West MAT Board President

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

What a summer. Here at the MAT office, I'd summarize quite a bit of our recent work as "change management." On the personal level, as our president mentioned, my wife and I had our third child born at the end of July. I took two weeks off to help her, and now I'm back at the office.

On the organizational level, our board recently held a retreat up in Nahma along Lake Michigan; we conducted our regular quarterly board meeting, but also held a goal-setting session. The board split into small groups to conduct a "SWOT" analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) for the Michigan Association of Timbermen, and identified ways to improve our operations, as well as launch a few new goals and objectives going in 2026.

Finally, I feel like our industry as a whole is experiencing a lot of change. We've been supporting our membership on all sorts of issues, ranging from rapid response for a logger whose machine broke down and needed an immediate replacement (we sent him a list of every single MAT member that sells new and used equipment across the state as well as their phone numbers), to helping assist a third generation mill owner that had to close due to market loss. We've been assisting a growing number of start-up loggers and sawmill operators as well, helping them connect with other members who can support their growth.

We're looking forward to a strong membership renewal season this fall, and will be reaching out to all of our annual sponsors as well. It's crazy how time flies!

I appreciate each one of you.
Justin Knepper, Executive Director



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Justin Knepper

Michigan Association of Timbermen

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!



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MAT was established in 1972 for the purpose of reducing costs and increasing profits of small forest industry businesses while ensuring a continued supply of timber. As a member you should enjoy all the benefits we have to offer. To join or renew, simply fill out the membership form at www.michigantimbermen.com/join and return to the MAT office. If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at 906.293.3236

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF TIMBERMEN

2025 STATE OF THE STATES REPORT TO THE AMERICAN LOGGERS COUNCIL

Each year the Michigan Association of Timbermen submits a “State of the States” report to the American Loggers Council, summarizing the current situation in Michigan’s forest products industry, as well as a recap of the year’s efforts by the Michigan Association of Timbermen.

The Michigan forest products industry continues to demonstrate resilience amid shifting economic and political landscapes. Early 2025 saw some increasing activity at several Upper Peninsula mills after two years of extreme reductions, as well as a measure of stability in the Lower Peninsula.

Things changed rapidly for both areas of the State as log truckers from the Upper Peninsula continued to answer the call for hurricane relief in the southeastern United States, creating a perceived trucking shortage. At the same time, a massive ice storm damaged or destroyed more than three million acres of public and private forest across northern Michigan.

Furthermore, central and southern Michigan, dotted with smaller mills and hand-cutting crews specialized in Red Oak, Black Walnut, and other high-value hardwoods, have begun to feel substantial negative impacts from uncertainty in global markets, suddenly reducing exports overseas.

The Michigan Association of Timbermen is working hard to assist our members across the peninsulas through these challenging times, directly engaging with individual business owners to help in the form of building networks and connecting to resources.

Despite these various headwinds, the Michigan Association of Timbermen has enjoyed a productive year. Our Annual Convention continues to grow, attracting nearly 300 attendees and a record number of exhibitors. Last summer we also launched Michigan’s first Forest Products Show, showcasing equipment and innovations while connecting industry stakeholders. Our Show will be returning in 2026, even bigger and better.

On the advocacy front, MAT leadership remains deeply engaged at the state and national levels. We’ve met with legislators and the DNR to address storm damage response and frost law hauling restrictions. Our Government Affairs Committee is preparing new advocacy projects, especially focused on forestry equipment hauling and other transportation issues.

We continue to promote the industry through education and outreach. Our continuing education courses have been well-received, and our communication efforts—via Facebook, Timber Talk magazine, and digital newsletters—continue to grow.

Looking ahead, MAT’s priorities include: increasing profitability and reducing costs for producers; supporting mill expansion through financial resource connections; enhancing recruitment and retention in the logging workforce; and promoting public awareness of Michigan’s forest industry.

Justin Knepper, Executive Director, Michigan Association of Timbermen





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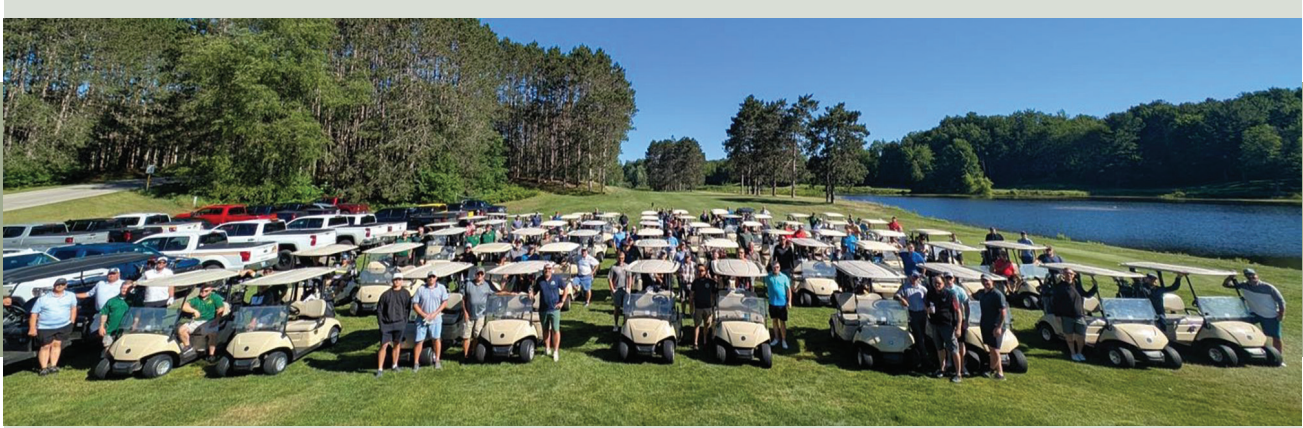
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MORE THAN 100 GOLF AT “LINKS WITH LOGGERS” IN CADILLAC

By Julianne Jahn, MAT Operations Administrator

It was a perfect day weather-wise with one of our largest turnouts. We had 30 teams registered. Lakewood on the Green is a beautiful course and we appreciate them hosting us. Link Manufacturing won first place with a total score of 58, with Northern Energy coming in second place with a score of 60. There was actually a tie for second place. Housler Sawmill also scored a 60 but a birdie made the difference. The longest putt went to Austin Ricketson with Bills Logging; closest to the pin was Jarrett Monroe; the women’s longest drive was by Shaleyn Birgy of Birgy Forest Products; and men’s longest drive went to Payton TerMeer.



2025 SFI Training Schedule • Visit www.sfimi.org/sessions to Register

Core Sessions	Venue	Date	Location
SFI National Review	Jays Sporting Goods	September 2, 2025	Clare, MI
SFI National Review	Baraga Lakeside Inn	September 10, 2025	Baraga, MI
Continuing Education Sessions	Venue	Date	Location
Northern Hardwood Regen Review	TBA	October 1, 2025	Grayling Area
Northern Hardwood Regen Review	TBA	October 2, 2025	Gaylord Area
Northern Hardwood Regen Review	TBA	October 3, 2025	Rexton Area
4hr Continuing Education Forestry Refresher	PCA	November 12, 2025	Filer City

Challenges of the Logging Sector in Michigan



By Raju Pokharel, Kamana Poudel, Michigan State University

The Mill and Logging Sector Plays a Vital Role in Michigan Communities. It is deeply rooted in the state's history and culture, provides jobs and economic opportunities, and supports sustainable forest management, helping reduce risks from forest health issues, wildfires, and other disturbances. Despite its importance, multiple studies show that the sector faces persistent challenges, including a retiring workforce, labor shortages, and declining interest among younger generations. New businesses also report barriers such as regulatory hurdles, high startup costs, and limited training opportunities. These issues highlight the need for a targeted, needs-based assessment to understand better the specific challenges loggers and other forestry stakeholders face, which can guide outreach efforts and inform policy solutions.

To explore these challenges, we conducted a literature review and developed a survey that was distributed at the Michigan Society of American Foresters (SAF) Meeting and the Michigan Association of Timbermen (MAT) Meeting. Participants were asked to rank key issues from most to least pressing.

The Top Ten Challenges Identified Were:

- Rising operational and equipment cost including fuel, insurance, and machinery maintenance
- Difficulty finding qualified workers, especially for machine operation and log truck driving
- Significant startup barriers for new businesses: high capital costs
- Unstable markets that affect profitability and stability
- Younger generations not interested in the logging industry
- Retiring workforce
- Significant startup barriers for new businesses: difficulty establishing industry connections and building an employment base
- Lack of markets for raw fiber
- Negative public perception of timber harvesting
- Lack of effective training resources and certification programs for loggers

Interestingly, while the literature often emphasizes retirement as the main concern, survey results revealed that rising costs and worker shortages are currently viewed as the most urgent challenges. This suggests that efforts to reduce operational costs and expand workforce training are critical for supporting the sector. It also aligns with economic theory: businesses are more likely to invest or enter an industry when profitability and opportunity outweigh barriers.



We also asked participants what would help them overcome these challenges.

Here are the top five topics of interest in order of priority as indicated by survey participants.

- Developing new markets (e.g: mass timber, bioenergy, biofuels, emerging topics)
- Workforce development programs to increase the availability of logging equipment operators and log trucks
- Partnership with K-12 schools, vocational schools, universities and extension programs to enhance logging as a career
- Capacity building on financial readiness. Examples: regulatory cost, establishment cost, handling inefficiencies
- Operating advance machinery and other technical advancements

Participants showed strong interest in innovative forest products like mass timber, (aviation fuel), biofuels, and other emerging markets. These emerging markets create new demand for underused resources such as small-diameter trees, low-grade logs, and forest residues, providing loggers with opportunities to diversify and increase revenue. Workforce development was another priority, directly addressing one of the top challenges identified.

A peer-reviewed publication based on this research is currently in preparation. In the meantime, these findings are helping shape our outreach and extension activities. We are developing webinars and workshops tailored to the highest-ranked topics of interest. Upcoming events, as well as recordings of past sessions, will be available on our website: FREE Webinars: Forest Economics and Resource Management (FERM) Lab. Our next webinar is scheduled for November 6, 2025, from 3:00 to 4:00 PM. We plan to host at least two webinars each year, on the first Thursday of March and November! In addition, we are collaborating with Michigan SAF, MAT, and the Michigan Association of Consulting Foresters to deliver training workshops during their 2026 annual meetings. Please stay tuned with these organizations for communication.

Finally, we sincerely thank everyone who participated in our recent mail survey on wood prices and harvesting. Results will be shared through upcoming webinars and workshops. To continue gathering data, we are distributing a new wood price survey. Your continued support is greatly appreciated. You can participate by scanning the QR code provided:



If you have any questions for us, feel free to email us at raju2020@msu.edu

Kamana Poudel, PhD is a postdoctoral research associate at Forest Economics and Resource Management (FERM) Lab at Department of Forestry Michigan State University and Raju Pokharel, PhD is the assistant professor of Forest Resource Economics at Department of Forestry Michigan State University.



Devereaux Sawmill Expands

Devereaux Sawmill among seven Michigan award recipients to receive combined \$1.91 million in USDA funds

Michigan's timber industry received a boost through the most recent round of USDA Wood Innovation grants, with our own member Devereaux Sawmill being awarded \$300,000 for new sawmill processing equipment. Devereaux Sawmill is investing over \$13 million to build a new sawmill that will double their quarter-sawn and rift-sawn production and will increase their plain sawn production as well.

Devereaux Sawmill General Manager Todd Smith said that the current mill was being pushed to its limits, requiring more downtime for maintenance and increased overtime hours. This project expands the mill's ability to diversify its products and improves its production and efficiency.

Devereaux Sawmill was one of seven grantees in Michigan receiving funds through the USDA Wood Innovations Grant. The full list of grant awards, as reported by Michigan Farm News, are:

- Devereaux Sawmill Inc.: \$300,000 for installing sawmill processing equipment to increase production capacity while supporting active forest management and rural jobs in Michigan.



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• **Northern Michigan University:**
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• **Ottawa Forest Products Inc.:**
\$300,000 for installing sawmill equipment to increase production and support active forest management including national forests in Michigan and Wisconsin.



• **Michigan Technological University:**
\$300,000 to demonstrate structural finger jointing technologies for hardwood lumber to expand markets and support active forest management.



• **Out of the Ashes Inc. (dba Hiawatha Log Homes):**
\$300,000 for installing new milling equipment to increase production and jobs while supporting active forest management in Michigan.



• **S&L Lumber Co LLC:**
\$300,000 to install sawmill processing equipment to increase production capacity while supporting rural jobs and active forest management including two national forests in Michigan and Wisconsin.



• **Western Michigan University:**
\$299,986 to develop a pathway to produce biochar asphalt additives using forest biomass, thereby supporting active forest management and wildfire risk reduction.



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CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

Biewer Sawmill's Legacy in McBain



Earlier this summer, Biewer McBain marked a significant milestone - its 40th anniversary.

Since its establishment in 1983, the McBain facility has been a cornerstone of Biewer Lumber's operations, contributing to the company's growth and reputation in Michigan's lumber industry.

A Legacy of Quality and Innovation

Biewer McBain began as a sawmill operation and has since expanded its capabilities to include Biewer Forest Management. This division works closely with woodland owners to achieve sustainable forest management goals, offering services such as timber marking and management planning .

The facility specializes in producing Spruce-Pine-Fir (SPF) lumber, a preferred choice for construction due to its strength, light weight, and versatility. SPF lumber is widely used in framing, flooring, and other structural applications, making it a staple in the building industry.

Community Impact and Growth

Over the years, Biewer McBain has been instrumental in creating jobs and supporting the local economy. In 2018, the company invested over \$30 million in expanding the McBain facility, adding 17 new jobs and enhancing its production capacity .

Looking Ahead

As Biewer McBain celebrates four decades of success, the commitment to quality, sustainability, and community remains steadfast. The facility continues to play a vital role in Biewer Lumber's mission to deliver top-quality products and services to customers across North America.



LP NEWBERRY CELEBRATES 40 YEARS

LP Newberry Celebrates 40 Years in Luce County with Community Event

This past month, LP Building Solutions' Newberry mill marked its 40th anniversary, hosting a special community event with free mill tours, live music, food, and carnival-style fun for all. LP welcomed the community to tour the mill—a longstanding local employer and a key producer of LP® SmartSide® Siding and specialty shed panels. The event offered guided tours, refreshments, carnival games, and entertainment.

The Back Story: Why Newberry?

Established in 1985, the Newberry mill was strategically placed to leverage the region's plentiful sustainably managed aspen forests, local skilled workforce, and proximity to growing housing markets. It was here that LP first produced its engineered wood SmartSide lap and groove products, contributing significantly to the company's brand and product growth.

Part of the Community: More Than Just a Mill

With more than 120 employees, the mill is one of the largest and longest-serving employers in Luce County—making it a vital economic pillar for the region. The mill covers 143,000 square feet across two buildings and has an annual production capacity of 165 million square feet.

LP Newberry plays a significant role in the local economy—employing about 9% of the local population and 22% of the civilian workforce. Beyond jobs, LP supports the community through the LP Foundation, donating nearly \$50,000 to improve local education and nonprofit services. This includes grants to bolster hands-on, skilled trades programs in schools—such as funding tools for Tahquamenon Area Schools' building trades, upgrading woodworking equipment in Engadine Consolidated Schools, and expanding educational offerings in Manistique Area Schools.



LP has also contributed to community safety by funding new equipment for the Newberry Fire Department through its community grants program.

What's Next: Investments for a Sustainable Future

LP recently completed \$35 million in capital investments at the Newberry mill, including expansions to the press area, upgrades to pollution controls for the press and dryer, and improved log handling and flaking systems. Looking ahead, LP plans further enhancements—like modernizing the log debarker and flake dryer—to maintain operational efficiency, environmental responsibility, and long-term growth in the region.

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF WEBER BROTHERS SAWMILL



Celebrating 75 Years of Weber Brothers Sawmill

The Michigan Association of Timbermen congratulates Weber Brothers Sawmill on reaching an incredible milestone—75 years in business. Weber Brothers Sawmill, located in Beal City, is a third-generation, family-run operation. The mill has built its legacy on integrity, experience, and a deep respect for Michigan's northern hardwoods.

Jacob Weber began logging in the early 1940s, and in 1950, Ben, John, and Ed Weber purchased a portable mill, laying the foundation for what would become Weber Brothers Sawmill. Since

then, they've remained a trusted resource for lumber, custom cutting, and responsible forest management, while continuing to support the local economy and forestry community.

This summer, as part of Beal City's 150-year sesquicentennial celebration, Weber Brothers hosted an open house at the mill and their mill museum. Guests enjoyed historic photographs from the 1940s and 1950s, along with a look back at the people, tools, and traditions that shaped the business.

We recognize and applaud their long-standing commitment to quality and sustainability. Congratulations to the Weber family on 75 years of excellence.



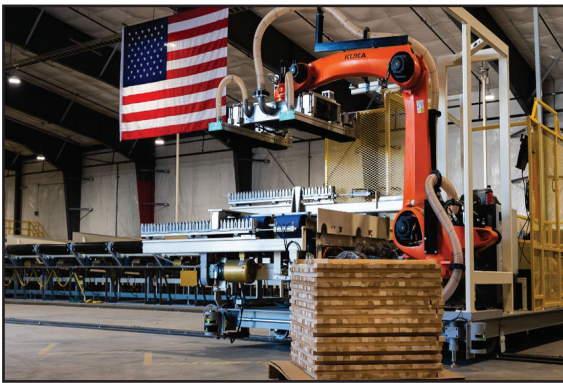
TIMBER PRODUCTS IN MUNISING COMPLETES MILL UPGRADES

Munising Components: Timber Products' New Chapter in the U.P.

By Michigan Association of Timbermen staff, with information provided by Building Products Digest's July 24, 2025 article entitled, "Timber Products Adds Component Plant in Michigan."

Munising, MI — A familiar name in the Upper Peninsula timber industry is making big moves. Timber Products Company, headquartered in Springfield, Oregon, has started up a brand-new hardwood component facility at its existing hardwood veneer and lumber mill in Munising — a site that has been part of the region's forest products economy for decades.

The new cutting-edge operation, dubbed Munising Components, is designed to produce ready-to-use hardwood components at scale right on site. These components will serve cabinetry, flooring, and millwork manufacturers, helping them reduce waste, improve yield, and elevate product quality — all while keeping more of the production process in Michigan.



High-Tech Meets Hardwood

The plant's impressive lineup includes Eagle's High Speed Hogging Moveable Blade Ripsaw, Talon 3000 High Speed Crosscut Saws, MiCROTEC's Woodeye Rip and Crosscut Scanners, and Eagle's newly patented automation for palletizing finished parts. These systems integrate into a central database, analyzed continuously through machine learning and AI to optimize performance in real time.

"This project has been five years in the making," said Jon Johnson, Manager of Timber Products' Michigan Operations. "Eagle has more than 25 years of experience with continuous improvement and development in the industrial woodworking and automation industry. Their willingness to work with us from the raw conceptual phase, and support the project along the way, is what made them stand out as the clear partner for the job."

"The Woodeye scanners allow for defects to be detected that could go unnoticed by a human," said Jerrod Allen, Lumber Inspector. "We can do just about anything now."

With its automation and robotics, the facility can process 30 boards per minute, producing consistent, high-grade components with unmatched precision.

Sustainability at the Core

Munising Components isn't just about speed — it's about smart use of resources. Material defects are removed onsite, and wood residuals are converted into fuel for the plant's boilers. Those boilers power all three facilities on the Munising site and generate steam for their dry kilns. By turning waste into energy, Timber Products reduces disposal costs for customers while lowering the facility's environmental footprint.

"This mill allows our customers to focus on what they do best, without dealing with lumber waste or additional processing," said John Erickson, Dimension Lumber Sales Manager (publicly referred to as Hardwood Component Sales Manager). "It's a win-win for our customers and for us."

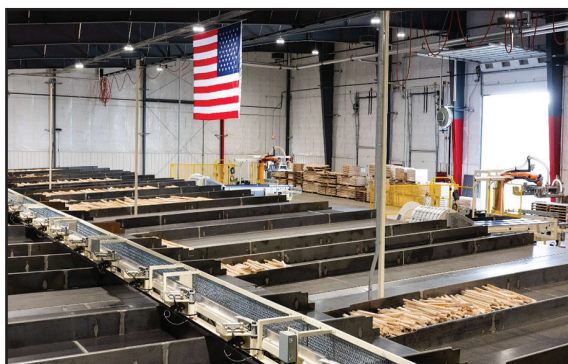
Timber Products (contd.)

A Boost for the U.P. Economy

The opening of Munising Components is expected to create dozens of skilled jobs in production, sales, and technical operations. For the Upper Peninsula's network of loggers and truckers, the expansion means more consistent demand for high-quality hardwood logs — especially maple, birch, and cherry — sourced from regional forests.

It's also a point of pride for Munising locals. The mill has been a major employer since the mid-20th century, evolving from a traditional hardwood mill into a modern, value-added manufacturing hub. This latest investment signals Timber Products' confidence in the community and the region's future as a leader in sustainable wood products.

Founded in 1918, Timber Products operates nine manufacturing facilities across the U.S., plus company-owned forestland, an international division, and nationwide logistics. But for the team in Munising, this expansion isn't just another project — it's a major step forward for Michigan's timber industry.



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We're excited to share a new opportunity designed to support responsible timber harvesting in Michigan—Master Loggers for Clean Water. This initiative is funded by the USDA Forest Service and is part of a national effort to protect natural resources through sustainable practices.



This program offers \$500 in support funding to help cover the costs for individuals applying to become certified—or recertified—as a Michigan Master Logger. The funding is meant to recognize the extra effort it takes to complete an on-site audit, especially when the work involves protecting streams, rivers, or wetlands.

Who Can Participate? You may be eligible if:

- You are applying to become a Michigan Master Logger or are renewing your certification;
- Your logging site includes water features (such as a stream or wetland);
- Your work follows Michigan's Best Management Practices—a set of guidelines to reduce environmental impact during logging.

The goal of this program is to support logging professionals who care about doing the job right—not just for the forest, but for Michigan's clean water too.

If you have an upcoming timber harvest—or completed one in the past year—that fits these criteria, we encourage you to reach out. We're happy to help you determine whether you qualify.

Please also share this information with others in the industry who may be interested in certification and could benefit from this support.

Feel free to contact us with any questions or to learn more. Thank you for your work and commitment to protecting Michigan's forests and waters.



Mike Elenz
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DEATH IN THE FOREST

Sponsored by Cookhouse Productions, Michigan Forest Association, Michigan State University Extension, and Michigan Technological University

By Bill Cook

All living things die, which is too often perceived as a negative phenomenon. Yet, forest mortality yields an opportunity for both change and rejuvenation. These dynamics are wonderful to witness, and immensely satisfying to initiate and steward.

Foresters, and others, have been regenerating Lake States forests for generations. Monitoring management practices has provided innumerable lessons in how forests respond to disturbances. This acquired knowledge has been folded back into how forests are tended.

The same can be said with recovery following natural disturbances, such as fire, windstorms, ice storms, and insect epidemics. The process of learning by observing, and experimenting, also applies to the more gradual and subtle death of individual trees, which is less dramatic but no less informative.

Forest mortality in the Lake States has reached record levels, exceeding the harvest volume by 17 percent, according to Forest Service inventories. Harvest levels have not gone down but, rather, natural mortality has increased. Our forests are growing older, in general, so increased levels of mortality can be expected.

So, which species account for most of the mortality? Quaking aspen experienced 17 percent of the mortality across the three Lake States. The next top four species are balsam fir (8 percent), green ash (7 percent), paper birch (4 percent), and red maple (4 percent).

Aspen, paper birch, and red maple are short-lived species that have approached the end of their normal lifespan. Green ash has been hit by the exotic emerald ash borer. Balsam fir is another a shorter-lived species but it has also been worked-over by the spruce budworm during the past few years. The other two ashes, white and black, are in the top ten tree species with the highest natural mortality, as is American elm with Dutch elm disease.

Sugar maple is also in the top ten, but not because it is shortlived or has suffered from an insect outbreak. Sugar maple volumes are huge, so even a small percentage loss would spell a large volume compared to other species. Red maple is also a common forest species and its listing among the top ten may be for the same reason, along with its shorter lifespan.

Of course, natural mortality might beg the question about harvested volumes. Which species have the largest harvest volumes in the Lake States? The top five are quaking aspen, sugar maple, red pine, red maple, and red oak. Together, these five species account for sixty percent of the harvest.

Considering both natural mortality and harvest, the forest continues to accrue standing volume. Growth rates still exceed losses. With an idea to the “big picture”, we could be safely harvesting more volume to capture a portion of that which is lost to natural mortality.

Ecologically, dead and dying trees in the forest have much value. Such trees provide a range of microhabitats for many species of wildlife, from nesting and feeding cavities to large woody debris on the ground. Tree decomposition returns minerals and physical structure to forest soils. Decomposer species, such as fungi, are essential to forests.

Carbon is both sequestered and released, sometimes with more being released than sequestered. High mortality



DEATH IN THE FOREST (CONTD.)

ratios may not be the wisest condition in regard to atmospheric carbon and climate change. A younger, more vigorous, forest typically experiences higher sequestration rates than older forests.

However, back to wood volume in a forest inventory, such volume is not necessarily available to the market. Ownership plays a large role. If forestowners do not wish to sell stumpage, then that wood is not on the market. Also, the species mix might not well match the requirements of wood-using mills in a particular area, or at a particular time. Without mill access, then wood cannot be sold. Mill capacity and variety can be increased over time, if a reasonable harvest expectation can be met.

So, if one looks at the natural mortality leaders, quaking aspen, balsam fir, green ash, paper birch, and red maple, how much of that volume might be offered for sale and how much could the current market absorb, before the trees die? This is a good question that does not have a definitive answer.

The supply chain for wood from forestowner to consumer-ready products is complex and variable by geography and time. However, with a "glut" of natural mortality, expanding markets may seem to be a good idea, both economically and environmentally. However, capturing more of that mortality will be a huge challenge.



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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

With Jason Wadaga

The Michigan Legislature spent the month of June negotiating on a Fiscal Year 2025-26 state budget without any success. The goal was to first finish the K-12 budget so that school districts know at the start of the school year what kind of funding they have then move on to the other budgets but that did not happen. The legislature must adopt the budget by September 30th. Negotiations at this point have been slow and Governor Whitmer has stated publicly that she wants a road funding package as part of the final budget negotiation.

Long Term Road Funding

With budget talks heating up in Lansing, so have discussions on a long-term road funding plan. Earlier this year, Gov. Whitmer proposed a plan that would dedicate \$3 billion to road funding. The plan included:

- Diverting all taxes paid at the gas pump to roads and infrastructure
- \$1.6 billion in new taxes to large corporations
- \$500 million from government efficiencies
- \$470 million on a new wholesale marijuana tax

In the spring, the House of Representatives passed their plan to the Michigan Senate that would provide \$3.2 billion in revenue for roads by:

- Taking \$2.2 billion from the Corporate Income Tax (CIT) revenue
- Removing the 6% sales tax on gasoline and replacing it with a 20-cent increase to the motor fuel tax and dedicating all funding to roads
- Disincentivizing corporations from benefiting from the Michigan Business Tax

The Michigan Senate has floated a budget proposal of \$3 billion in contingency funding for roads but has yet to announce the details of the proposal. If a road deal is finalized, it's going to require the House, Senate and Governor's office to compromise on a plan. Whether or not that will happen is unknown at this time.

DNR Unveils Ice Storm Response Plan

In June, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) unveiled what they have accomplished and their course of action to address the ice storm in late March that devastated 12 counties in northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula.

Included in the document that was released to lawmakers was information on what the department had done to that point including assessing the damage, clearing the land and putting up timber sales.

Perhaps most importantly, the DNR released estimates of the state funding needed to address the ice storm in the future including:

- Incident Management Team emergency response work - \$676,100
 - Infrastructure repairs to DNR facilities damaged by the storm - \$100,200
 - Clearing/re-opening state forest land - \$7,513,800
 - Debris removal across state parks and recreation areas, boating access sites and trails - \$9,566,100
 - Recultivation and restoration of state forest land - \$13,996,200
 - Replacement of lost timber and camping/lodging revenue - \$7,017,600
- Total - \$38,870,000.



Jason Wadaga
MAT Lobbyist



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



While the DNR proposed this as needed funding in response to the ice storm, the Michigan Legislature must now act on appropriating the funds. MAT has been communicating closely with Rep. Ken Borton (who chairs the DNR Appropriations Subcommittee) and many other state lawmakers on the need for immediate action on the replanting red pine in the impacted forest areas.

Additional Federal/State Funding Coming to Michigan

In May, the Michigan House of Representatives passed an appropriations bill for \$100 million to provide disaster relief grants for local communities affected by the storm. That legislation, House Bill 4328, now sits in the Senate Appropriations Committee for consideration.

Meanwhile, the federal government recently announced an additional \$50 million in disaster relief funds to go to Michigan in response to the ice storm. The funds will be distributed through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).



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FUELING THE FUTURE:

GREAT NORTHERN COOPERATIVE OPENS NEW DIESEL FUELING STATION NEAR BILLERUD'S QUINNESEC PLANT

By Executive Director Justin Knepper

In a significant development for Michigan's timber industry, the Great Northern Cooperative (GNC) has opened its first diesel fueling station in Breitung Township, located just across Highway 2 from Billerud's Quinnesec mill. The Great Northern Cooperative's goal is to leverage the collective purchasing power of the forest products sector to provide affordable and reliable fueling options for those in the supply chain.

This member-owned cooperative was under formation for more than a decade, with various trade organizations and industry leaders working to bring the concept to fruition. 10 years of planning the launch of the Great Northern Cooperative was worth the wait, according to its volunteer board of directors.

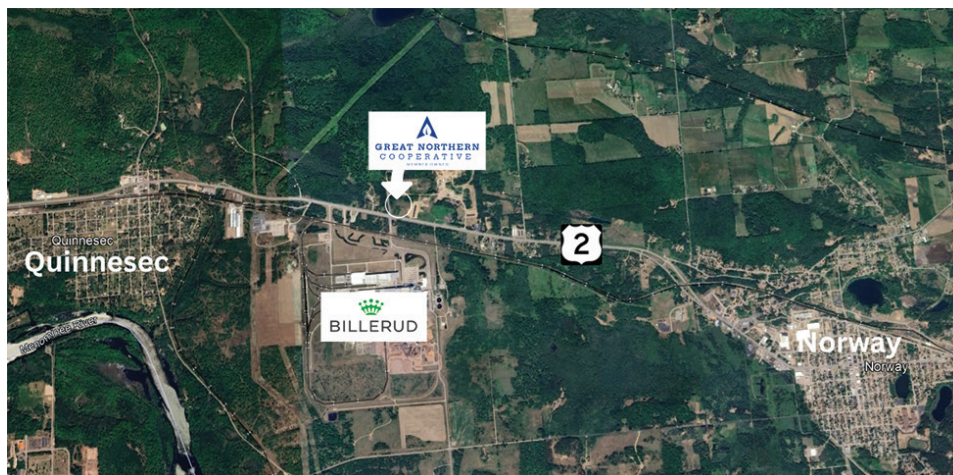
GNC board member Todd Johnson said that the Great Northern Cooperative board took its time to do things right. Johnson said the Board "Did our due diligence benchmarking other fuel cooperatives across the country, in both the forest products industry and in other industries."

Johnson stated, "I'm most proud of how much we worked to go back to the table time and again, to make sure we addressed all the concerns brought up by Michigan's timber industry." He went on to say that GNC organized and structured itself based around this feedback, and we are now fortunate to have a Michigan-based cooperative that is able to support the entire industry.



A STRATEGIC LOCATION

The new fueling station is strategically situated at W6664 US-2 in Quinnesec (technically Breitung Township), directly across from the truck entrance to the Billerud Americas paper mill. This prime location ensures easy access for loggers, haulers, truckers, mill operators, and others involved in the forest products industry. The station offers on-road diesel, off-road diesel, and diesel exhaust fluid (DEF), catering to the diverse fueling needs of its members. The cooperative operates 24/7, providing unmanned fueling services that are both safe and reliable.



A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

The Great Northern Cooperative is overseen by an all-volunteer board of directors, who represent investor companies and organizations. These founding companies and organizations invested financially in the fueling cooperative, and have long-term goals of seeing a return on their investment.

One of the primary organizations that has overseen the project from conception to completion is the Lansing-based Michigan Forest Products Council, spearheaded by their director Kevin Korpi and his staff. Kevin Korpi's determination and persistence in making the project a reality is commendable.

The Michigan Association of Timbermen (MAT) is proud to be one of several minority investors in this innovative project. MAT Executive Director Justin Knepper participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony, highlighting the importance of this initiative for the timber community. "Timber, especially pulpwood, is one of the lower-value raw materials out there, and with diesel prices the way they are, a lot of guys are barely breaking even just hauling it," said Knepper. "The Great Northern Co-op is about getting fuel back to a price that makes sense, so our people can keep working and so consumers aren't stuck paying more down the line. When we save at the pump, the savings flow through the whole supply chain."



MEMBERSHIP: HOW IT WORKS

Becoming a member of the Great Northern Cooperative is straightforward and offers numerous benefits. For an annual fee of \$45, members gain access to high-quality fuel and additional services, including fuel billing and reporting. The cooperative focuses on offering the lowest cost, highest quality, and most efficient products and services on the market, aiming to improve the bottom line for its members.

To join, interested individuals or businesses can fill out a quick membership and credit application form, which helps the cooperative learn more about their needs. Upon approval, members agree to the terms and conditions outlined in the membership agreement. This agreement allows members to purchase goods and services at negotiated prices, with the understanding that they will patronize the cooperative for their operational needs. Failure to do so may result in suspension or termination of membership, as per the cooperative's bylaws. The membership application is available at: <https://greatnortherncoop.com/membership-application/>.

EXPANDING ACCESS

The success of the Quinnesec station marks the beginning of GNC's expansion plans. Future fueling stations are being considered in Escanaba and Grayling, with the cooperative actively recruiting members across the Upper Peninsula. Membership is open to loggers, haulers, truckers, mill operators, and others in the forest products supply chain.

LOOKING AHEAD

The establishment of the GNC diesel fueling station in Breitung Township is a testament to the power of collaboration within the forest products industry. By pooling resources and leveraging collective purchasing power, stakeholders can achieve cost savings that benefit the entire supply chain. As the cooperative expands its reach, it continues to strengthen the economic foundation of Michigan's timber industry.

For more information or to become a member, visit greatnortherncoop.com or contact the cooperative at info@greatnortherncoop.com.





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