

THE MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF TIMBERMEN

FALL 2023

# TIMBER TALK

Dedicated to Representing the Needs of Small Businesses in the Forest Product Industry

## INSIDE

- Industry Teams up to Harvest State Christmas Tree
- MATSIF: Nearly 50 Years of Providing Excellent Workers Compensation

## 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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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**PRESIDENT**  
**Joe Doyle**

Michigan Association of Timbermen

Last quarter my report was labeled Pain and Agony, I promise not to repeat that theme, but the reality is what it is. Most loggers, truckers and sawmillers are facing a downturn like never seen before.

Loggers are forced to cut products that they haven't paid attention to in years, Sawmills are cutting different cuts to fill what markets are available. And most log truckers are facing a much shorter work week. With that being said, the Timberman board and staff recognize that markets are very different in certain parts of the state. With the current Decline in Pulp usage the Upper Peninsula, many lower grade stands are simply going no bid or extended until markets improve. This affects all markets as higher quality materials are being produced at a slower rate.

I used to equate the evolution of Timber Marketing to be the same as slaughtering hogs. Now, stay with me here. Back in the Seventies, most crating and bolt mills

didn't exist. A logger for the most part just had to cut the grade log off then the rest of the tree was sent to the pulp mill. The same was true for the pork producer. Back then it was chops and Bacon and sausage. You couldn't see up to five or six items on the menu containing pork. Someone convinced us as technology evolved that we had a need for Pork Rinds, Pulled Pork, baby back ribs etc. We as an industry have also enjoyed the advancements in machinery to provide a staggering array of diverse wood products.

With cut-to-length machinery, optimizing sawmills, and great advances in trucking capacities we have evolved into a much more efficient and value-added industry. It is very common to see up to 4-8 sorts on a job landing putting more items on the menu if you will. The problem is that we currently have a glut of sausage on our menu. With current conditions, most days would seem there is no end in sight of market decline. Patience may

be a virtue, but it doesn't pay the bills, we get that. For those of you that have been around for a while, you know that it will get better, the question is when? Now is a good time to encourage companies to innovate and encourage investors to come up with new ways to use our resource. Think of all the markets you have today, did they exist 10-20 years ago? Probably not.

New Innovative markets seem slow to come, but they will, they always have. Your Dad never ordered a pulled pork sandwich for lunch back in the day. You can be rest assured that Timberman staff will use all efforts to promote wood products in Michigan. As an association, we are doing everything we can to help curb the pain. If you are reading this, you have received your member benefits folder. Please take the time to review the resources that we provide and know that we are doing what we can to help you weather the storm.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**Justin Knepper**

Michigan Association of Timbermen

It's been a busy fall season for the Michigan Association of Timbermen office. Michelle and I, alongside your dedicated Board of Directors, have been hard at work, on a number of issues:

1. Staying Resilient in a Challenging Economy: We're still focused on doing everything and anything we can to support our loggers and truckers, especially across the Upper Peninsula, where the economic downturn has hit the pulpwood industry the hardest. We're brainstorming new markets, discussing big ideas with economic development leaders, and working on plans to hold regional meetings with our members to talk about what can be done in the short term.

2. Further Advocacy Efforts: On the advocacy front, we've had to work on a ton of issues, most of them covered in greater depth under the Legislative Update segment of this publication. One of the biggest ones I'm concerned about

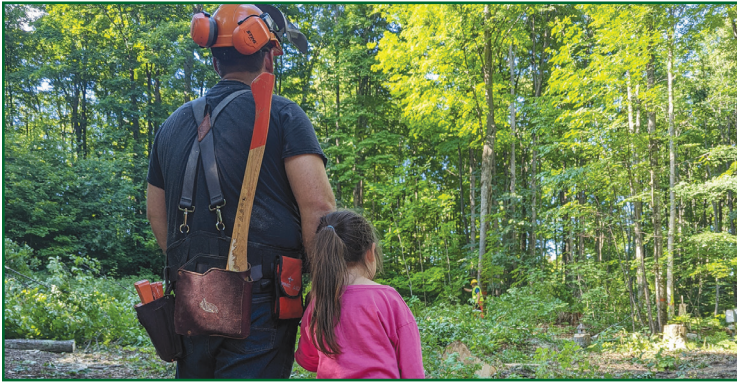
is the global "30x30" Initiative, called America the Beautiful at the National level, and "Michigan the Beautiful" at the State level. The goal of this movement is to conserve 30 percent of all land by 2030. I attended the first "Michigan the Beautiful" meeting held last month in Lansing and spoke up on behalf of the forest products industry. We will be actively engaged in this process going forward.

I also hopped over to Beaver Island to work on a specific member issue there; the Lake Michigan Islands Collaborative held their first regional meeting in two years to discuss island conservation issues; we promoted sustainable harvesting of Beaver Islands state lands, speaking to a group of nearly 30 environmental activists gathered there. Our presentation was generally well received and we hope to see carefully managed logging on public lands return to Beaver Island for the first time in a number of years.

3. Member Support: as mentioned above regarding our member logging company on Beaver Island, it is my goal to work closely with any of our members on any issues you may need us to tackle. We've been supporting businesses this fall more than ever. I recently assisted a small mill near Petoskey that was struggling to get a certificate of occupancy. I've spoken with another mill about how to expand to tap into underutilized species in the central UP; and a third mill in northern Michigan about how to apply for grant funding for an expansion. We especially want to support our loggers and truckers; please give us a call with anything you might need.

Another thing: we need your membership! Please pay your 2024 membership invoice if you haven't yet, and thank you for your support for the Michigan Association of Timbermen.

# WELCOME NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS!



**Northwoods Harvesting, LLC**  
Anthony & Mallory Ozzello  
Gaylord, MI



**Mid Michigan Tree Care**  
Jordan Clanche  
Lakeview, Michigan



**Donald H. Look Logging**  
Donald Look  
Tawas City, MI



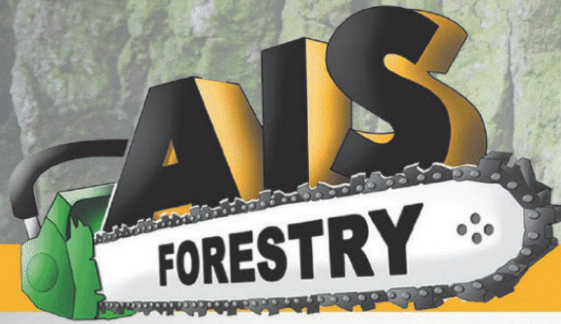
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[www.wolverinehardwoods.com](http://www.wolverinehardwoods.com)



**Lakeland Pallets**  
Jordan Koole  
Grand Rapids, MI  
[www.lakelandpalletsinc.com](http://www.lakelandpalletsinc.com)

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.timbermen.org/join](http://www.timbermen.org/join) and return to the MAT office. If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at 906.293.3236



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# Industry Teams Up To Harvest State Christmas Tree

Onaway, Michigan Celebrates Honor of Providing the 2023 State Christmas Tree

Sources: The Michigan Association of Timbermen and the Alpena News

On a rainy yet festive day in Onaway, Michigan, the community gathered to celebrate the selection of one of the city's trees as the official 2023 state Christmas tree. Denny Olson, MAT member and Director of Michigan Affairs for GLTPA, expressed gratitude to the small town in northern lower Michigan for their cooperation in providing the tree. Denny gave a tremendous speech to the large crowd about the importance of the event and the true meaning of Christmas.

The event took place at a residence on Main Street, where Onaway residents and students from Onaway Area Schools witnessed the cutting down of the

60-foot spruce. The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5857 acted as honor guards, while the Onaway school band played the National Anthem and other songs to commemorate the event.

The selected tree was transported to Lansing, where it is being prepared for the Silver Bells in the City event scheduled for November 17. This annual celebration in Lansing marks the lighting of the State Capitol Christmas Tree.

The generous donation of the tree came from Onaway resident Vic Ruppert, in honor of his late wife. The tree was deemed an ideal candidate by the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget. Despite the rain, the community turned out in full force to witness the tree-cutting ceremony.

Vic Ruppert shared his sentiments about the overwhelming response, stating, "I usually don't



see this many people unless it's the Fourth of July parade. So I was really pleased with the turnout."

The entire process was a collaborative effort, with local businesses and organizations playing crucial roles. Precision Forestry in Onaway, represented by Mike Sturgill, provided the chain saw and the truck and trailer for transporting the tree to Lansing. Mike Elenz of Elenz Inc. in Gaylord contributed significantly by trimming the tree and assisting with various aspects of the event.

Warren Suchovsky, a board member of the Michigan Association of Timbermen, was present along with Executive Director Justing Knepper, who both worked hard in the rain, lending a hand in tying up the branches for the journey. The efforts of volunteers from Operating Engineers 324 and McNally-Nimergood Crane Rentals, who provided the crane, were integral to the success of the event.





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# New Regulations on the Way for CDL Operators

If you own or drive a truck that requires a CDL license to operate, please take a moment to review the following information. Compliance with FMCSA's Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse regulations is critical to maintaining the ability to operate. Simply put, if your company and your driver(s) are not registered in the Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse the CDL privilege will be removed at renewal beginning November 18, 2024. To register you will need an email address, if you do not have one create one before you proceed with the registration process.

It is also important to remember that compliance with FMC-SA, state and local laws and regulations is crucial when involved in a crash whether at fault or not.

## Overview of Alcohol and Drug Testing Regulation - Compliance Date: January 6, 2020

The Federal Motor Carrier Administration Safety Administration established the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse (DACH). This new database

contains information pertaining to violations of the U.S. DOT controlled substances drug and alcohol testing program for holders of CDLs. The DACH final rule requires the following:

- Employers must query the Clearinghouse for current and prospective employees' drug and alcohol violations before permitting those employees to operate a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) on public roads.
- Employers must annually query the Clearinghouse for each driver they currently employ.

## Clearinghouse-II Final Rule: CDL Downgrades

As required in the Clearinghouse-II final rule, **beginning November 18, 2024**, State Driver Licensing Agencies (SDLAs) must query the Clearinghouse before issuing, renewing, upgrading, or transferring CDLs and CLPs, and must review a driver's information when notified by the Clearinghouse of a status change. SDLAs will be required to remove the CDL or CLP privilege from the driver's license of

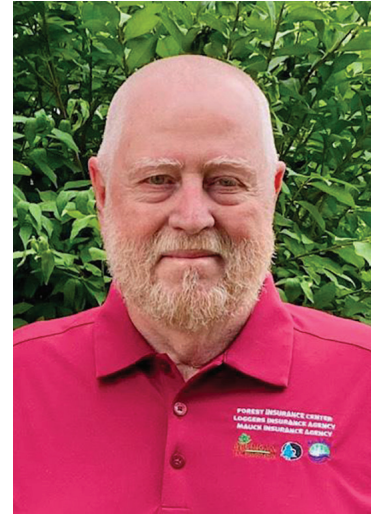
an individual subject to the CMV driving prohibition, which would result in a downgrade of the license until the driver complies with the return-to-duty (RTD) requirements.

**For more information on the Clearinghouse or to register go to <https://clearinghouse.fmcsa.dot.gov/>**

## Final Comments to Consider

Obviously, it is very important that we all work together to remove all drivers impaired by alcohol and/or drugs from our roadways, regardless of the type of license they have. Driving while impaired crashes continue to be a major concern to all who travel the nation's highways. The Clearinghouse-II Final Rule will go a long way to addressing these concerns regarding CDL holders, but I can only hope that further steps will be taken to remove non-CDL licensed drivers from the roadways as well. Our families are often exposed to the danger impaired drivers pose.

Forest Insurance Center Agen-

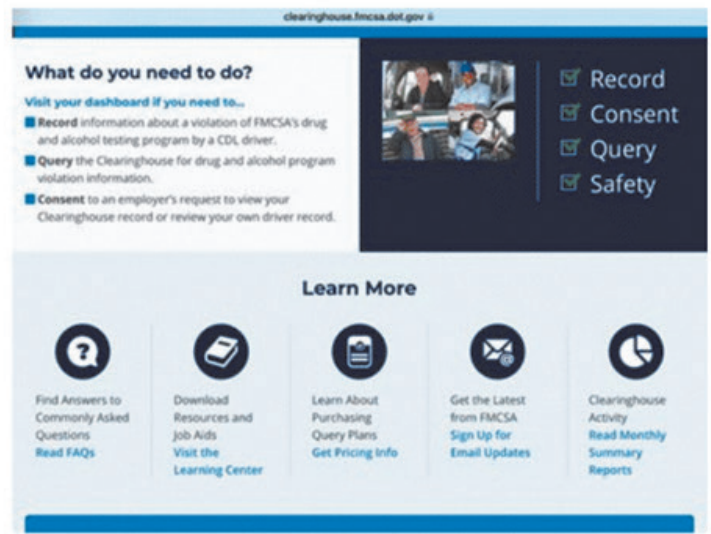
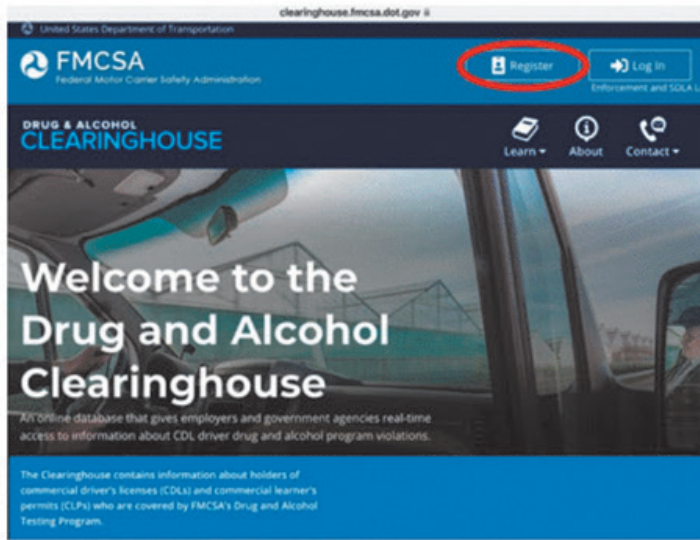


*Jimmie Locklear*

cy, Inc. - Risk Control Services was created to assist companies that transport forest products within Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota. If you have questions or need assistance with understanding FMCSA regulations or need driver safety issues addressed, please contact, Jimmie Locklear, Risk Control Manager, at [jlOCKlear@forestinsurancecenter.com](mailto:jlOCKlear@forestinsurancecenter.com) or cell # 906-291-0011.

*Always Think Safety and Drive Safe!*

For more information on the Clearinghouse or to register go to <https://clearinghouse.fmcsa.dot.gov/>



# Warren Suchovsky Scholarship Fund Accepting Applications

The Michigan Association of Timbermen will award a yearly scholarship of \$1,000 on behalf of Warren Suchovsky for his generous service to the forest industry.

We welcome your applications from applicants who have chosen a forestry, natural resources or forest product manufacturing field of study. Applicants who have chosen a broad base field such as environmental science will be asked to provide a list of courses for that field.

Applications are also accepted for non-degree courses such as lumber grading, timber harvesting certificates, or other fields that directly impact the forest products industry.

Past award recipients may

apply again using the current year's application form. Past applications are not kept on file by MAT.

Applicants may email, fax, or mail their application to the MAT office and must be postmarked or received prior to March 8, 2024.

The scholarship committee will be reviewing candidates' applications during the month of March with final selection and announcement of award winner by April 12, 2024.

It is strongly desired that the scholarship awardee be present to receive their award during the Michigan Association of Timbermen Annual Convention banquet and awards ceremony the evening of Friday April 26, 2024 at the Bavarian Inn Lodge in

Frankenmuth, MI.

Awardees will be provided with up to 3 complimentary banquet tickets and if desired one complimentary overnight stay the evening of the banquet.

If you have any questions or need clarification, please contact:

Michelle Sears,  
Office Administrator  
Office: 906-293-3236  
Fax: 906-293-5444  
Email:  
msears@timbermen.org



Warren Suchovsky

*Applications can be found on  
the following link:*

*[www.michigantimbermen.com/scholarship](http://www.michigantimbermen.com/scholarship)*

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# PLATINUM SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT: MATSIF - Nearly 50 Years of Providing Workers Compensation To The Forest Products Industry

The Michigan Association of Timbermen Self-Insurers' Fund (MATSIF), based in Newberry, Michigan is a leading provider of workers' compensation insurance for the wood products industry. Established by the Michigan Association of Timbermen (MAT) in 1974, MATSIF was created to address the unique insurance needs of its members. In the early 2000s, MAT and MATSIF formed separate organizational entities to better serve their respective members. The evolving needs and priorities of each organization necessitated a new path forward. MAT and MATSIF continue to work closely together. MATSIF supports MAT as a member and sponsor, and both organizations collaborate on a joint annual convention each year.

With nearly 50 years of experience providing specialized coverage, competitive pricing, and exceptional service, MATSIF has become a premier program dedicated to supporting the growth and success of employers in the wood products industry.

One of MATSIF's biggest successes over the years has been its ability to give back to its members. This past year, MATSIF distributed \$1.6 million in surplus and interest income to its members, showcasing its financial stability and commitment to providing value. With a consistent

surplus return of over 34% of the total premium collected, MATSIF has been able to continually ensure competitive pricing for its members.

Furthermore, the Organization's impressive average loss ratio of 42% is achieved through collaborative efforts with members in developing

tailored safety and loss control packages. By accessing MATSIF's safety resources, members can create safer workplaces, receive competitive ratings, and enjoy premium refunds.

MATSIF underwent a leadership change last year, following the retirement of longtime Fund Administrator Barb Bennett. Jackie Schummer, assumed the role of Fund Administrator in November 2022, and brings a wealth of experience and exper-

tise from her 44-year career at MATSIF as Assistant Administrator. Her extensive knowledge of workers' compensation insurance and self-insured programs, along with her deep understanding of the challenges faced by wood products employers, has been instrumental in pro-



viding tailored services and support to members. Under Jackie's capable leadership, MATSIF continues to maintain the highest standards of service and support, navigating the ever-evolving



*Jackie Schummer  
Fund Administrator*

landscape of the wood products industry.

Jackie Schummer oversees a skilled six person team at MATSIF, including loss control representatives Rick Dessellier, Brian LeBeouf, Mike Kline. Jessie Maeder works as Loss Control Secretary. Emily Golat and Missy Olivier work in Accounting.

Going forward, MATSIF remains committed to serving its members and working for the good of the wood products industry. MAT continues to promote and endorse this premier workers' compensation program established by the dedicated "Timbermen" that saw a need to achieve a strong, stable, and competitive program that would provide the greatest return on investment to participants.



49<sup>th</sup> Annual

# TIMBERMEN'S CONVENTION

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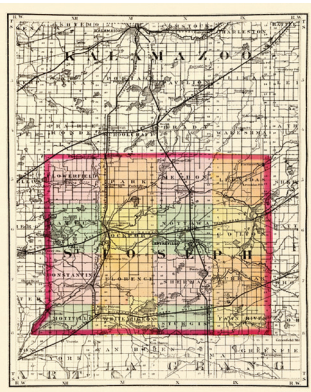


# History Across Michigan's Regions - Region 4: Richard Allen Logging



Michigan Association of Timbermen member Richard Allen Logging hails from Sturgis, Michigan, located just a few miles north of the Indiana border in St. Joseph County. While the community is not as deeply tied to the early days of lumbering as other areas of the State, it is still a tradition that is woven through stories of early settlers who sought fertile soil, plenty of water, and useful timber. Richard Allen, and his father before him, continues to build on these traditions.

Sturgis, named after Pennsylvania Judge John Sturgis,



began was founded as settlers, including the Sturgis family, moved west. Originally settling near Detroit, Judge Sturgis met federal

surveyors marking out St. Joseph County. These surveyors painted a vivid picture of the area's richness, described by Bob Hair in the book *Sturgis, Michigan: Its Story to 1930*. "They told glowing tales of rich soil with abundant supplies of water and useable timber."

Sturgis and his family faced challenges, like fording rivers and navigating swamps,

as they brought their belongings on wagons pulled by ox teams on their 20 day trek. Several years later, after having been settled, cutting timber and clearing the land for their home, Judge Sturgis and his family entertained future Michigan Governor Lewis Cass, who after enjoying a meal at the Sturgis home, supposedly named the settlement "Sturgis" in honor of Mrs. Sturgis' biscuits! ([www.us12heritage-trail.org](http://www.us12heritage-trail.org))

Fast forward to the 1970s, and the Allen family continued the logging tradition in this historic corner of Michigan. Richard Allen's father embraced logging when the International Harvester Plant where he worked in northern Indiana closed down. He decided to give logging a try, becoming one of the first men in the region to own a log

*Continues on page 14*



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*Continued from page 13*

## History Across Michigan's Regions - Region 4: Richard Allen Logging

skidder. However, after two of Richard's uncles were injured in logging accidents, his father shifted to just skidding and hauling, and warned his sons to stay away from his choice of work.

Richard's dad Harry Allen and his mother at a log yard in the early days.

Despite his father's warnings, Richard always felt a pull toward logging. After his father's passing in 1988, Richard thought he'd give it a shot.

"[In 1989], I began logging for a friend of [my dad's] for a brief time, and I was really bad at it. I mostly worked in construction until 2000. That year I took some time off to help my brother after a devastating fire that destroyed his business. He owned an old Massey Ferguson skidder, [which] he used it to manage his property. My brother gifted it to me. That year I made a few calls and landed my first logging job. [The job ended up being] for the first mill my dad ever worked for! The first few years I struggled. I was able to purchase a newer John Deere skidder[:]; the Massey Ferguson skidder burned up on an ash sludge job.

Richard's old Massey Ferguson Skidder

As hard as I tried [in these early years], I just could not make things work on my own. I was offered a job at the biggest mill in our area as an employee [and accept-



*Richard Allen Logging's newer Clark Cable Skidder, still going strong!*

ed the position]. Over a 10+ year period, I went through saw training [under a fellow named Joe Glenn, who helped me tremendously We're now close friends.] That experience and training gave me the knowledge I needed and a better logger I became! This led me to the logging supervisor position. In this position, I trained and worked with new loggers.

In 2016, I decided to give contracting another go! I drove to New Hampshire and purchased my Clark Cable skidder. In the past years I have cut timber for a few different mills. I am currently cutting for Quality Hardwoods, located in Sunfield, MI. Logging had been a hard road, but ultimately has provided my family a good life!"

Richard Allen's business card next to his dad's old business card and the last scale his father used, which he carries with him on his clipboard.



*Richard Allen at work, November 2023*

# Nearly 70 Central UP 8th Graders Experience Logging Operations

The Michigan Association of Timbermen staff joined Ponsse North America and St. John Forest Products at a huge field day for eight graders that took place deep in the State Forest north of Ralph, Michigan. More than 70 eighth grade students from multiple schools including North Central in Powers, Carney-Nadeau Public School, and North Dickinson County School were bussed into the woods to learn about logging and forest management.

They spent time talking

with Jordan St. John and on ride-alongs with St. John Forest Products operators; they enjoyed interacting with Ponsse North America staff and trying their hand on the simulator; they listened to foresters from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources; they learned about safety from MATSIF loss control representative Rick Dessellier; they talked with Justin

Knepper from the Michigan Association of Timbermen and Henry Schienebeck from the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association; and some of them were interviewed by the TV6 & FOX UP journalist and The Escanaba Daily Press journalist! Based on student excitement, we're pretty sure at least a handful of eighth graders are going to be future loggers once they graduate!

*U.P. Middle Schoolers Experience the Timber Industry First-Hand*

The Michigan Association of Timbermen would especially like to thank Jim Charlier and his crew with Ponsse, and Jordan St. John with St. John Forest Products for working with our office to coordinate the event; Ponsse provided a simulator and a lot of other goodies for the students, and Jordan and his wife Trista St. John somehow got dozens of hot Dominoe's pizzas delivered to the middle of nowhere, in a timely fashion!



## Final 2023 SFI Training

Date	Time	Location	City
12/7/2023	9am-1pm	Weyerhaeuser, 4111 W. Four Mile Rd.	Grayling, MI

Register at <https://events.anr.msu.edu/weyerdec7/>

# Michigan Legislature's Energy/Climate Bills Effect on the Biomass Industry

A series of bills addressing energy and climate policy were approved by the [State] house and senate, preserving electricity produced from woody biomass as a renewable energy resource.

The bills this week rest in the senate chambers, where lawmakers will take action on four bills that give the Michigan Public Service Commission expanded authority in the siting of wind projects 100 megawatts or greater, and solar projects 50 megawatts or greater.

As passed by the house, SB 271 puts limitations on biomass power plants as a renewable energy resourced. Biomass facilities that co-fire with scrap tires or tire-derived

fuel (TDF) would not be considered renewable, and facilities entering commercial operation after enactment of the bill would be restricted to wood fuel resources that meet certain sustainability criteria.

"It's a good day, but not a great day for Michigan's biomass power generators," said Michigan Biomass director Gary Melow. "While on one hand lawmakers saw the climate and energy values of biomass power, the prohibition on utilizing TDF handcuffs these facilities because using small amounts of it reduces our air emission, helps get more renewable megawatts out of the wood fuel, stabilizes power production, and keeps Michigan's scrap tires from being spread

around the landscape, posing environment hazards and health risks."

Since 2012, Michigan's biomass power plants have helped the state's Scrap Tire Management Program collect and clean up more than 53 million scrap tires that would have otherwise been littered across the landscape or ended up in landfills. Disallowing the use of this fuel creates a scrap tire management problem for the state, has a detrimental impact on the environment, and puts Michigan's biomass plants in economic harm through increase production costs and stripping them of the renewable branding of their electricity.



Gary Melow

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# As We See It: Inconsistent Federal Transportation Policy Hurting the Economy and Environment

The U.S. Federal Transportation Policy is a disjointed, bureaucratic hodgepodge of restrictions and requirements lacking consistency across the states, imposed under the extortionist threat of federal funding losses.

## What weighs more?

### A ton of milk or a ton of logs?

A ton is still a ton, there is no difference. Why, then, can a truck hauling milk carry heavier loads than a truck carrying logs on the Federal Interstate? This is but one example of the vagaries of a federal policy that allows specific commodities exemptions or authorization to carry more weight on the Federal Interstate System.

In many areas, there is a wide disparity between the speed and weight limits on state and interstate roadways, even when compared with other Interstate Highways. For instance, in New England states, trucks hauling timber are authorized to access the Federal Interstate System at 100,000 pounds. Meanwhile, on a specific 23-mile corridor of federal interstate in Minnesota, trucks are allowed to haul timber up to 99,000 pounds. Other sections of the interstate in different states are grandfathered in at higher weights than the standard Interstate weight limit.

Are particular Federal Interstate Highways in New England or other states built to a different engineering standard than federal interstates in other states?

The answer is no, they are all built to the same standards. Similar bureaucratic manipulation is apparent with the Electric Vehicle push. The heavier electric semi-trucks would by law have been forced to carry less cargo, thus increasing transportation costs which would be passed onto the consumer. But EV semi-trucks have now been authorized to carry 2,000 more pounds (4,000 in Europe) to accommodate the heavier batteries of the EV semi-trucks. So again, what weighs more? Batteries or logs?

Optimum transportation weights are recognized as a major contributing factor in maxi-

mizing transportation efficiency, reducing consumer costs, and improving safety while resulting in less carbon emissions. Transportation engineering studies have recognized the opportunity to safely increase truck weights on the federal interstate system. Congress has established precedents with carve-outs and exemptions in select states for specific commodities, routes, and weights. Globally, other countries and regions, specifically Canada and the European Union, allow for heavier weight limits on their roadways.

### Why doesn't Congress and the Administration establish competitive, efficient, and uniform weight standards for the federal interstate system?

It seems that the influence and targeted opposition of the railroad lobbyists are derailing (pun intended) the overriding goals of the Transportation Department to provide safe and efficient avenues for the nation. It would be much better for our national transportation goals if the railroad industry invested in their equipment, tracks, and safety instead of investing in politicians.

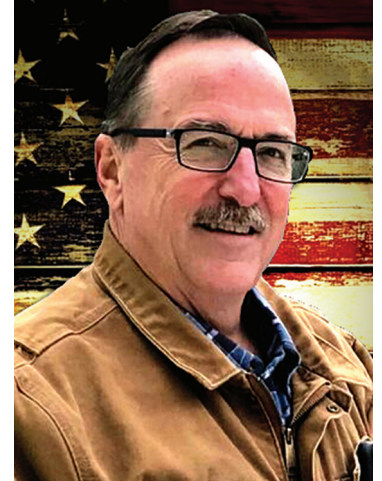
With the history of accidents and hazardous chemical spills exposing communities to life-threatening situations, the railways have plenty to focus on.

This year Congress has the opportunity to put the economy, environment, and public safety above monopolistic railroad interests by supporting the Safe Routes Act of 2023. This Bill has been introduced in both the Senate and House of Representatives. Failure to pass the Safe Routes Act of 2023 will continue to expose the public to unnecessary safety risks, increase consumer product costs, generate more carbon emissions, and contribute to climate change by requiring the use of more fossil fuels.

The question for Congress and the Administration is simple -

Are you going to establish uniform, consistent, and fair Federal Transportation Policies across the country, or are you going to continue to allow unelected lobbyists to dictate transportation policy at the expense of the general public?

The Administration and many in Congress profess wanting to



*Scott Dane  
Executive Director,  
American Loggers Council*

reduce fossil fuel use, reduce carbon emissions, improve the economy, create rural jobs, and support general welfare and safety. This is the perfect opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to these priorities by passing the Safe Routes Act of 2023. Choosing not to support the Safe Routes Act of 2023 would be a demonstration of whose best interest is being served by our elected officials.



*The American Loggers Council 2023 Annual Membership Meeting was held in Newry, Maine earlier in October. The Michigan Association of Timbermen is proud to have been represented by our outgoing Michigan ALC representative Brian Nelson and his wife Maureen (left). Brian is passing the torch to our MAT Board President Joe Doyle, pictured on the right, with his wife Christine.*

# New American Loggers Council Rebates

Michigan Association of Timbermen members are affiliate members of the American Loggers Council, and qualify for the following long-standing and new rebate offers:



MEMBERS RECEIVE A \$10,000 PARTS & SERVICE CREDIT WITH PURCHASE OF NEW HARVESTER OR FORWARDER.

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To apply for a rebate or for more information, visit [www.amloggers.com/rebates](http://www.amloggers.com/rebates)

# TIMBER TALK LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FALL 2023



*Jason Wadaga*  
MAT Lobbyist

The last few weeks have brought a rare early adjournment and a slew of major policy changes in a short period of time by the Michigan Legislature.

In Governor Whitmer's "What's Next" address at the end of this summer, she laid out her priorities for the rest of 2023. Included in that list was a 100% clean energy plan, lowering health care and prescription drug costs, a paid family medical leave act, reproductive health (or abortion) protections and election security.

In recent months, the legislature was able to pass and get signed into law a handful of these issues including a re-write of Michigan's energy plan, new abortion protection statute and reform to our state election laws.

## **EARLY ADJOURNMENT (SINE DIE) IN MICHIGAN**

Typically, the Michigan Legislature adjourns (called sine die) its legislative session after Christmas for the year. However, they formally adjourned for the rest of 2023 in early November of this year and it's not known at this point when they will return in 2024.

This decision was made for two reasons, #1) to speed up the effective date of policies passed earlier in 2023 and #2) because two Democrat members of the Michigan House of Representatives were elected Mayor in their hometown essentially ending the Democrats majority in the House until new members are elected.

In early 2023, the Democratic led

majority in the legislature passed several of their priorities including moving Michigan's 2024 Democrat Presidential primary to February as opposed to their usual date in March. In order for this to happen, the legislature needed to speed up their adjournment date to allow the legislation to take effect in time.

Also, two of the members of the House Democrat Caucus, Rep. Lori Stone (Warren) and Rep. Kevin Coleman (Westland) won their mayoral elections taking the House Democrats majority from 56-54 to 54-54, essentially creating gridlock on any major policy items until those seats are filled.

The Governor will now need to call a primary election followed by a general election for both of those seats. While it's anticipated that both will remain Democrat seats, it will slow the legislative process down significantly until well into 2024.

## **ENERGY OVERHAUL SIGNED INTO LAW IN MICHIGAN**

As part of the "Clean Energy Future Plan", Gov. Whitmer and the legislative Democrats passed legislation this November to re-write the scope of energy policy in our state. MAT lobbied legislators and followed the package of bills from their inception. We saw three critical areas that needed to be monitored:

### **• RENEWABLE**

**MANDATES** - The final versions of the bills require a 100% "clean energy" portfolio by 2040 for electricity providers in Michigan. "Clean Energy" can include nuclear energy, biomass energy and new and existing gas plants utilizing technology with a carbon capture and a storage (CCS) rate of 90%.

Between 2030 and 2034, electricity providers must have a "renewable energy portfolio" of 50% and must reach 60% renewable by 2035. Renewable energy is defined as solar, wind and geothermal energy.

These are obviously very ambitious goals that create uncertainty in the electric grid.

**• MAT HAS WIN ON INCLUDING BIOMASS AS A "CLEAN ENERGY"** - The original versions of the bills that were introduced in the House and Senate excluded biomass as a clean energy which included wood product. This

would have devastated Michigan's biomass facilities and left our membership with no market for wood products.

MAT advocated lawmakers over the summer months to get wood product and biomass reinstated in the legislation and we were ultimately successful.

### **• WIND AND SOLAR**

**SITING** - Perhaps the most controversial part of the energy re-write was the legislation dealing with solar and wind sites across Michigan. In order to reach the renewable energy mandates in the bills, it's estimated that Michigan will need an additional 250,000 plus acres of land for these solar panels and wind turbines.

The legislation that was passed would move the permitting of utility-scale renewable energy facilities from the local level to the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) on projects 100 megawatts or larger. This was obviously very controversial with local communities who felt they were being stripped of their control.

## **MAT INPUT LEADS TO CHANGES IN PROPOSED RULES FROM MDNR**

In August, MAT lobbyists provided comments in front of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regarding their proposed changes to the Commercial Forest rules set.

Originally, the DNR had proposed the following in Rule 299.2606 regarding Prior Reporting; harvest of forest products:

Rule 6. (1) The owner of listed land shall report to the department of an intent to harvest on a form prescribed by the department, not less than 30 days before prior to the cutting, harvesting, or removing forest products from listed land.

MAT went on the record asking for more flexibility on the "intent to harvest" as no less than 30 days requirement didn't take into consideration unpredictable weather conditions and other factors. We asked that the rules state "not less than 7 days prior to the cutting, harvesting, or removal of removing forest products from listed land."

The DNR ultimately decided to put into the rules a 10-day intent to harvest in the Commercial Forest Rules.

MAT appreciates the DNR listen-

ing to the industry, resulting in the flexibility needed by both owners and loggers when harvesting these lands.

## **MAT PARTICIPATING IN "MICHIGAN THE BEAUTFUL SUMMIT"**

In October, MAT Executive Director Justin Knepper, participated in what is being called the "Michigan the Beautiful Summit" in Lansing with more than one hundred environmental sector leaders from the DNR, tribal governments, the Nature Conservancy and many others. The summit was the first event organized in Michigan to promote the controversial "30x30" plan to conserve 30 percent of land across the globe by 2030.

The mission statement of the "Michigan the Beautiful Summit" is that nature defines Michigan and is essential to our health, well-being, and prosperity. Yet across the U.S., we are seeing the disappearance of nature, changes in climate are impacting our natural environment, and we have inequitable access to the outdoors. The Michigan the Beautiful Initiative is an effort to protect, conserve, and restore Michigan's nature for the future through collaborative and strategic conservation. Together we can ensure the long-term health of our nature.

MAT's interest, or concern, is that the summit will result in further limiting the harvesting of timber product across the state of Michigan. The movement is in its preliminary stages and will be an ongoing effort that requires education and advocacy from MAT and its members.

Justin was able to spend the day with leaders across a variety of interests including Sen. Sue Shink from Ann Arbor who serves as the Chairwoman of the Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee in the Michigan Senate. MAT is currently working to host Sen. Shink for a logging tour in Northern Michigan.

Thanks to the other representative from the forest products industry who was present at the Summit - Bill O'Brion with Lyme Great Lakes Timberlands, who served on a panel discussion and positively represented our industry.

Stay tuned for developments on this summit.



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