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TIMBER BULLETIN

DULUTH, MINNESOTA

MARCH/APRIL 2020

VOLUME 75

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Volume 75
March/April 2020
Duluth, Minnesota

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Timber harvested right before breakup waits to be hauled to the mill.

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Another winter logging season is in the books. I am sure most will agree, it was a winter that we don't want to relive anytime soon. Above normal snow early in the season does not make for good working conditions in this industry. I hope the lack of snowfall for the rest of the winter was helpful in making up for a lousy beginning to the most productive season that we all bank on.

Quarantine, social distancing, food rationing, ventilators, etc. etc. Terms that many of us were very unfamiliar with, have become a new normal for the hopefully only short future. Obviously I am referring to COVID-19. Unfortunately, the phrases that will

President's Column



undoubtedly go with these are, "market related" downtime and "major" changes in our industry. Timber auctions have gone mostly sealed bid for all agencies, a very unpopular form of selling wood to many of our members. You should have received information on what is being offered in terms of Small Business Administration loan opportunities. Please feel free to call TPA staff with any questions or comments you may have.

On the TPA side of things, the legislative session has made considerable changes, as a result our Executive Vice President has had to make changes to his schedule. Working remotely has many challenges. We had to cancel our regional board meetings, which were (in my view) very productive in acquiring useful information in more concentrated areas of the state. We hope to still get these in sometime in the latter part of the year. The decision has been made to postpone our annual meeting. It has been re-scheduled for October 8, still taking place at Sugar Lake Lodge, south of Grand Rapids. There had to be a couple agenda items changed. We have scheduled the Board of Directors meeting in the morning, and full membership meeting in the afternoon. Keep in mind, attendance at the membership meeting in the afternoon will make you eligible for MLEP credits. We will miss the golf/fishing that we have done for years. Hope we can get it back next year!

I hope that things will get back to some sort of normal atmosphere for all of us. Please take break-up for some family time as well as repairs and maintenance that I am sure you are working on. As always, be safe!

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In times like these, it feels especially good to get outside—and breathe in the damp, musky air of spring. Getting outside and doing ... something ... beats the constant drumbeat of the 24-hour news cycle.

With the COVID-19 crisis ever-present, it reminds me that life is good in the woods. It doesn't mean life is easy (as logging conditions this winter attest). But given the impacts of the coronavirus, and the distance of small towns and rural areas from big cities (social and otherwise),



the reach of the virus has been limited in most rural communities so far.

I pray it stays that way. Sometimes, when you live and work off the beaten path, it has advantages. In this case, at least at the time of this writing, the big advantage of living and working in

rural Minnesota is social distancing. Maybe it's our mostly Scandinavian roots. Or perhaps it's the fact we have millions more trees than people in our neck of the woods.

Whatever the reason, the benefit, at this point, is the health and well-being of family members, employees, our businesses, and our communities. Rural America has plenty of challenges. Here's hoping we don't add coronavirus to the list.

Maintaining social distancing seems to help. Facemasks may soon be the norm and not the exception—even in rural areas. Small changes in some respects – but it appears they make a big difference, along with wiping down working areas. If that's what it takes to stay safe and healthy and still operate – it's worth putting these measures into practice.

The virus has taught us new terms, such as “essential services” and “critical infrastructure.” And we've learned these are important terms for the logging industry.

As Governor Walz was considering a stay home (shelter-in-

place) order in March, we worked with local legislators and the Governor's office to classify logging and the forest industry as an “essential” part of the supply chain during this pandemic.

Whether it's cutting wood, hauling timber, or manufacturing products such as utility poles for electric service; pallets for shipping a wide-range of goods; lumber, siding and structural panels that provide shelter (or the need for temporary shelters due to the pandemic); or pulp and paper products that provide for other essential needs such as clothing, paper to print news and research, and packaging – Minnesota's wide range of forest products are essential across the state, the nation, and the globe.

We thank northern legislators, including Minnesota's Iron Range delegation, and specifically Rep. Rob Ecklund, DFL-International Falls; and Senator Erik Simonson, DFL-Duluth; for their help sharing this message with the Governor and his staff as the administration considered the stay home order.

Some states curtailed logging



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operations, sawmills, board plants and other wood products operations amid the crisis. We're thankful Minnesota officials followed guidelines established by the Department of Homeland Security that classified forest products as essential.

We could be in for a long haul. But it helps when we have the support of public officials who understand the importance of the logging community and the importance of products that are produced from Minnesota's forests--products that are essential to the supply chain and well-being of individuals, families and communities across the state, the nation, and the globe.

Governor Walz has also set up a web site www.mn.gov/COVID-19 to track and update all statewide statistics related to coronavirus. The web site also contains links to educational resources and information for businesses seeking assistance, relief, or resources to better understand the numerous policies, programs, and Executive Orders governing the pandemic.

The state has passed emergency legislation totaling more than \$500 million to date. The Feds—more than \$2 trillion and counting. Some of the funding is available to small businesses that need help to get through the crisis. More information is available in this issue of the Bulletin and at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>.

The disruption caused by COVID-19 also forced the state to issue an Emergency Budget Forecast. Prior to the crisis, Minnesota was looking at a \$1.5 billion surplus. The revised forecast will reflect a significant budget shortfall for the next two years.

It will drastically change funding priorities within state government for the foreseeable future.

The crisis has disrupted everything from TPA's spring Regional Board Meetings, to MLEP and Logsafe sessions, to oral timber

auctions. It has also disrupted our Annual Membership meeting – originally scheduled for June 4. We have rescheduled the annual meeting to October 8 at Sugar Lake Lodge and are hopeful we can get together safely and at that time.

If nothing else, the crisis reminds us what's most important in life. Sometimes reminders like this are painful and hard to take, but It's likely we've been spending more time at home and reconnecting with family. And we've been following guidelines for social distancing to

help prevent "community spread" and keep people safe.

Keeping others safe is essential any day of the week. Whether we're dealing with coronavirus, or working in the woods, in the shop, or at home with our families. Social distancing is a different safety message than we're used to sending -- but if it helps put this crisis in the rear-view mirror, and we come out of this crisis stronger, healthier, and better off because of it -- then let's practice it intently so we can get back to business as usual and life as we prefer it.

Until then, stay safe. Stay well.



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Member Feature...



Dean, Red, Jeff, and David Haley of Haley Logging Company

It's Just In My Blood

On a typical late December morning in northern Minnesota, logger David Haley is alone in his pickup, driving down a logging road to his partner for the day, a Timbco 425 EXL feller buncher.

As Haley pulls up, his dashboard thermometer reads -22, but he can see steam coming from the engine compartment. He'd set the timer on the engine heater the night before, so this is a good sign.

"Do you see what I see?" Haley says. "The heater's running. I hope it's warm enough to start. It should be. The heater's been running for an hour."

No one is there to hear him speak,

but thousands end up hearing what he said. Haley had put his cell phone in a mount on his pickup's dash and pressed record on its video camera. He walks into the frame and climbs into the buncher. Thanks to the heater, the Timbco starts right up.

It's the start of one of the 300+ logging videos Haley has uploaded to YouTube since 2016. Now four years later, Haley has more than 10,500 subscribers to his YouTube channel, and his videos chronicling Haley Logging Company, the business he owns with his brothers Jeff and Dean, have been viewed more than 3 million times.

"I never thought so many people

would see my videos," he says.

"It's one nice way the internet can bring people together," Dean says, "and then hopefully educate them a little bit about the timber industry."

The videos—like the business—are all about family. The brothers' father Hubert "Red" Haley started Haley Logging Company nearly sixty years ago.

But Red's life in the woods began long before that. His dad worked in a logging camp northeast of Bigfork, and their family lived there. By age 9, Red was helping out, running a D6 Cat in the summertime. He was used to running around barefoot all summer, but there was no cab on the D6, so he'd work in the sunshine,

and the transmission engine was right under the floorboard, getting blazing hot, brutal for bare feet.

"I was too small. My feet didn't touch the floorboards," Red chuckles. "So I was OK. But the seat got pretty hot."

After graduating high school, Red went off to college in Bemidji, earning a business degree. But logging was where he wanted to put that degree to use, returning to Bigfork to start Haley Logging Company in the early 1960s.

"I grew up in the logging camp," Red says. "It's just in my blood. I graduated out of college and went right back to the woods. I mean, it's just in my blood."

As the boys came of age, they all headed to the woods to help out. Once Red retired from day-to-day operations around 13 years ago, Jeff, Dean, and David went forward as equal partners in the business their father built from scratch.

"Being the age I am now (45) is roughly how old Dad was when I was in high school," Dean says, "so I've really grown to appreciate what he was able to do for us, the opportunities he gave us and the sacrifices he made on his own to be able to provide for the family. It's very hard to try and replicate what he did, the work ethic, and the self-discipline. It's amazing what he was able to do."

"We are very appreciative of my father because he has shown us that hard work actually does pay off," Jeff says. "He has always done as much as he could for us and has supported us with everything. I am so grateful for everything he has taught me. Thanks Dad!"

These days, Red is never too far away. Haley Logging's shop is still right next door to Red's house, and when the boys need a hand, he's there to help. Case in point: in December just before Christmas, long time skidder operator Jeff "Spiff" Parsons injured his shoulder and wound up missing the rest of the winter. Fortunately, Red was ready to jump in to help.

"That's a 79-year-old guy and he sees a need in the company and he jumps," David says. "Nobody had to ask him or suggest or anything. He just said he was going to show up the next day and jump in that skidder and we're going to go to



Now that the winter season is over, the Haley's equipment is parked outside their shop, ready for off-season maintenance.



Dean Haley operates this John Deere delimiting machine with a Lim-mit.

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work. It was awesome. That's the kind of guy he is."

"I like to help out," Red says. "You feel like you actually accomplish something. It's better than sitting around. I help if they need help."

How good at skidding was Red after all these years?

"He might have been the best skidder operator in northern Minnesota," David says.

"He's an unbelievable skidder operator," Jeff says. "His operating skills are still there."

"It's like riding a bike," Dean smiles.

And the best part about skidding in 2020 as opposed to back in Red's heyday: heated skidder cabs.

"It was comfortable," Red acknowledges with a smile. "I used to just sit out in the cold for years."

It was good for the Haleys to have their dad help them through an otherwise difficult winter. Markets were tight, and the deep freeze needed for high winter production—particularly in spruce—never materialized. But they've been through the ups and downs before, harvesting mostly aspen this past winter and delivering to several Minnesota mills, including Sappi, PCA, Blandin, and Norbord.

"We just have to keep doing what we've been doing the last couple of years: buy more open market wood and try to get it at a reasonable price." Dean says "The opportunity will present itself at some point here. It might be something that's currently in the works that nobody knows about. And who knows? It might be two years, it might be five years. Something good will happen."

Something good is happening with David's videos on YouTube. He never intended them to become so popular. He started making them for Red's 93-year-old brother Jim who lives in Chicago.

"I have roughly an hour drive home each night, so I'd often call Uncle Jim," David says, "He'd ask all these different questions: where we were working, what the machines do. I thought, why don't I just take some videos? I'll put them on YouTube and share them with him so he can see what I'm



Aspen is loaded onto trucks to be hauled to the mill.

David's process is pretty simple. He shoots the vast majority of the videos with his Android smart phone. He has a mount he can use in his pickup or in the buncher for action shots. He also utilizes a GoPro or drone from time to time. Once the video is shot, he edits using a phone app called PowerDirector, and uploads to YouTube.

Over the past four years, he's covered a variety of logging-related topics: not only harvesting trees, but also maintaining equipment, how loggers buy timber, how weather impacts logging in Minnesota, even

pitfalls like getting a truck stuck in a soft logging road—and getting it unstuck. There have also been videos on the North Star Expo, MLEP logger education classes, and selling used equipment.

"I don't necessarily have to look for ideas, they just happen, David says. "There are literally times where I'll think oh, this'll make a good video. Like if something breaks down or something gets stuck. All these different things come up, so I don't have much trouble coming up with a halfway decent video."

For example, as Haley drove down a woods road to his harvest site early one morning earlier this year, he spotted fresh wolf tracks in the four inches of snow that had fallen overnight. He slid his Android into his dash mount and



Red Haley gets ready for another day in the John Deere skidder earlier this year.

started recording. Pretty soon, he came upon the wolf, jogging ahead of him.

"There he is right there," Haley tells the camera as the wolf comes into sight. "You see him?"

In the early days, Haley didn't say a word in the videos, only showing equipment. Then he began speaking, sharing information he thought his Uncle Jim would be interested in. Now he shows his face on camera from time-to-time, although he'd rather showcase the equipment or the logging action.

The videos have also gotten longer. The first few were only a minute or two in length. But Haley's learned that the YouTube algorithm prefers content over ten minutes long, so he shoots for the 12 to 15 minute range.

"There are other YouTubers who put videos out every day," he says. "There are logging YouTubers from all over the world, and they're bigger than I am."

One of the biggest logging YouTubers is "Logger Wade" from Indiana, with more than 60,000 subscribers. The two have become friends through their common hobby. Wade even appears in many of Haley's productions saying "Thanks for watching! Have a nice day!" David also gets folks across the internet, including from Canada and European countries, commenting on what's happening in his videos.

"I live in western Canada and even by our standards you have had a lot of snow," wrote a commenter on one video.

"Another exciting day in the woods," another commenter wrote. "Keep up the great videos"

"I do read all the comments," Haley says. "And I appreciate all of them."

"There's been quite a few questions about what we do after we're done harvesting the site," Dean says. "David does a good job of answering those so people know it's going to come back as a healthy forest."

"Someday I'll be old and I'll forget all this stuff. My dad has said 'Oh, I wish I would have had a picture of this, or I wish I would have a picture of that.' I have all that, I have so much stuff. As long as YouTube doesn't crash, it'll always



David Haley speak to Jeff Shay of the Minnesota State Patrol in a You Tube video shot at last year's North Star Expo.

be there. You can look at any video you want, anywhere on the planet, as long as you have the right cell service."

David's favorite topic for his videos? The same reason he and his brothers are in the business in the first place: Their father Red.

In one video posted in April titled "May I Never Forget," David brings Red back to the site of that logging camp he worked and lived in 70 years ago, pointing out the locations of the welding shack, bunk house, truck garage, sawmill, and more. David also edited in old photos of the camp, as well as old film of falling trees. Another video shows

Red clearing snow with a D6D Cat. Within a couple of months that video had more than 85,000 views.

"He is one of the most honest, genuine, hardest working men ever," David says. "He's earned everything he's got. He never cheated anybody. If we had more people like him on this planet, this place would be a whole better place. You'd be hard pressed to find a person that doesn't like him or respect the life he's led. All he wanted to do was be a good person that worked hard and provided. That right there to me, that's a hero."



Red Haley as a youngster in his father's logging camp atop an International Harvester TD9 dozer, circa 1949.

TPA Insurance Program Offers Loss Prevention Assistance

Workers' compensation continues to be a large fixed, but necessary expense to any logging company with employees. Northern Capital is TPA's partner on our workers' compensation program, with John Saccoman or Mackinaw Administrators providing loss prevention consultation for participants in TPA's program. John will be contributing to the Timber Bulletin on a regular basis with information on how to operate safely in the woods.

By John Saccoman, Mackinaw Consulting

As an employer, there are steps that can be taken to prevent injuries and in turn, lower your company's work comp premiums.

Minnesota requires all employers to purchase workers' compensation insurance to provide benefits to their employees for on-the-job work-related accidents and injuries. Or, typically a large company may obtain approval from the Minnesota Department of Commerce permitting self-insurance coverage upon proof of the employer's financial ability to do so.

There is no minimum number of employees that an employer must have before insurance is required. Employees are generally defined as people performing services for another, for hire, including minors, part time workers and even workers who are non-citizens of the United States.

Some states like Alabama, do not require worker's comp coverage until the business has five or more people. In Minnesota, even an employer with only one part-time employee generally must provide coverage. According to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, an employer could be required to pay a penalty of up to \$1,000 for each employee, each week, during the time the employee was not insured. That could be expensive!

Two areas in the Minnesota logging profession where loggers are routinely susceptible to dangerous day-to-day accidents and injuries are from **slips, trips and falls** and from **log-truck accidents**. The **slips, trips and falls** are known as the "frequency" types of claims. Such claims are the ones that occur most often. **Log-truck accidents** are known as the "severity" types of

claims. These claims generally can cause the most worker deaths and/or the most severe bodily injuries to employees.

In snowy Minnesota during the winter, logging operations reach their busiest period of operation. Accordingly, slip, trip and fall accidents rise as well. Climbing on and dismounting from skidders, loaders, feller bunchers and trucks with frozen steps several times a day presents slip and fall opportunities, if a worker is not careful. Walking around the logging site or the log deck reveals numerous hazards including frozen ground, frozen logs, and ice-covered leaves. All lead to slips & falls. The rugged terrain and constantly-changing weather just adds to a logger's problems.

According to the Minnesota State Demographic Center Dept. of Administration, 2020, officials

estimate 3,078,438 people, age 16 and over, travel Minnesota roads and highways going to and from work. Some are salesmen, some are teachers, some doctors and yes, some are log-truck drivers. Motor vehicle accidents are a leading cause of "severe accidents & injuries" to employees in the logging profession.

So how can we prevent slip, trip and fall and vehicle related accidents to our loggers. There are at least three steps that should be taken:

1. Each logging company should have a written safety program that addresses the logging site operations, the equipment and the employees. The safety program should state the employer's commitment to safety to the workers, the equipment and to the logging site. Reinforcing the company policies, rules and commitment



to safety comes through regular safety meetings, enforcing the safety rules and by penalties for rule violations. Developing a culture of safety in all crew members is paramount to having a safe and secure jobsite.

2. Identifying work-place hazards at the beginning of each work day is vital to worker and to equipment safety. Train all employees to conduct daily inspections of the equipment and the jobsite before work commences. Such inspections can help recognize unsafe equipment and conditions that can cause accidents and even cause severe and costly equipment damage. These hazards and unsafe conditions should be communicated to all crew members as soon as possible. Then, several times each workday, conduct other visual inspections of the jobsite and equipment. Developing a culture of on the job safety is a participating sport and everyone needs to contribute to the game.
3. Finally, the employer should provide the required and necessary protective equipment

for the jobs the employees are required to perform. Protective equipment is the second line of defense against accidents and injuries. The first line, of course, is training employees how to safely and effectively perform their assigned jobs. Steel toed boots, high-visibility safety vests, safety glasses and hardhats are just some of the protective equipment loggers need. Fire extinguishers, first aid kits and AED's are other forms of life saving equipment. Each logging company should stress the importance of these items and train workers to be proficient in their use.

At the end of the day, the employer has a great responsibility in creating a culture of safety in his crew members, by diligently working to provide a safe environment. Besides the company responsibility for safety, the employees are required to learn and obey the OSHA-mandated regulations. Each worker should be intimately acquainted with OSHA standard **29 CFR 12910.266**.

These OSHA standards are just the minimum standards for logging and logger safety. If a company is blessed to have several seasoned

employees, then they are qualified to assess the day-to-day hazards of logging operations. Such employees can offer invaluable guidance and advice to other crew members on how to avoid accidents and injuries. The end goal is the same for both employee and employer: "That all employees return home safely to their families each night."

In the 1930's safety pioneer H. W. Heinrich conducted a thorough study of workplace accidents. He concluded that workplace accidents had two main causes. Unsafe acts and unsafe conditions. His research found that unsafe acts accounts for about 88% of the accidents. These accident are "people caused." And about 10% are caused by unsafe conditions. Such accidents are those which man probably has little or no control over.

Therefore, it is vital that the employer and the employees in the logging profession take safety seriously.

Ron True of Mackinaw Administrators contributed to this article. In addition, information was also taken from the MN Dept. of Labor and Industry and www2.gov.bn.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/resource-roads/local-road-safety-information

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On the Markets

The *Timber Bulletin* publishes information regarding results of a sampling of recent timber sales and other market indicators, as well as other market-related news items.

Many Spring Timber Auctions Move to Sealed Bid due to COVID-19

Many Minnesota agencies are shifting their normal oral timber auctions to sealed bid, in response to the COVID-19 virus, and advisories to “social distance” and avoid gatherings of more than ten people.

Several counties have made this move, including St. Louis, Aitkin and Crow Wing counties. The Minnesota DNR will keep as many of its auctions “oral bid” as possible with hopes that restrictions related to COVID-19 are eased.

“The Division of Forestry will continue to follow the auction

schedule found on the DNR’s website and make adjustments along the way,” DNR Timber Program Supervisor Jon Drimel wrote in an email. “We intend to wait as long as possible to make decisions on auction method (oral bid vs sealed bid) and approach each individual scheduled auction, or groups of auctions when close in date, independently.”

“The goal is to keep everything as close to normal as possible. That means that even as efforts to increase social distancing have ramped up, we are still facilitating on the ground timber operations and offering timber at auction. We can achieve offering new timber by using sealed bid auctions on a case by case basis,” Drimel wrote.

DNR is making some changes to the sealed bid process, including allowing more than one bid per envelope and eliminating the requirement to have the bidders name and tract number on the outside of the envelope. Bidders are asked to still completely fill out and sign each bid form submitted.

Forest Service Offers Permit Extensions due to COVID-19

The Forest Service has issued a Significant Overriding Public Interest (SOPI) to address potential delays as a result of COVID-19.

It will provide up to 2 years of contract extensions for all Forest Service timber sale contracts, including salvage contracts and Integrated Resource Timber Contracts (IRTC Stewardship Contracts), regardless of the amount of time or volume left in the contract.

TPA was among 37 organizations signing onto a letter to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue urging the SOPI designation.

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Recent Timber Sales
Average prices, as reported by each agency

Agency Regular Intermediate

St. Louis County

February 27 – Sealed Bid

Aspen	\$30.77	NA
Black Spruce	\$18.40	NA
Birch	\$10.31	NA
Balsam Fir	\$16.66	NA

22 of the 26 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

Cass County

February 27 – Sealed Bid

Aspen	\$34.17	\$28.04
-------	---------	---------

Red Oak \$44.15 \$20.01

All 6 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

Cass County

March 26 – Sealed Bid

Aspen	\$32.01	\$43.45
Red Oak	\$24.00	\$32.16
Red Pine P&B	\$51.46	NA

4 of the 6 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

Hubbard County

April 9th – Sealed Bid

Aspen Mixed	NA	\$38.31
Aspen Pulp	NA	\$38.72

Norway Pine

Mixed	NA	\$33.89
Birch Pulp	NA	\$11.94

All 16 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.



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Mark Your Calendars: 67th Expo North Star Expo Slated for Rapids

The North Star Expo returns to the Itasca County Fairgrounds in Grand Rapids for its 67th annual event, Friday and Saturday September 18 and 19.

The 2020 Expo will again include the newest in logging equipment from all of the region's top vendors.

"Expo time is always a great time of the year," said TPA Expo Committee Chair Chad Lovdahl. "It's a great chance to see everyone in the industry and start getting ready for the winter logging season. I'm looking forward to it."

Day one at the Expo will be capped by the Evening Reception at the Timberlake Lodge on Friday, September 18, featuring a cash bar and free hors d'oeuvres. All are welcome to attend.

McCoy Construction and Equipment will also sponsor Saturday morning's pancake breakfast again in 2020, another Expo tradition.

In addition to the latest and greatest from the industry's manufacturers, the 2020 Expo will also feature the Future Forest Stewards event, with high schoolers from around the region traveling to the Expo to learn about logging.

Vendor registration will begin later this spring when registration packets are sent out. Sponsorship



Folks at the Expo love to look at the Best Load entries. The 67th annual event returns to the Itasca County Fairgrounds in Grand Rapids on September 18 and 19.

opportunities will also be available. For more information, call the TPA office at (218) 722-5013, or visit mntimberproducers.com and click on the North Star Expo button.

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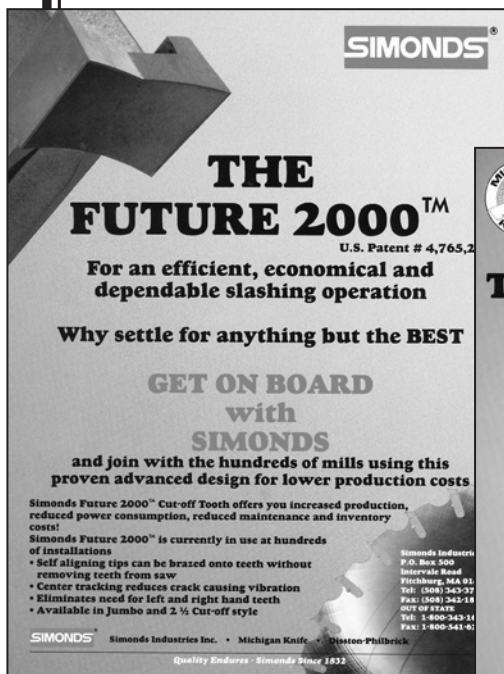
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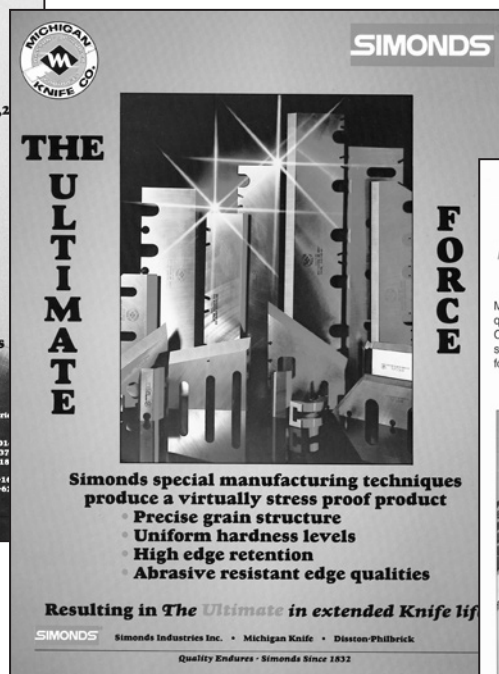
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CDL Expirations Delayed Due to COVID-19

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the State of Minnesota have issued guidance on several parts of trucking regulation during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- An extension for CDLs that expire on or after March 1, 2020. The Minnesota Legislature has pushed a person's license expiration to "to end of the second consecutive month in which the peacetime emergency is terminated." As of mid-April, Governor Walz had extended the peacetime emergency to May 13, **meaning licenses—including CDLs—now have expiration dates of July 31, 2020.** This could be pushed back further pending



- potential additional emergency declaration extensions by the Governor.
- An extension for those with expiring DOT health cards on or after March 1, 2020, provided

they have proof of a valid medical certification that was issued for a period of 90 days or longer at that time. Drivers with expired health cards will have until June 30, 2020 to renew.

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COVID-19 Ramifications on Timber Industry

By mid-March as the COVID-19 pandemic started to spread across the U.S. and into Minnesota, several directives from state and federal government, the Centers for Disease Control, and others played roles in operations of Minnesota's logging companies and the timber industry as a whole.

As these decisions were being made, TPA was in contact with all levels of government to make sure our member companies could operate as close to "normal" as possible.

TPA's lobbying partners in Washington, DC were instrumental in advocating the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to include the forest products industry in its list of "Essential Critical Infrastructure," as was Congressman Pete Stauber (R-Minnesota) whose staff engaged on this issue.

As a result, our industry was

included in the list under "Workers who support sawmills and the manufacture and distribution of fiber and forest products, including, but not limited to timber, paper, and other wood and fiber products."

That designation was critical, because it was followed by Minnesota Governor Tim Walz when he issued his "Stay Home" executive order on March 25. TPA had written a letter urging the Governor to follow Department of Homeland Security Guidance.

"With social distancing and limited site access already underway in these operations, we ask that you ensure the list of essential employees and critical infrastructure allows Minnesota loggers, as well as our wood products and pulp and paper manufacturers, to continue providing essential products for the state and nation's supply chain during this crisis," TPA Executive

Vice President Mike Birkeland wrote."

TPA also engaged northern Minnesota state legislators to advocate on our behalf. As a result, Rep. Rob Ecklund (DFL-International Falls) spearheaded a letter of support to Gov. Walz, signed by others in Minnesota's "Iron Range" delegation, including Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), Sen. Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook), Sen. Justin Eichorn (R-Grand Rapids), Sen. Carrie Ruud (R-Breezy Point), Rep. Dale Lueck (R-Aitkin), Rep. Julie Sandstede, (DFL-Hibbing), Rep. Sandy Layman (R-Cohasset), and Rep. Dave Lislegard (DFL-Aurora). The letter asked the governor to include loggers as well as others in the forest products and mining industries in the list of "essential" employees.

"These industries are not just critical for our region's economic welfare, but in one fashion or









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another, all of us depend on products produced with these materials in our daily lives," the Range Delegation wrote.

Sen. Eric Simonson (DFL-Duluth) also wrote a letter to the Governor asking that workers in the forest products industry be included in "essential critical worker" designation.

TPA Annual Meeting

Due to the pandemic and on-going restrictions on group sizes, TPA has re-scheduled its **Annual Meeting Events**, including the Membership meeting, Board of Directors meeting, and Banquet, to **October 8, 2020 at Sugar Lake Lodge in Grand Rapids**. Normally, these events are held in June.

Among those tentatively scheduled to participate in these events are DNR Forestry Director Forrest Boe, MnDOT District Engineer Duane Hill, and Superior National Forest Supervisor Connie Cummins, among others. MLEP training credit will be available for attendees.

Once arrangements are finalized, information on registration for these events will be sent to members, as well as published in the *Timber Bulletin*.

Agencies Continue Timber Operations

As a result of forest products industry's "essential" designation, agencies like the U.S. Forest Service, DNR, and county land departments have continued administering timber sales, opening new sales, and cruising timber for future sales. While agency staff is working from home for the most part, timber permit holders should be able to continue opening sales and operating on them during the crisis. Call the TPA office if you're having problems in this area.

MLEP and Logsafe

All spring MLEP and Logsafe training in Minnesota has been canceled, including the Logger Conferences. 2020 Training will be offered via online platforms so loggers can maintain their MLEP training utilizing their home computer or smart phone. For those without internet access, the MLEP office will make accommodations.

MLEP updates its website regularly and will be mailing a new brochure reflecting all available training as soon as it is scheduled. Please watch your mail and MLEP's website at www.mlep.org for more information.

Logsafe classes will be offered between August 1 and December 21, enabling affected loggers to continue receiving their Logsafe rebates. Classes will be scheduled in compliance with CDC guidance, it is hoped that the limitations regarding group size will be relaxed by fall class dates. Fall 2020 locations shall be arranged around or near such locations as Rochester, Baudette, International Falls, Tower, Two Harbors, Cloquet, Grand Rapids and Bemidji.

Small Business Administration Loans

The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to Minnesota small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

SBA Customer Service Representatives will be available to answer questions about SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan program and explain the application process.

Small businesses, private non-profit organizations of any size, small agricultural cooperatives and small aquaculture enterprises that

have been financially impacted as a direct result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) since Jan. 31, 2020, may qualify for Economic Injury Disaster Loans of up to \$2 million to help meet financial obligations and operating expenses which could have been met had the disaster not occurred.

"These loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that can't be paid because of the disaster's impact," said SBA Administrator Jovita Carranza. "Disaster loans can provide vital economic assistance to small businesses to help overcome the temporary loss of revenue they are experiencing."

Eligibility for Economic Injury Disaster Loans is based on the financial impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The interest rate is 3.75 percent for small businesses. SBA offers loans with long-term repayments in order to keep payments affordable, up to a maximum of 30 years and are available to entities without the financial ability to offset the adverse impact without hardship.

Applicants may apply online, receive additional disaster assistance information and download applications at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>. Applicants may also call SBA's Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov for more information on SBA disaster assistance.

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Twin Ports Interchange Project Delayed

MnDOT announced in March it is postponing the Twin Ports Interchange project in Duluth for one year.

The \$343 million project will redesign the “can of worms” portion of I-35 in Duluth. In November, MnDOT identified an approximate \$100 million funding gap, much

of it due to unknown costs related to contaminated materials and utility work.

Timber Talk

Some construction will begin in Fall of 2020, but the public will not see significant traffic impacts until the spring of 2021, when I-35 will be reduced to a single lane in each direction through the project area.

In a news release, MnDOT officials said, “by deferring the majority of the project one year, this allows time to obtain a better understanding of the unknowns, like contaminated materials and will give MnDOT an opportunity to better quantify costs. MnDOT is confident this new timeline will benefit the overall project.”

Minnesota Moose Population Remains Stable

For the ninth year in a row, Minnesota’s moose population remains relatively stable, but reproductive success – one of the factors that has the greatest impact on moose survival over time – remains low.

This past winter, the DNR estimated the moose population to be 3,150 animals (between a range of 2,400 and 4,320). Due to the variance in this type of annual population estimate, this year’s estimate does not suggest a decline from last year’s estimate of 4,180 moose.



Site of MnDOT’s Twin Ports Interchange project in Duluth, now scheduled to begin in 2021.

The survey provides an estimate rather than documenting the precise number of moose because biologists cannot see or count every moose across the 6,000-square mile survey area. A portion of the moose range is surveyed every year to generate the estimate.

While the recent population stability is good news, DNR researchers say moose in Minnesota remain at risk over the long term. The moose population has declined from an estimated 8,840 animals in 2006.

Logging is the Most Dangerous Job in the U.S.

Fifty-six loggers died in the U.S. in 2018, making it the nation’s most dangerous occupation, according to figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Logging had the highest rate of fatalities per 100,000 full-time equivalent workers in 2018, the most recent year for which data is available.

Logging replaces “fishers and related fishing workers” as the most dangerous job in the country, which held the distinction in 2017.

The most common cause of death for loggers was “contact with metal objects and equipment” according to the study. In addition to the fatalities, loggers incurred 1040 non-fatal injuries in 2018.

After Logging and fishing, Aircraft pilots/flight engineers, roofing, and garbage collection rounded out the top five most dangerous occupations, according to the study.

MN Forest Resources Council Has New Leader

Eric Schenck was named Executive Director of the Minnesota Forest Resources Council in April.

Originally from Illinois, Schenck earned a degree in wildlife management at the University of Idaho and holds a Master’s in Forest Science from Yale University. His career includes nine years in Washington, D.C. as a lobbyist on conservation policy issues. He also has over twenty years of managerial and field experience supervising staff, and has service on the City Council in Canton, Illinois.

Minnesota’s Forest Resources Council advises the governor and federal, state, and local government on sustainable forest resource policies and practices. The Council includes 17 members from a variety of forest stakeholders, including the Minnesota DNR, U.S. Forest Service, county land departments, the University of Minnesota, conservation groups, logging, and the forest products industry.



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LOGGERS OF THE PAST . . .

Big Wheel Logging

by J. C. Ryan

This story is reprinted from an earlier *Timber Bulletin*—one of the first of “Buzz” Ryan’s ever-popular contributions to these pages. The *Bulletin* will continue to reprint selected stories from the memories he recorded for us.—*Editor*



When writing about the history of the early logging in Minnesota, much is said about the logging camps and the lumber-

jacks. Stories revolve around their lives in the camps and the problems of supplying and feeding them as well as delivering the

logs to the mills.

The transportation of logs by rivers, lakes and logging railroads has been told. And, the hauling of logs over the ice roads is given a lot of attention. There is nothing that interests our present-day citizens more than a picture of a large load of logs hauled over an ice road by four horses. Much of our logging history is centered around skidding logs, the river drives, the loading of logs by cross-haul, horse and steam jammers, and hauling the large loads. The ox and the horse came in for their fair share of importance in the transportation of the logs to market, as did the steam hauler.

However, there is one method of log transportation that was used to a limited extent with very little mention of it in logging history and that is “big wheel” logging. While it did not play a very large part, it did, however, fill in where other methods failed. Big wheel logging had been carried on considerably in Michigan and Wisconsin during the summer months. The big wheels were developed by Syllas C. Overpack of Manistee, Mich. in the early 1890s.

The wheels used measured 10 feet in diameter with steel tires six inches wide or wider and 16-foot long tongues. The axles and wheels were built strong to withstand the beating they took over rough ground.

Big wheels were used by running them astride three to five logs that had been skidded into a pile. The tongue would then be raised to a vertical position letting the part of the tongue that ran in back of the wheels to lower. A chain would be slipped around the logs and fastened to hooks back and on top of the axle and the back end of the tongue. When the tongue was pulled down by the horses, the logs would rise from the ground and then be fastened by another chain. The logs would then ride under the axle high enough to clear stumps, etc.

The driver usually sat on a board or seat of some sort above and in back of the axle. Much of the time the teamster walked alongside as it was rough riding when the wheels bounded from stump to stump. As a rule one team of horses was used, but sometimes four were needed. Oxen were



The set of big wheels above was used near Akeley, Minn. Below: Dinner for Minnesota lumberjacks. It took good food to hold good men in the camps.



Small groups of logs such as those at right could be moved during summer months with big wheels. Used more in Wisconsin, the big wheels were at least 10 feet in diameter. The set in the bottom photograph is now on display at a museum in Wisconsin.

used if it was hard going. Much of the big wheel logging was confined to sandy soil areas and was usually done during the summer months when the ground was fairly dry.

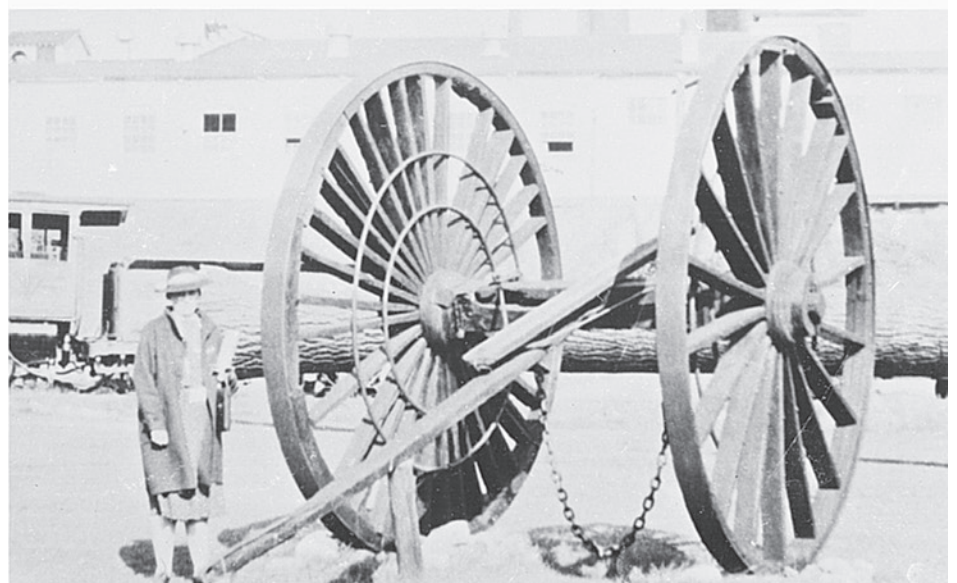
To my knowledge big wheels were only used on special occasions in Minnesota. However, they were often used around sawmills to move decked logs to the mill or to the water instead of dragging or skidding them through the mud or sand where logs could pick up small stones and gravel in bark or cracks that would be hard on the saws.

Big wheels were used by the Gull River Logging Company near Brainerd and also the Cross Lake Logging Company at different points along their railroad line. They were also used near Bena and at Cass lake by J. Neils Co. These big wheels were not used as regular summer logging equipment, but mostly used when logs could not be taken out during the winter due to deep snow, early break-up, or other reasons that prevented logs from being taken out before worms would get into them or they were burned by slash fires.

I have never seen big wheels being used, but have seen a number of sets of them. There was one set of big wheels standing on a hill near the Turtle River Mill in Turtle River, Minn., when I was a boy. We would climb up on them while playing, and I remember being told that these wheels had been used to haul logs to Turtle River Lake by the Burlington Lumber Company contractors Blakely and Farley and later used around the Turtle River Lumber Co. mill. A large set of these wheels has been on display near the Birchmount Beach Motel near Bemidji for a number of years.

I have known several men who drove teams hauling logs with the big wheels. Jack Van House of Kelliher and Turtle River was one of these men. Another man by the name of Russell Hieth, but better known as "Old Sandy," told me that he drove four horses hauling logs with big wheels near Cass Lake. During the summer of 1900, Oz Gray, who was logging for the Walker Timber Company near Wilton, Minn., used big wheels to pick up logs on several scattered forties very successfully.

The skidding or hauling of logs from the woods by these big wheels was a slow and expensive method of getting logs out of the woods. At its best, nevertheless, it could be done when other methods failed. While the big wheels played but a very small part in logging our original timber stands, they did do their part and are worthy of mention in any history of logging in Minnesota.



Classifieds

To serve our readers better, the Timber Bulletin offers free classified ads of up to 85 words to all members and associate members of the Minnesota Timber Producers Association. All ads must be submitted in writing to the Association office. The MTPA assumes no responsibility for ad contents and accepts free ads on a first-come, first-served basis within space limitations.

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