

THE VOICE OF THE TIMBER INDUSTRY

# TIMBER BULLETIN

DULUTH, MINNESOTA

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2009

VOLUME 65

***Happy Holidays!***

**Member Feature:**

**Pohl Creek Logging**

**Ainsworth Mills**

**Purchased**

**Cass Co. Trees Vandalized**



# TIMBER BULLETIN

Volume 65  
November/December 2009  
Duluth, Minnesota

## IN THIS ISSUE

Changes – Pohl Creek Logging.....**8**

Dave Berthiaume:  
2009 Lake States Outstanding Logger .....**14**

Cass County Red Pines Damaged.....**17**

Timber Talk .....**18**

Lessons from Losses .....**20**

On the Markets.....**22**

Loggers of the Past .....**24**

Classifieds .....**26**

Advertisers Index .....**26**

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Happy Holidays from the Minnesota  
Timber Producers Association.

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**W**e may finally be getting more seasonal weather. With November weather in October and then getting October weather in November the colder temperatures we have been getting in December have been nice to see. Hopefully

## President's Column



the one good thing from a warm wet fall is that the mills' inventories will have been depleted and demand for our wood will be good this winter. I think everyone is hoping for a good winter

logging season.

With that said, the TPA has been hard at work trying to make sure that budget cuts to the DNR does not keep them from selling wood. Our number one concern, as always, is to make sure that the state and county keep selling as much wood as they can. Ray has also been out in the field to meet with as many members as possible to hear what issues are most important to everyone.

I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year. And as always, with the long winter hours, please work safely.

Mike Rieger, President

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# Ainsworth Plants Purchased



The former Ainsworth mill in Grand Rapids was purchased in November by the Itasca Economic Development Corporation.

**A**insworth Engineered's idled plant in Cook has been purchased by nearby Hill Wood Products. The company says it plans to produce biomass products for various markets.

"It came together really fast," said Steve Hill of Hill Wood Products. "It's going to be biofuels. It could be bulk fuels, it could be pellets, or it could be co-gen. It all hinges on the environmental issues."

All three former Ainsworth plants have now been sold. The Itasca Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) finalized an agreement in November to purchase the Grand Rapids facility. That site includes 400,000 sq. ft. of manufacturing and distribution space situated on 233 acres, and will serve as the new home of the proposed Itasca Eco Industrial Park. In a news release, IEDC says it, "hopes to cluster synergistic businesses in several different industries in a way that reduces operating costs and maximizes competitive advantages. The facility will feature industrial condos for lease and parcels will also be available for tenants interested in design/build alternatives."

The group also says it plans to

leverage the site's strategic location in the heart of northern Minnesota's wood basket and adjacent to major North American wind fields.

Ainsworth had previously sold its Bemidji Mill to a locally based company with plans of developing a bioenergy park.

The company, called The Idea Circle, provides organization and workforce development solutions for businesses in the region. Tenant relationships being explored in the bioenergy park include manufacturers, utility companies, higher education and research, and testing services supporting renewable energy development and energy efficiency improvement technology.

**1**.2 seems like a small number. Except when it's 1.2 billion dollars. Except when it's on top of 2.7 billion dollars. Except when it's combined with 5.4 billion dollars.

\$1.2 billion is the projected deficit for the rest of the state's biennial budget which runs through June 30, 2011. \$2.7 billion is the amount the Gov. Pawlenty cut the budget for this biennium through unallotment when he and the legislature were unable to agree on a budget. \$5.4 billion is the amount of the projected deficit for the following two-year budget cycle which begins July 1, 2011.

Add it up and it totals a

## Executive Vice President's Column



whopping \$9.3 billion over four years. With the need to budget for cash flow and some reserves, let's just call it \$10 billion.

Given that most of the easy cuts and accounting shifts have been made, and these are not insignificant items, the 2010 session will be extremely difficult for any issues that involve money.

But, it is also an opportunity for the legislature and the governor to look at what state government does, how it does it and how it is funded. When it is all over and done with my guess is that we will have another short-term fix with the heavy lifting left to the new governor and legislators.



As I write this column we have a fresh blanket of snow and have been having some below-zero temperatures. It's always good to see the cold before there's too much snow so roads and sales can get frozen down. As we enter the big winter wood production push make sure you organize regular safety meetings. Whether it's in a warming shack or at the start of the day it's worth the time. You won't ever regret holding a safety meeting.



The TPA Board of Directors met

in December. The board heard from the DNR's Olin Phillips and their legislative agenda, DNR staffer Sue Burks on invasive species and MN Forest Resources Council Executive Director Dave Zumeta on council programs. Rob Slesak of the council also made a presentation on the process and timeline for revising the Voluntary Site Level Guidelines. This will be a big project taking several years. Its progress will also be somewhat dependent on state budgets.

The board also approved the 2010 budget and issues. While times are tough, TPA will continue to be a strong advocate for our members long into the future. Our members are strongly dedicated to our association which is what makes us effective.



About 60 percent of the timberland that the DNR manages is Permanent School Trust Fund land. These lands were granted to the state by the federal government when Minnesota entered the Union. The purpose of these lands is to generate revenue for our public schools. Revenue is generated through timber sales, mineral leases and royalty payments, gravel sales and other activities.

There has been some increasing interest in the management of these lands by some legislators. Primarily these legislators are interested in generating more revenue to fund schools. Some of them are learning a lot about forest management as part of their committee work.

They are also starting to learn about School Trust fund lands that don't generate any revenue due to their management status. They're learning that different approaches to management can produce vastly different revenues depending on the decisions that are made.

It will be interesting to see how the interest of these "education" legislators plays out over the next several years.



I am very pleased to announce that TPA has been certified as an official Bigfoot reporting organization. The press has

reported on what may be a Bigfoot that was photographed on a trail camera in the Leech Lake area. Various local, state, federal and international agencies are intensively seeking information on any other Bigfoot sightings or sign. If you have any information on Bigfoot or Bigfeet, please contact the office immediately. TPA is pleased that the published picture did not show any badges, uniforms, notebooks or weapons on the beast. We are concerned that if Bigfoot/feet are confirmed that it may prompt immediate litigation seeking to establish Bigfoot/feet reserve(s).



As the holiday season approaches and the calendar turns to a new year we can all count our many blessings. We have lost friends this year but we have made new friends. The economy has been historically difficult but we have adjusted and persevered. As I reflect on the past year I am more convinced than ever that people who go to the woods and turn wood into products that we all use are the best people around. I am proud of each of you and proud to be part of TPA.

Best wishes.





Nate (L) and Nik Rajala of Pohl Creek Logging.

# Changes

## Nik Rajala of Pohl Creek Logging Shifts Gears to Keep Up with a Changing Industry

by Ray Higgins

**W**hen Nik Rajala was ready to start his own logging company in 1998 and needed to decide whether to purchase a conventional logging operation or cut-to-length equipment, the choice for him was obvious.

"I had studied both kinds of operations," Rajala says, "all the pros and cons, from an economic standpoint and which would do a better job. For me, the choice was

obvious. The capabilities of cut-to-length machines are phenomenal."

But colleagues in the industry weren't so bullish on the equipment. Loggers running cut-to-length told him he wasn't going to be able to cut high concentrations of hardwood, big aspen or big pine. Rajala didn't listen.

"I did everything that I said I was going to do with them," he says. "I put the machines to the test. I cut the big wood,

merchandized big timber and also a lot of large diameter hardwoods with those nasty tops on them, something that everybody told me I wouldn't be able to do, unless I did a lot of chain sawing work. I did it without a chain saw. I found a way to make it work."

Over the years, the industry had no greater advocate for cut-to-length logging. So in September when Rajala sold his cut-to-length equipment and purchased a



conventional system, it came as something of a surprise.

Nik grew up in one of the state's best known timber industry families. Great grandfather Ivar Rajala started logging in northern Minnesota 1910, and in 1941 Ivar's son Art started a wood product manufacturing business. Today, Rajala Companies is a collection of wholesale businesses in the Bigfork area that produce lumber for furniture, framing for homes, veneer used in fine cabinetry, doors and windows; moldings, and a variety of other wood products. In addition, the companies own and care for 35,000 acres of timberland in the state. Nik's father Jack and uncles Randy and Dean are partners in the companies, and a variety of family members work there.

Timber wasn't just an occupation for the Rajalas, and the forest wasn't just a place of work. It was a lifestyle in which the real vocation was taking care of the forest, doing everything and anything possible to keep it healthy. Growing up in that environment made a huge impact on all of them, including Nik.

"It's in my blood," he says. "When you spend your childhood, when you're out grouse hunting, deer hunting, fishing, regardless of what you're doing to spend time in then outdoors, and you realize by the time you're about 15, 16 years old that you and your father and your brothers are all fooling yourselves that you're actually doing any of those activities – you're actually just looking at timber all the time and you happen to have a shotgun or a rifle or a fishing pole in your hand."

Gravitating to the companies was second nature. Along with his twin brother Nate, Nik started sweeping warehouses and piling lumber around the age of 11. By the time he was at Grand Rapids high school, he was building trails and roads in the woods. During college at Montana State in Bozeman, breaks and summer vacations meant heading back to the woods on his bulldozer. After a short stint as a carpenter when he graduated from college in 1997, Nik came back to Minnesota and joined the family business.

"I realized it was time to come home and get involved in the



Nik Rajala harvests aspen with a John Deere 843J feller buncher.



Pohl Creek Logging's delimber is a John Deere 2054 with a 4140 Denharco limbing head.

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timber industry," he says.

Nik worked with his father managing the companies' lands, making silvicultural decisions. Nate was involved with secondary manufacturing. Each family member had a role.

But Nik wanted to get back to the woods. He'd been researching logging operations and proposed a modern cut-to-length system. The timing for the companies to make the plunge wasn't right and the decision was made not to expand logging operations. So, Nik broke away and started his own company. He called it Pohl Creek Logging, named after a creek just north of Cohasset, roughly where he thought his center of operations would be. It was the first time since his great grandfather Ivar that a Rajala had a business in which the sole purpose was to harvest timber.

"The family had been pretty much sawmillers and had logging operations going on all the time," he says, "but to get back to a company that's sole purpose was to be out there logging, procuring wood, and operating in the forest on a daily basis, that's the step that I had taken."

Initially, Pohl Creek did a lot of contract work for the Rajala Companies, cutting their timber sales and cutting on their lands, being a part of a lot of the timber management that went along with ownership of those lands. As time went on other opportunities developed and Nik started to become more and more an independent logger.

"I've basically sold all of my wood open market to everybody," Rajala says. "Every once in a while my dad will need my help on a project and I'll go in and take care of some specialty cutting with my logging operation, but for the most part I just sell open market wood."

To Rajala, branching out on his own really has more than one meaning. Not only did he make a break from the family business, but over the years he's found that working by himself in the woods, without employees, is the best way for him to operate, even in the days when that meant switching back and forth between operating a harvester and a forwarder. So other than wife Teresa, who handles the bookkeeping and



Nate Rajala operates Pohl Creek's John Deere 648H skidder.

everything that needs to be done around town, Rajala is truly on his own.

"I've had operations just about every way that you possibly can," he says, "and to be perfectly honest with you, probably the most financially successful that I've been

and the most fun that I've had in terms of enjoying my job is when I'm out here all alone. Once you get in that frame of mind and once you're in that mode of operation, you take a liking to it. It's hard to let anyone else have their paws on your wood pile."

The trouble with going solo is that it wouldn't seem particularly efficient. Rajala understands that line of thinking.

"It's a business model that shouldn't make any sense whatsoever," he says. "Sure I could have more bodies out here in the woods, but the thing is, in today's market conditions, I can't sell that wood pile. But there was a good stint of time there where I was running my cut-to-length operation when markets were far better than they are now, and the simple fact is every time when I'm out here working by myself, every minute of the day something is happening. There is absolutely zero downtime. I run around like a mad man but the thing is there's not one missed move, nobody's ever waiting on anybody else. I mean, it's taxing on an individual trying to make these payments by himself, but the operating costs that are associated with having employees are just enormous, in my opinion.

"So for me, this is actually more efficient. I'm not a production operation. Never have been, never will be. This is the definition of efficiency in my mind. And it's also the definition of having control



**Pohl Creek's John Deere 437C knuckleboom loader has a HanFab 72 inch slasher.**

of your wood.

To make it work on his own, it helps to have the work ethic and love for the woods all of the Rajalas seem to share. For Nik, those are lessons learned from his dad.

"It's an interesting thing growing up in a family business," Nik says. Many people in the logging industry have been in that

situation. It doesn't have the best reputation in the world, but at the same time that's outsiders looking in. When you're on the inside of a family situation, obviously there's going to be some rubs and it's difficult, but at the same time it's a wonderful experience from the standpoint that generally associated with it is a lifetime's



worth of learning and I would say that's certainly true in my case."

"The unique thing about the relationship that I personally have with my father is that I've done more logging in my life – he's observed and managed a lot of logging, but he hasn't done a lot of logging himself. So we've learned a lot from each other. But regardless of where my father's coming from or where I'm coming from, it all always comes back to the forest."

The forest is a big reason Nik stared with cut-to-length in the first place. It's lighter on the land. It enabled him to do some specialized cutting, thinning hardwoods and the like. But over the last year or two, changes in the industry caused him to see things differently. Marketing his wood became more difficult. Expenses increased. It was harder to stay in business. He knew he had to make a change.

"Your per unit costs to produce wood is just so high that you don't get compensated to put those machines through that kind of punishment," he says. "And then as far as doing all these hardwood thinnings and really doing an extremely good job out in the forest, doing some really special work, nobody pays you for that kind of work. I could have spent a lifetime of putting smiles on faces, but at the end of the day, at times like this, an operation needs to pay its bills."

So earlier this year, he decided to switch from the cut-to-length system he had loved and advocated to conventional equipment. He found a buyer for the forwarder and harvester and took delivery on the new machines in September. Not exactly an ideal time to make such a switch, given the state of the industry and the economy as a whole.

"I won't lie to you and tell you it was easy," he says. "I went through three different parties in order to get the financing to make this deal happen."

Rajala's learning the new equipment as he goes along. Now with four machines to operate instead of two, twin brother Nate has joined the company to take up half the workload in the woods. That's made a drastic transition easier.



**Jim Johnston leaves the job site with a load of aspen, heading for Blandin in Grand Rapids.**

"I have a lot of good things to say about cut-to-length, but at the same time my whole reason for making this move right now is strictly financial," he says. "It's not because I didn't want to be a cut-to-length logger and it's not because I don't prefer to cut wood that way. It simply comes down to you can't get enough done with the cut-to-length system in this environment in order to consistently have good financial performance from month to month. You need to kind of have a weighted year and you need to make your money in the winter to survive in the summer.

"When I started in 1998, one advantage you had with cut-to-length is you could operate the machine with good operating practices and being on the right sites, you could be

operating twelve months a year. That's not the case any more. It's hard to find summer wood to cut. I've had to beg, borrow, and steal to make it through the springs the last three years because no one will let you cut on public land anymore during break-up and I've been fortunate to operate on some

private stuff to keep myself going, but I knew that that was not going to last. So the bottom line is, with cut-to-length a nine- or ten-month year doesn't pay the bills.

"I can bring you to all my spring-time sites and you can't even tell that we were even there. There's no reason in my opinion that they ever should have taken that away."

Chief among Rajala's concerns regarding the change to conventional is the effect on the ground at his job sites. In that regard, he's been pleasantly surprised.

"I'm very impressed so far with how the wide rubber, the 44-inch rubber on the 648 skidder and the 37-inch rubber on the 843 buncher holds up during wet ground conditions. This has been one of the rainiest Octobers that most people can remember and after two months of operating this equipment, I can honestly tell you we haven't left a single rut anywhere, and that also includes being out on some black spruce sites on the edges of the last permit we cut."

"As far as soil disturbance or compaction goes, I don't feel like I've made as big a compromise as I thought I was going to be making. The ground seems to hold up just as well with these new machines as it did with the cut-to-length and we're not operating on a slash mat. We're bare ground logging all of this, which is good for regeneration and then we're not redistributing the slash on the sites."

Still, Rajala isn't making the change without reservation. He'd developed a niche while in cut-to-length of hardwood thinnings, work he took pride in. A number of foresters have approached him and asked who's going to thin their hardwoods now that he's left cut-to-length behind.

"I just say I'm sorry, but for the time being for economic reasons I've had to make this change," he says.

Now 36, Rajala isn't spending much time worrying about the past. The sale he and Nate are working is an Itasca County permit with good road access and sandy soil in the Scooty Lake area north of Keewatin, and pretty even volumes across jack pine, balsam, spruce, aspen, and birch. Jim Johnston will take this wood to Blandin in a Pohl Creek truck. Nik also sells wood to

NewPage, Potlatch, Sappi, Boise, Savannah Pallets, and of course, the Rajala Companies.

For now he's eager to learn more about operating a conventional system. Maybe some day he'll get back to cut-to-length. Either way, he's proud of the work he's doing as a steward of the state's precious resource, work he's been learning

to do all his life from the Rajala family.

"Good operating habits in any operation are going to produce good results, both in the wood pile and also what occurs in the forest. You can have the world's best equipment and if you don't have the right ethic, you can butcher any job or butcher any woodpile."



# Dave Berthiaume: 2009 Lake States Outstanding Logger

**T**PA board member Dave Berthiaume of Cloquet has been named Lake States Region 2009 Outstanding Logger by the Forest Resources Association and Stihl Incorporated. Berthiaume now becomes a nominee for FRA's National Outstanding Logger recognition.

In April, Berthiaume was named Minnesota Logger of the Year by the Minnesota Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Program Implementation Committee. He received the regional award at an awards ceremony in October.

Berthiaume Logging has been a family run business for three generations, beginning over 60 years ago when Richard Berthiaume returned from service at the end of WWII. Dave's brothers Donald and Duane, and nephews Jacob and Andrew worked with Berthiaume Logging for many years. His son Bob, brother Duane, and nephew Andrew are still working with him in the woods. While family involvement adds to success on the ground, Dave Berthiaume's participation in the community is invaluable to the forest products industry. Berthiaume Logging has been a mainstay in the education of students at the Cloquet Forestry Center. When students need to see an example of sound forest management, they tour an active Berthiaume Logging site.

Lew Castle, with Potlatch Corporation, commented at the awards ceremony, "Dave is very deserving of this award. There is never a doubt that he will work on something until it is done, and done right."

Berthiaume is one of five regional winners. The Lake States region includes Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska.

FRA's Outstanding Logger Award program is designed to recognize outstanding independent



FRA Lake States Chair Bud DeLano (at right) presents the 2009 Outstanding Logger Award to Dave Berthiaume and his wife Cindy.

logging contractor performance, raise the visibility of professional logging contractors, encourage other loggers to adopt the performance of the award winners, and improve forester-logger-landowner relations by publicly recognizing outstanding logging performance as an essential element of every planned timber harvest.

Nominated logging companies are judged on whether safety is a major part of the individual's business practices and programs and how much the individual or company is involved in community and industry activities, as well as the company's professionalism,

business management, and forest management practices.

## Nortrax Supports Log-A-Load for Kids at Expo

**D**ale Gessell of Nortrax Equipment Company (L) presents a check for \$1066 to Becky Holst of Log-A-Load for Kids. Nortrax sold John Deere baseballs, John Deere caps, and “Proud to be a Logger” t-shirts at the Expo. Each person who purchased one of the promotional items was entered in a drawing for a John Deere gas grill. Kelly Kimball of Park Rapids won the drawing.



“We couldn’t have been successful in raising money for Log-A-Load without the participation of the very generous loggers and truckers of our state,” Gessell said. “A special thank you goes out to all who donated.”

A similar promotion was held at the Lake States Logging Congress in Escanaba. In all, Nortrax donated \$5281 to Log-A-Load for Kids.

Nortrax, Inc., a major dealer of John Deere construction and forestry equipment, is headquartered in Moline, IL. The Midwest division consists of eight dealerships in the northern regions of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Upper Michigan.

## Clarification

**A** story about licensing trucks with either five or six axles in the September/October issue of *The Timber Bulletin* referred to a TPA member that had received incorrect information and was consequently improperly licensed. The truck in the accompanying photo was not from the member’s company and was licensed correctly.



# TPA Annual Meeting to Feature Former CIA Counterintelligence Chief

**F**ormer CIA agent Jim Olson will be the featured speaker at TPA's Annual Meeting Banquet on June 10th.



Jim Olson

The banquet will again be held at Ruttger's Sugar Lake Lodge just south of Grand Rapids and cap a day full of events, including the TPA annual meeting and TPA golf and fishing outings.

Author of a book titled *Fair Play: The Moral Dilemmas of Spying*, Olson spent more than 25 years as a spy for the CIA in various locations around the globe. His wife Meredith was also a CIA agent.

"I had the chance to hear Mr. Olson speak at a conference I attended earlier this year," said

TPA executive Vice President Wayne Brandt. "His stories of his work as a spy were fascinating and I knew he was someone our members would love to meet and hear."

Olson received his law degree from the University of Iowa in 1969. He's currently a professor at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, where he teaches courses on intelligence, national security, and international crisis management. He served for over 25 years in the Directorate of Operations of the Central Intelligence Agency, mostly overseas in clandestine operations. In addition to several foreign assignments, he was Chief of Counterintelligence at CIA headquarters in Langley, Va.

Professor Olson has been awarded the Intelligence Medal of Merit, the Distinguished Career Intelligence Medal, the Donovan Award, and several Distinguished Service Citations. He is the recipient of awards from the Bush School and the Association of Former Students for excellence in teaching.

Information on how to register for the TPA Annual Meeting, Golf and fishing event, and banquet will be sent in the spring of 2010.

# Cass County Red Pines Damaged

**A** 51-year-old Backus man faces up to five years in prison and a maximum fine of \$10,000 plus restitution for allegedly driving 6-inch pole barn nails into more than 500 red pines that had been sold at a Cass County timber auction.

The damage occurred on a plantation north of Backus. Cass County Land Department staff discovered the damage in late October. The damaged trees were part of a county timber sale at the October auction. Land department staff visited the site before logging operations began and discovered the damage, including a sign that said, "2 in every tree."

Stephen Louis Olson, an adjacent land owner, was charged in Cass County District Court with First Degree Criminal Damage to Property. According to the criminal complaint, Olson had expressed anger, frustration, and resentment

for the county's plans to have the trees logged. Olson allegedly told others that he intended to spike the trees with pole barn nails. In an interview with investigators, another man said that he and Olson purchased six boxes of pole barn nails and spiked the trees in about one week with the help of a juvenile.

"It is fortunate that this was uncovered before anyone was seriously injured," Cass County land commissioner Josh Stevenson said in a statement. "This crime is not only against the resource but also the township, school district, and other entities that rely on revenue generated from the resource. The damage that has occurred to the stand must be removed, resulting in the complete harvest of the plantation. The plantation would have been managed for another 70-80 years through a series of thinnings

resulting in older, larger, high quality red pine. With the damage it has sustained and the potential danger to future operators, it will now be clear cut and replanted."

The purchaser of the stumpage paid in full at the time of the auction. His money was refunded, the timber was re-cruised, and is being re-offered at the county's December 23 timber sale.

"It's a shame we couldn't manage the trees to their extended rotation age, which in this case was 150 years," Stevenson said. "The plantation was only 56 years old and now we'll have to clear-cut it."

In 1991, TPA supported a bill at the Minnesota Legislature making damage to timber a felony. The measure was passed into law and set the maximum penalty at five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine for incidents that cause injuries, plus restitution.



A Cass County red pine that's been damaged with pole barn nails.



This sign was found where more than 500 trees were damaged in Cass County.



# Titus Named Crow Wing Land Commissioner

**K**irk Titus has joined Crow Wing County as a supervisor in the Land Services Department, directing the efforts of the Natural Resource Management Division,



Kirk Titus

formerly known as the Land Department.

Kirk is a well-known and widely respected member of Minnesota's forest management community. A natural resource manager with more than 25 years of forestry experience, Kirk's most recent assignment was with

Weyerhaeuser Company, where he established technology-based management systems in facilities throughout the country. These duties included

implementing an integrated inventory, processing, planning, transportation and time management system in multiple company locations, and developing training materials to achieve that implementation.

## Timber Talk

Kirk is a former TPA board member. He received his forestry degree from Iowa State University in 1984 and served as Minnesota State Chairman of the Minnesota Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee.

## B5 Biodiesel Now Mandated in Minnesota

**M**innesota's biodiesel requirement has increased from two percent blend to a five percent blend in diesel fuel.

Woods equipment is exempted from the biodiesel mandate, thanks to legislation spearheaded by TPA in 2008 that was passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Pawlenty. But trucks hauling wood to the mill are still required to run B5 biodiesel.

When Minnesota truckers began using B2 in 2005, numerous users throughout the state had problems with the fuel gelling, causing filters to clog. Biodiesel blends typically have higher cloud points than straight diesel. In addition, investigators found that in many of the areas where gelling was a problem, the biodiesel hadn't been blended properly.

Earlier this fall, the Minnesota Petroleum Marketers Association received word of problems with B5 that turned out to be concentrated in southwestern Minnesota and ended up being caused by a faulty blend. They were also investigating reported problems in the northern part of the state during December's cold snap.

If you experience any issues with B5 this winter, contact the TPA office.

# Readily Available Fire Extinguishers Put Fire Out on Logging Mobile Equipment

by Dave Amundson  
Lumbermen's Underwriting Alliance

To help TPA members avoid accidents resulting in injury or damage to property, the *Timber Bulletin*, in association with Lumbermen's Underwriting Alliance, will publish details of actual incidents and what can be done to avoid such occurrences in the future. By sharing this information, TPA and LUA hope to make our industry as safe as possible.

## Background:

This information was put together from a personal interview with the owner of a long-term MTPA subscriber. This mid-size logging and trucking company

operates one conventional logging and trucking operation.

## Lessons from Losses

This instance occurred in late summer while dry and sunny with

temperatures over 60 degrees. The job site was located in a remote area where the primary wood species was jack pine.

The involved mobile equipment had noted no maintenance problems within the prior two weeks and had been recently cleaned.

## Operator:

The operator of this machine was actually the owner of the equipment. He would be considered fully trained in operation and maintenance of this type of logging mobile equipment. This individual has over 36 years of experience, most of which has involved the operation of a feller buncher.

## Accident and/or Injury:

During operation of the feller buncher on a midweek morning, a fire broke out in the engine compartment. Leading up to this fire situation, the operator noticed that the engine started to labor. This caused him to check the gauges and the engine

compartment. Smoke was seen coming from the left side of the engine compartment. Following his emergency response plan, he shut down the machine and used the on-board 10-pound hand-held multi-purpose fire extinguisher to fight this fire. The fire was initially attacked through the rear left side panel where the flames were more intense, and again after opening the left side panel. The fire was extinguished, but not before damage to some of the engine components. In this situation, this individual felt that over 2/3 of the 10 lb. fire extinguisher was used. Fast action can and will payoff with a good emergency plan. No personal injury occurred.

## Unsafe Act and/or Condition:

It is believed that the electric fuel pump failed, and this may have led to an electrical fire that grew large enough to rupture the air conditioning lines, some water lines, multiple fuel/hydraulic lines and damage some other electrical wiring/engine components.

## Preventative Measures:

1. Implement an emergency response plan for all pieces of mobile equipment, and train all operators to follow these emergency procedures when operating. The use of the operators' manual is a very good

source for this information.

2. Follow proper shutdown procedures of all mobile equipment when parking for the day, completing maintenance, and/or in emergencies. This includes shutting down the electrical disconnect (master switch).
3. Install and maintain either one 10 lb. or two 5 lb. fully-charged multi-purpose fire extinguishers on all mobile equipment when operating. In high hazard mobile equipment, two 10 lb. extinguishers is recommended.
4. Maintain quick-opening fasteners on the engine/hydraulic panels on all mobile equipment. Fast access to interior areas is very important in an emergency.
5. Maintain good housekeeping practices in the engine/hydraulic compartments on all mobile equipment. Daily inspection and cleaning is the norm. Good housekeeping leads to good maintenance.
6. Review and inspect special maintenance concerns involving electrical wiring/harnesses, electrical components, possible damage to hydraulic lines and fuel lines, as well as other trouble spots. Thorough self-inspections will help keep your equipment operating safely.



This is what can go wrong very quickly! No one can afford these types of problems.



# BCAP Program Receives Federal Funding

**C**ounty Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices are now taking applications for the federal Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP).

Five hundred fourteen million dollars has been apportioned by the Office of Management and Budget, to be used between now and March 31, 2010. Additional funding is expected to be secured for use after that date.

Initial assistance will be a dollar per dollar match, up to \$45 per dry ton, for biomass that is delivered to a designated biomass conversion facility. Producers, such as loggers, will be eligible for payments for up to two years.

To qualify for BCAP payments, loggers with eligible fiber must apply for payments at county's FSA office where their business is located. Application should be made in person, and must be made before the material is delivered. If the applicant is not the actual individual landowner from which the eligible material was removed, the applicant must provide a copy of a written agreement that authorizes removal of the eligible material to the FSA County Office.

Any material which is sold or delivered before the application for payment is approved is ineligible for payment.

"Payments are triggered by approval of the paperwork," said Greg Anderson of FSA's St. Paul office. "The county can't approve payments to eligible material owners until they make sure the funding is available."

Approval from FSA should take about a week. After delivery, eligible material owners then submit payment requests to their county office, and payments will be made through the U.S. Treasury.

BCAP was created by Congress through the Farm Bill and is designed to stimulate growth in the bioenergy sector and would provide financial assistance to loggers, farmers, or landowners that deliver eligible biomass

material to designated biomass conversion facilities.

As of December 1, several Minnesota facilities had received government approval to participate in the BCAP program, including:

Chippewa Valley Ethanol Co.	Benson
Koda Energy	Shakopee
Laurentian Energy	Hibbing and Virginia
Verso Paper	Sartell
U of M-Morris	Morris
Minnesota Power – Hibbard Energy	Duluth
Minnesota Power – Rapid Energy Ctr.	Grand Rapids
Valley Forest Wood Products	Marcell
Sappi Fine Paper	Cloquet

Others facilities have applied for approval with the Department of Agriculture. A facility that receives the material must be registered in the program in order for the fiber producer to receive BCAP payments.

A list of registered facilities nationwide is available at:  
[http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA\\_File/bcapfacilitieslist.pdf](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/bcapfacilitieslist.pdf)

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## TPA/MLEP Offer Skilled Driver Workshops



**E**ric Sundby of the Minnesota State Patrol discusses load securement at this year's Skilled Driver Workshop in Bemidji. TPA again partnered with the Minnesota Logger Education Program to cosponsor the workshop, as well as another in Virginia. The workshop featured a review of the load restraint standards and discussed the use and placement of these restraints during a truck/trailer walk around. Attendees were also able to ask questions about a variety of enforcement issues.

# 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.

## Recent Timber Sales Average prices, as reported by each agency

**N**ote: On state sales, the DNR does not calculate price per cord on individual auctions. Price per cord information on these sales is done by TPA staff. This average is for "trembling aspen" and "aspen species" combined, unless otherwise noted.

Average prices are for the combined regular and intermediate auctions.

### St. Louis County

November 5 – Oral Auction

Species	Avg. Price
Aspen pulpwood	\$24.38
Black Spruce pulpwood	\$24.51
Birch pulpwood	\$ 7.09
Balsam pulpwood	\$13.44

### Koochiching County

November 18 – Oral Auction

Species	Avg. Price
Aspen Pulp/Bolts	\$24.66
Spruce Pulp/Bolts	\$15.81
Balm Pulp/Bolts	\$23.08
Tamarack Pulp/Bolts	\$ 5.57

### DNR – Blackduck Area

December 1 – Oral Auction

Species	Avg. Price
Aspen	\$21.69
Aspen	\$xx.xx

### DNR – Hibbing Area

December 2 – Oral Auction

Species	Avg. Price
Aspen	\$24.42

Six of the 18 tracts offered on the regular and intermediate auctions went unsold.

### Beltrami County

December 3 – Oral Auction

Species	Avg. Price
Aspen pulpwood	\$25.19
Balsam pulpwood	\$20.77
Jack Pine P/B	\$29.31
Spruce/Tamarack	\$12.76

Of 27 tracts on the auction, two sold for the appraised price, one

was sold over the counter, and the remainder were bid up.

### DNR – Tower Area

December 3 – Oral Auction

Species	Avg. Price
Aspen	\$23.28

Of the 34 tracts offered for sale, 21 had reduced base prices for a variety of reasons: because the sale had poor terrain, poor access, poor quality wood, or because the tract had gone unsold at previous auctions. Some aspen had been reduced as much as 75%, to \$4/cord. All but three of the reduced price tracts received no bids, including all five tracts with \$4 aspen. In all, more than 46% of the total volume across all species offered on the auction went unsold.

### DNR – Warroad Area

December 8 – Sealed Bid

Species	Avg. Price
Aspen	\$18.63

Of the 37 tracts offered on the regular and intermediate auctions, 27 were sold. Of those sold, ten were purchased for the appraised price.

## October Housing Starts Decline; Other Housing Figures Favorable

**U**.S. housing starts fell 10.6% in between September and October, according to figures released by the U.S. Census Bureau. October's seasonally adjusted annual rate of 529,000 units was also down 30.7% from the October 2008 rate.

However, several other indicators painted a more encouraging picture. Sales of new homes and of existing homes increased in October, both over the previous month and over 2008 levels. In addition, an index that measures nationwide housing affordability is near an all-time high. The National Association of Home builders/Wells Fargo Housing Opportunity Index showed that 70.1 percent of all new and existing homes sold in the third quarter of 2009 were affordable to families earning the national median income of \$64,000, down slightly from a near-record 72.3 percent during the previous quarter and up from 56.1 percent during the third quarter of 2008. The report says home sales were bolstered by affordable interest rates, and because Congress and

the Obama Administration extended the federal tax credit beyond its Nov. 30 deadline and expanded it to a wider group of eligible home buyers.

"With interest rates now lower than last quarter," said NAHB Chairman Joe Robson, a home builder from Tulsa, "the tax credit will encourage even more home buyers to enter the market and help stabilize housing and the economy by creating new jobs, stimulating home sales, reducing foreclosures, cutting excess inventories and stabilizing home prices."

## Gross Vehicle Weight Rating Advisory

**O**fficials from MnDOT and the Minnesota State Patrol caution loggers and truckers to make sure they purchase a "forest products" permit when licensing their trucks for use with a sixth axle and up to 99,000 pounds during winter weight increases.

The reason: now two different types of permits exist for carrying weight in excess of 80,000 pounds. In 2008, legislation was enacted that allows increased weights for certain agricultural commodities. However, that law indicates those with the "ag permit" must comply with the gross vehicle weight (GVW) rating stamped on the door of the truck and on the trailer. With the ag permit, certain loads could be permissible under state weight laws but would put the truck/trailer combination over the GVW rating. Even though a sixth axle would allow for the additional weight, it doesn't change the combination's GVW rating.

However, the legislation enacted in 2004 allowing haulers of forest products to carry increased weights didn't include a provision pertaining to the GVW rating. So, haulers with the "forest products" permit can carry an additional 10 percent with a sixth axle, even if it exceeds the GVW rating.

"Some truckers who haul forest products may have purchased the ag permit by mistake," said Lt. Ron Silcox of the Minnesota State Patrol. "If they have the 'forest products' permit, they'll be able to haul the maximum weight, regardless of the GVW ratings."



# DNR Completes Sustainable Timber Yield Analysis

**M**innesota's forest can sustainably support a 5.5 million cord yearly harvest level, according to an analysis across all forest ownerships recently completed by the Department of Natural Resources.

"This analysis is important because it can help guide forest investment decisions," said State Forester Dave Epperly. "Minnesotans depend on their 16.3 million acres of forest land for many things important to them, including wildlife habitat, recreation and tourism, clean water, natural beauty and forest products. All these things that we value require protection and investment."

The study, titled "Forest Harvest Levels in Minnesota – Effects of Selected Forest Management Practices on Sustained Timber Yields," will help policymakers, forest managers and proposers of new industrial facilities assess future timber yields and forest age classes under a range of potential management and policy options.

According to the DNR, it is critical to have updated information on forest conditions and potential timber yields such as this new analysis, in order to make informed decisions on where to invest in the state's forests for greatest forest health and economic benefit today and far into the future.

"Resources were not available for a full update to the 1994 Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Timber Harvesting (GEIS), but we felt it was important to update what we could, and we did have sufficient ability to examine timber yields," Epperly said. "This

analysis, while not as comprehensive as the GEIS, incorporates important environmental issues such as reserved forest areas and forest management guideline impacts."

"It's important for people to understand the connection between management and industry," said Keith Jacobson, the DNR's forest products utilization and marketing program leader. "The analysis shows the biggest opportunity by far is on private land."

The analysis isn't an effort to dictate how different landowners manage their forests and it isn't the final word on sustainable harvest levels. It is tremendously important information, however, that can help guide forest investment decisions and provide a starting point for future analyses.

An assessment of the potential for reaching a sustainable timber yield of 5.5 million cords was a key recommendation of the 2007 Governor's Task Force on Primary Forest Industry Competitiveness.

Items necessary to achieve this level are 1) improved markets for a wide range of species and products and 2) increased investments in forest management practices. Specific opportunities for

raising harvest levels through intensified management include intensified "commercial" and "precommercial" thinning in several forest types such as red pine, addressing market and process constraints, and addressing regeneration challenges in forest types such as white cedar.

An advisory group provided assistance and guidance as the analysis was developed. Its members reflected a breadth of diversity in management and administration statewide, and included representatives from state and federal government, counties and the scientific community. The advisory group also made recommendations for additional analysis beyond the scope of this initial work.

To read more about this finding and what else the analysis contains, visit [www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/um/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/um/index.html) or [www.forestry.umn.edu/publications/staffpapers/Staffpaper204.pdf](http://www.forestry.umn.edu/publications/staffpapers/Staffpaper204.pdf).



LOGGERS OF THE PAST . . .

## "State Log Scalers"

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*



During a presentation of slides on early loggers or during any conversation about logging history in Minnesota, "state scalers" are mentioned and I am asked, "What do you mean by state scalers?" I will try to cover this subject as it applies to the logging industry.

The scaling of logs was the process of determining the amount of lumber that could be sawed from a log. On straight and sound logs this was quite simple, but with logs having defects, crooks, rot, etc., it took considerable knowledge of logs and lumber to determine the amount of usable lumber in a log. A number of log rules were developed, including the Wisconsin Decimal C, the Doyle, the International and the Minnesota Standard—all somewhat different.

In Minnesota, the Minnesota Standard rule was the official one for scaling all state-owned timber. However, the other rules were used by private companies in buying and selling logs. The scale of each scaler would also differ some in the scaling of faulty timber. Disagreement

often occurred and lawsuits developed.

The Minnesota office of Surveyor General of Logs and Lumber was created by law as an official and neutral department for scaling. When a contract would be made to sell or buy logs it would require that the scaling be done by a state scaler and the amount of lumber in the logs as determined by him would be official.

Besides the scaling on private contracts, the Surveyor General had other duties such as the recording of all stamps and bark marks and the scaling of all timber cut from state land. The Surveyor General would try to obtain the best qualified scalers possible.

During the peak years of logging, the Surveyor General may have had as many as a hundred scalers working on private contracts alone. On private contracts, the parties involved paid for the scaling costs. Just which party—buyer or seller—was to pay the cost of scaling would be in the contract. Not all logs were sold on or subject to state scale, but many were.

In the early days, much of the scaling

was done during the winter months or on the sorting works and booms on the rivers in the spring. Some scalers would be laid off during the summer, but many worked the year around and would be shifted from job to job.

It was during the days of the river drives, with the sorting works on the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers, that the demand for scaling on private contracts was at its peak. However, the scaling on private contracts did continue clear through the logging of the original pine stands. It was only during the final days of white pine logging that the request for state scaling of private contracts declined.

However, the scaling of state-owned timber increased as the cutting of smaller products such as ties, pulpwood and cedar, which was plentiful on state swamp lands, came into demand. This continued to be done by Surveyor General scalers until the office of State Surveyor General of Logs and Lumber was abolished by law in 1967 and the duties of that office were turned over to the Division of Forestry.

The Surveyor General had several Deputy Surveyor General offices set up around the state so as to better serve the logging industry. One of these offices was in Duluth in the old Manhattan Building and continued operations up into the early 1920s.

As demand for state scalers on private contracts became less, these deputy offices were dissolved and the work was handled from the St. Paul office of the Surveyor General. State scalers then were assigned to State Timber Appraisers districts and from there to the state timber permits. Here again some of these scalers worked for private companies when not employed by the state.

As a rule these scalers were older men who had scaled for private companies for many years before being hired by the state. In later years some younger men were hired for the scaling of smaller timber products such as ties, posts and poles. Smaller timber products did not require the experience as did log scaling.

For many years the law required that all state timber be scaled on the grounds

A nice, sound log being scaled at a sawmill. Logs like this would be easy for a state scaler.





where cut. For logs, this meant scaled as they were skidded to the skidways or when they were loaded onto sleighs. Smaller timber would be scaled in the strips or on the side of the log road where it had been skidded.

In later years the law was changed so the timber could be moved to a central landing for scaling after a request for a landing had been approved by the division in charge of timber permit supervision.

Sometimes the buyer or seller on private contract scaling would be dissatisfied with the scaler and would request another. This was done in rare cases. On logging operations where only state-owned timber was being cut, a scaler would be assigned to one camp during the entire logging season. However, most camps cut some private timber as well as state-owned, and in this case a scaler of state timber might be assigned to scaling in several camps in the same general area. He would then keep in touch with the logging operation in these camps and scale as needed to keep the operation moving.

Where state timber permits were small or inactive he might scale for a number of operators. The state appraisers or rangers in charge of the state permits would work very closely with the scaler in having all permits scaled so as not to hold up the logging operation.

In some cases where the logger was selling his logs to a mill on scale, the mill operator accepted the state scaler's decisions, but in others insisted on scaling all logs purchased himself, and a difference in scale—which always existed—sometimes was cause of dissatisfaction.

Besides the regular scalers, the Surveyor General had check scalers or scaler supervisors who called on scalers to keep the scaling as uniform as possible. These check scalers were very well qualified and knew all the problems. In making a check scale, they would scale up to 200 logs and then compare with the scaler's scale and make adjustments if needed.

All logs were numbered and recorded by number. On small products such as pulp, the piles were numbered. Ties were counted and recorded as to small or standard. Posts, poles and mine timbers were counted and recorded as to length. Mine lagging was scaled by the cord. Piling, which was usually sold by the lineal foot, was recorded as to lengths.

Having been raised in the Bemidji area and having worked along the Minnesota and International Railroad as timber checker, camp clerk and camp foreman in this area where considerable state-owned timber was cut, I became very well acquainted with many state timber scalers. Many of these men were old when I was a young man and had acquired their experience in scaling on the St. Croix, Rum and Mississippi Rivers

when pine logging was at its peak. Most of these older men preferred the scaling of logs rather than small products and they took great pride in their log scaling ability.

These older scalers were very well qualified and I had great respect for their competence. Some of the ones I knew best were Jimmy Brennen of Stillwater, who would fight at a drop of a hat if anyone questioned his ability to scale; the Carroll brothers, John and Dan; Alex McNeil, John Fiarity, Jack Morrisey, John Dufall, Jim Hogan and others.

I also knew many of the latter-day scalers, including Clyde Johnson, Wil-

liam Kenely, Wally Sutherland, Oscar Anderson, Carl Freeberg, Rusty Willis, Fred Letourneau, Art Miller and many others.

While the Division of Forestry is still carrying on the scaling of state-owned timber, the demand for different types of timber products has brought about many new scaling methods which no doubt will change further as different uses for wood fibers are developed.

But when we look back on our forest history, we must salute the early state log scalers—all great men who played a large part in bringing our vast virgin pine stands to market.



Above: Clyde Johnson, a state scaler in the Big Fork area, 1917. Below: Dan O'Connor looks over a defective log; logs like this called for experienced scalers.



Logs scaled in the water at the sorting works were scaled with a caliper.



# 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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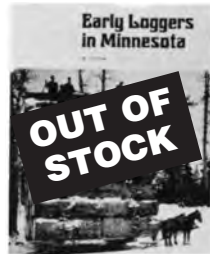
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# Early Loggers in Minnesota

by J. C. Ryan

VOL. I



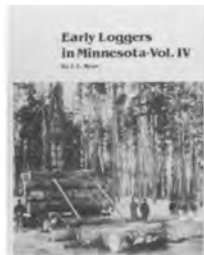
VOL. III



VOL. II



VOL. IV



First-hand recollections by storyteller "Buzz" Ryan of the loggers, loaders, swampers, wood butchers and bull cooks who ruled the woods in the heyday of the pioneer lumberjacks—with dozens of historical photographs.

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ copies "Early Loggers in Minnesota" Vol. I at \$8.50 each.

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## ADVERTISERS INDEX

AgStar.....	10
Cass Forest Products.....	14
Corporate 4.....	13
Enbridge.....	19
Fryberger, Buchanan, Smith & Frederick, P.A.....	23
Great Lakes Trailers.....	11
Hedstrom Lumber Co.....	18
Industrial Fluid Technologies, LLC.....	19
Itasca Greenhouse.....	7
Lumbermen's Underwriting Alliance.....	15
Northern Engine & Supply.....	5
Northern Timberline Equipment.....	7
Nortrax.....	5, 27
Otis-Magie Insurance Agency.....	26
Pomp's Tire.....	16
Rapids Hydraulic.....	12
Rice Blacksmith Saw & Machine.....	2
Road Machinery & Supplies.....	28
Rux Strapping.....	14
Schaefer Enterprises.....	4
Stewart-Taylor Printing.....	5
Tire Chains Required.....	6
Wausau Sales Corp.....	16