**Actions the Minnesota Timber Producers Association**

**(TPA) has taken on your behalf**

Thanks to TPA’s lobbying efforts, both during Minnesota’s Legislative Session and through discussions with policy makers at the state, federal, and county levels, a number of issues important to TPA members were acted upon in the last 12 months. Here is a rundown of actions pertaining to the forest products industry, and their outcomes this year:

**“Essential” Designation During Pandemic**

TPA was at the forefront of making sure the Forest Products Industry was among businesses allowed to remain “open” through the pandemic. When Governor Walz issued his Executive Order in March, our industry was included in the “Critical Infrastructure Designation.” This “Essential” declaration allowed loggers to continue in the woods, as well as allowed mills to keep making their products during the pandemic.

**DNR Base Prices on Spring Auctions**

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the downturn in markets, TPA urged DNR to reduce base prices on spring timber auctions. As a result, DNR reduced prices on softwood logs and bolts by 10%. In addition, DNR base prices on aspen averaged 36% lower than on the fall auctions, and between 8% and 47% lower than recent aspen prices on federal and county auctions.

**Response to Verso Closure**

When the Duluth mill announced its closure, TPA staff immediately started conversations with lawmakers and policy makers at the county, state, and federal levels, seeking ways to give loggers relief on permits that no longer have markets.

**Conformity with Federal Tax Laws**

TPA continues to advocate for conformity with the federal tax code. After the Trump Tax Cuts of 2017, Section 179 allows a taxpayer to elect to deduct the cost of certain types of property on their income taxes as an expense, rather than requiring the cost of the property to be capitalized and depreciated over time. But Minnesota tax law does not currently comply with this. Bringing the two tax codes into conformity, as passed in the Minnesota Senate, would result in a savings to Minnesota’s loggers.

**DNR Extension Program**

When warm temperatures during the Winter of 2020 didn’t allow harvesting operations on certain sales, TPA advocated on behalf of its members as DNR developed its Adverse Surface Conditions Extension Policy.

**Road Posting Increased**

Last summer, Carlton County lowered the maximum weight on Hwy 61 between Moose Lake and Barnum, an important route for timber haulers. TPA worked with the County Highway Department and with MnDOT’s Bridge Office, pointing out that 6-axle trucks have less impact per axle and should be allowed on that road. The County and State agreed and Hwy 61 was re-posted, allowing max weights with a 6-axle configuration.

**Timber Sale Tours on DNR and USFS Lands**

TPA staff and members often tour unsold tracts of timber with staff from the appropriate agency to offer feedback on how to better design sales and make them more attractive to bidders. It is an opportunity for TPA members to provide feedback on a variety issues, with a goal of getting more high-quality timber on the market for purchase.

**Input on County, State, and Federal Issues**

When county, state, or federal government asks for public comment, TPA weighs in on behalf of its members. Among the topics TPA has commented on over the past year include: USFS environmental assessments on both the Superior and Chippewa NF; the implementation of DNR’s Sustainable Harvest Analysis; reform of the USFS NEPA process; the proposed Northern Long Eared Bat Habitat Conservation Plan; County land management plans.

**Advocating For Reasonable Energy Policy**

During this year’s legislative session, proposals mandating “Clean Energy” were introduced in both the House and the Senate. If passed, it would cost billions for ratepayers. According to a *Center of the American Experiment* analysis, “Greater Minnesota would suffer the most” under the legislation, costing the state thousands of jobs in paper mills and taconite mines dependent on low-cost energy. TPA worked with industry allies, making the case the legislation would kill jobs in the logging and forest products industries. Bills in both houses failed to pass, but the fight will continue in future legislative sessions.