

The Link

Newsletter | May 2026



Building a Stronger Industry

by Ian Faight

Executive Vice President, HMA



It's hard to believe it's May, but here we are. And I couldn't be more excited, because that means the countdown is on to summer—and **HMA's 2026 Spring Regional Meeting**. This year's event will be based out of Wausau, Wisconsin, **Wednesday-Thursday, May 20 and 21**, just before Memorial Day weekend and the unofficial start of summer.

I hope you're planning on joining us. HMA members always say our Regionals are one of our most beneficial membership perks. By seeing other operations in action, they offer an excellent opportunity to get ideas to take back to your own facilities and improve operations. And of course, there's plenty of time for networking and camaraderie

We have five tours lined up, with stops at HMA member companies **Kretz Lumber Company** and **NWH**; and non-members, **Menzner Hardwoods**, **Menominee Tribal Enterprises**, and **North Central Technical College's** brand new mill. I thank our tour hosts for allowing us to stop by and take look around.

Another thank you goes out to our meeting sponsors, **Eagle Machinery and Supply**, **Menzner Hardwoods**, and **TS Manufacturing**. Their support is greatly appreciated and enables us to put on a great meeting by defraying expenses and providing an excellent experience for all attendees. Thank you!

More details are on the next page and online at HMAmembers.org. I look forward to seeing everyone.

Once I get back from Wisconsin, it'll be time to tackle other HMA business, including planning for our 2027 National Conference and Expo. And I could use your help by participating in our **Planning Call**. It'll take place on **Tuesday, June 30**, 10 am, and will require your thoughts, ideas, and about an hour of time. See the article to the right for more details.

That's all for now. Feel free to reach out any time!

Spring Regional Meeting Sponsors

The HMA extends a hearty "Thank You" to the following companies for their generous support of our 2026 Spring Regional Meeting.



TS Manufacturing

Sign Up for HMA's 2027 National Conference Planning Call

HMA's 2027 National Conference and Expo is set for Monday-Wednesday, March 15-17, at the Charleston Place Hotel in Charleston, South Carolina. Before we get there, we're counting on your participation in our National Conference Planning Call to provide input on potential learning session topics, our event theme, and ways we can improve your experience in Charleston.

The call will take place on **Tuesday, June 30**, 10-11 am, on Zoom. Join the conversation and let us know what information you need to improve your business. Your input matters!

If you'd like to participate, send me an email at ian@hardwood.org and we'll make sure you receive the call details.



Spring Regional Meeting

Wausau, Wisconsin | May 20–21

Last Chance to Register for HMA's Spring Regional Meeting

HMA's 2026 Spring Regional Meeting is set to be held in Wausau, Wisconsin, **May 20–21**, and we'll be visiting five excellent facilities on our tour of The Badger State. A preview follows and you can see our full tour schedule at HMAmembers.org.

And if you're thinking about a last-minute registration, email ian@hardwood.org as soon as possible.

Our Spring Regional Meeting begins on **Wednesday, May 20**, with a hot breakfast at our host hotel, the Fairfield by Marriott Inn & Suites Wausau.



We'll board the bus bright and early to head out to our first stop at **Kretz Lumber Company** in Antigo, Wisconsin. Since 1929, Kretz Lumber Company has been a leading manufacturer of high-quality American hardwood

lumber. The company operates a 48,000-square-foot facility, has the capacity to produce more than 13 million board feet of lumber each year, maintains 16 dry kilns, and offers custom milling services.



Then we'll take a short ride to **Northcentral Technical College's** campus in Antigo. NTC's

Wood Technology Center of Excellence is a one-of-a-kind facility dedicated to preparing students for careers in the forest products and woodworking industry. Attendees will tour NTC's new, state-of-the-art lumber manufacturing facility. Opened in 2025, the 10,000-square-foot training sawmill is the first of its kind in the U.S., and was built to help train students in the latest technologies, safety practices, and career skills in the lumber industry.

Following NTC, we'll be off to **Menzner Hardwoods** in Marathon City, Wisconsin. Menzner Hardwoods is a fifth-generation, family-owned business. Over 130 years, the company has grown into a premier manufacturer of hardwood millwork and mouldings. Attendees will have the opportunity to see Menzner's kiln drying and millwork facilities.



After the tour at Menzner Hardwoods and lunch sponsored by the company, we'll get back on the bus for a short trip to **NWH's** facility in Dorchester, Wisconsin. Attendees will get a look at their recently installed walnut steaming operation.



Then we'll head back to our hotel to freshen up and get ready for our Reception & Dinner, sponsored by Eagle Machinery & Supply.

After breakfast on **Thursday, May 21**, we'll take a trip to Neopit, Wisconsin, to tour **Menominee Tribal Enterprises' (MTE)** operations. MTE has been a producer of hardwood lumber since 1908.

Owned and operated by the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, MTE sustainably manages and maintains the 230,000-acre Menominee Forest to harvest approximately 20 million board feet of timber each year. Attendees will experience MTE's unique approach to forestry and tour their manufacturing and kiln-drying facilities.



Menominee Tribal Enterprises

And then we'll be off to the highways and airports to head home for the Memorial Day weekend.

The Latest from Capitol Hill

by Dana Lee Cole

Executive Director, Hardwood Federation



Farm Bill Passes the House

The Farm Bill (H.R. 7567, the Farm, Food and National Security Act) passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 224–200. Fourteen Democrats voted for the measure, joining all but three Republicans in support. We are hopeful the House action will jump start the Farm Bill rewriting process

in the upper chamber. The House-passed measure includes the Hardwood Federation-supported Jobs in the Woods Act language, a binding biomass carbon neutrality provision, which we intend to bolster in the Senate and language reauthorizing and updating both the Wood Innovation and Community Wood Grant programs, among other beneficial provisions.

Hardwood Federation and HF Partners Sign Coalition Statement to European Union Leaders:

The Hardwood Federation and other members of the U.S. wood products value chain, including HMA, **signed a letter** to European Union President Ursula von der Leyen and key cabinet members regarding our continued united support of key changes to the EU Deforestation Regulations, primarily the need to make simple, common sense, changes to the current EUDR definition of “plot of land.” The Federation continues to work closely with the American Hardwood Export Council, our member associations, wood products allies in pursuing these changes.

European Union Simplification Announcement Offers No Real Change

The European Commission published its much anticipated EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) simplification document. Despite the best effort of the united U.S. forest products industry, including the Hardwood Federation and the American Hardwood Export Council, minimal changes were made to the existing rule for the US supply chain. Our primary concern, the definition of “plot of land” requiring onerous reporting measures, was not mentioned at all, nor was any explanation of why proposed corrections were rejected. The Federation and AHEC will continue to work with our allies to push for meaningful change.

USDA Announcing Streamlines NEPA Administration

In April, the US Department of Agriculture announced they have finalized a rule modernizing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations. This Final Rule consolidates seven agency-specific NEPA regulations into a single, department wide framework, reducing the overall volume of regulations by 66

percent. Agriculture based industries have expressed concerns about the bureaucratic overreach of NEPA for years. According to USDA officials, the changes in the Final Rule restore NEPA implementation to its core purpose: ensuring federal agencies consider environmental impacts while maintaining the flexibility needed for efficient permitting and faster delivery of critical USDA services and funding relied on by farmers, ranchers, loggers, and rural communities.

Endangered Species Act Reform Stalls In House

The ESA Amendments Act (H.R. 1897) was pulled from House floor consideration yesterday as a group of Florida Republicans expressed concern over one aspect of the legislation. Overall, the bill attempts to reform the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to afford greater weight to economic impacts of listing animals and plants as endangered while also limiting environmental group litigation. The component that drew Florida House member opposition was a provision in Section 506 expanding the use of a group of high-level officials, colloquially known as “The God Squad,” that would be empowered to waive ESA mandates in favor of development projects, even when protected species could be put at risk. A primary concern among these mostly coastal district lawmakers was the potential to open up coastal waters to oil and gas drilling.

The lead sponsor of the bill, House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bruce Westerman (R-AR), vowed to continue to work on the measure and bring it back for full House consideration.

Register for the Hardwood Federation Fly-In

The annual Hardwood Federation Fly-In to D.C. will take place June 9–10. This is a great year to visit our nation’s capital...not only is it a chance to share your insights, concerns, and opportunities with your Members of Congress, it also is a great way to celebrate the United States’ 250th Birthday. Washington will be in full celebration mode in June, with plenty of **special events** to enjoy. Our **agenda** this year is tight and focused to make the best use of your valuable time. As in the past, we will start with a welcome reception on Tuesday, June 9, and spend Wednesday, June 10, on Capitol Hill meeting with your elected officials. We will end the day with two select PAC events for our friends on both sides of the aisle.

A limited block of rooms is available at the Fly-In Host Hotel, the Embassy Suites D.C. Convention Center. **Register today** to take advantage of our special rate!

The Renewable Fuel Standard & Woody Biomass Debate

by Dana Lee Cole

Executive Director, Hardwood Federation

A forestry and forest products value chain issue that has emerged and become hotly debated with increasing frequency over the last couple of years is related to a long-standing liquid transportation fuel mandate known as the Renewable Fuels Standard or RFS. Originally enacted in 2005 and then refined in 2007 as part of the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA), the RFS requires growing volumes of biofuels to be blended into U.S. transportation fuel supplies of gasoline and diesel. EPA finalized a rule in March, setting the annual (2026) number of renewable fuel gallons to be blended into the U.S. supply at almost 26 billion gallons. Despite this considerable volumetric mandate, the underlying law is an anomaly. Instead of deploying an “all of the above” approach in tapping renewable feedstock sources, the statute imposes overly restrictive conditions on eligibility for fuels derived from forest-based biomass. In the law’s definition of “renewable biomass,” fiber from private tree plantations is eligible, but only on those lands cleared prior to enactment—December 19, 2007. Slash and precommercial thinnings qualify, but whole trees do not. And fiber from federal lands is strictly prohibited. These definitional restrictions were negotiated and secured by the Natural Resources Defense Council, based on environmentalists’ concerns around widescale conversion of natural forests to pine plantations to fulfill anticipated renewable fuel demand.

With markets for forest fiber and residuals in a down cycle, the chorus of stakeholders urging expansion of the definition is growing louder. Private industrial forest landowners who see a potential market growth opportunity for their assets have led efforts over the years to revise the definition and open up eligibility for fuels derived from private working forestlands. The challenge politically has been that this definition is deeply embedded in the Clean Air Act and there has been consensus among legal experts that any revision would necessitate a legislative reopening of that statute. In Washington, amending a landmark statute like the Clean Air Act or Resources Conservation and Recovery Act in a rifle-shot fashion is nearly impossible. Such efforts attract a lot of attention, both from opponents and ancillary stakeholders looking to “shoehorn” in their priorities on any moving legislative vehicle. Moreover, there is very little appetite in Congress right now for moving clean air legislation. That is why forest landowners were pushing hard for EPA to try to modify the definition in its recently completed RFS rulemaking mentioned above. The Agency did seek comments on the renewable biomass definition during this process, but did not make any changes to it. This action officially

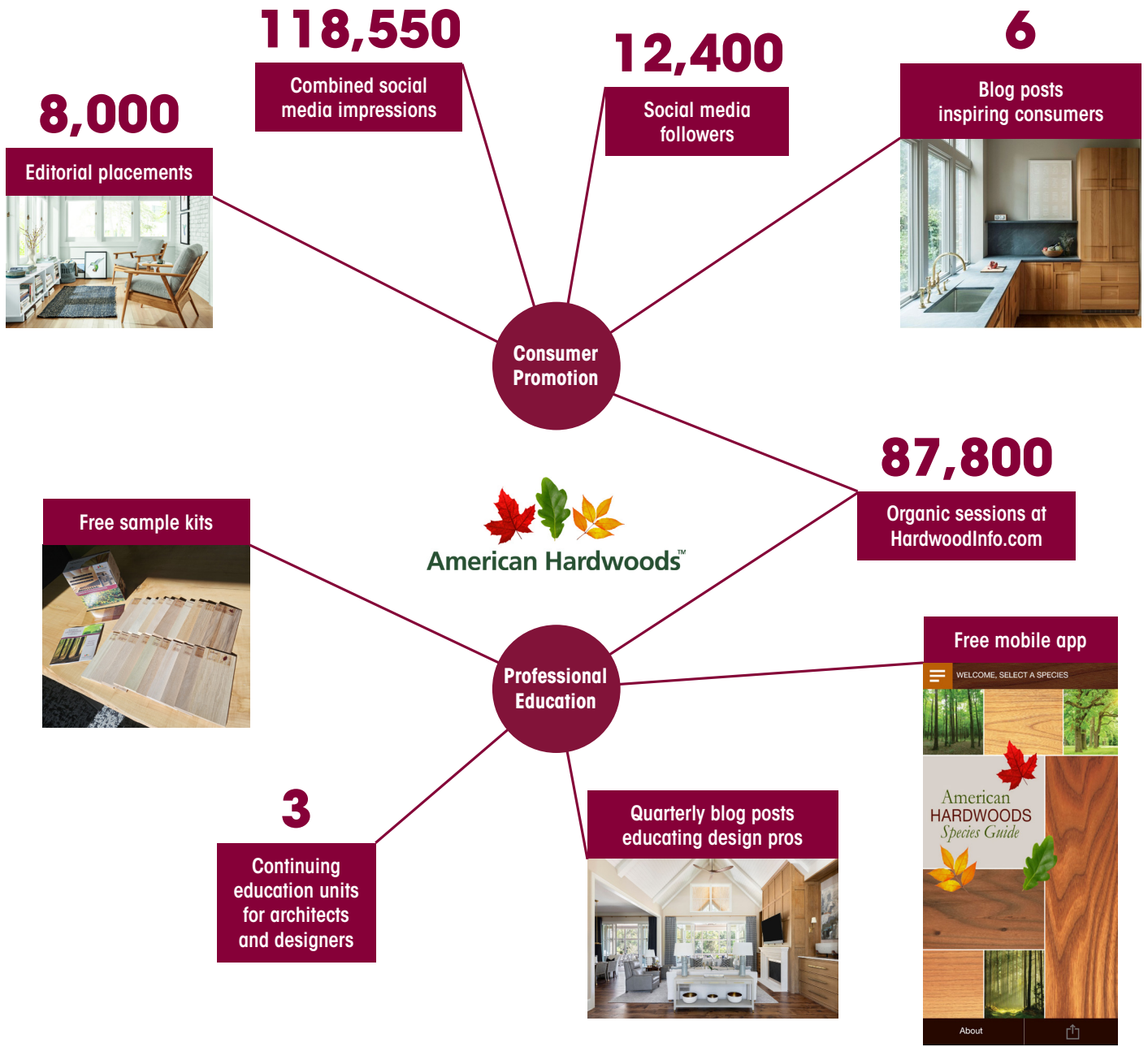
closes the regulatory chapter of this issue for now.

So, what comes next? Advocates for an expanded renewable biomass definition—Hardwood Federation included—will continue to push on Congress to act. With recent pulp and paper mill closures in South Carolina and elsewhere in the Southeast, falling demand in some of these fiber baskets has loggers, landowners, and sawmill operators viewing the situation with increased urgency and asking key lawmakers to understand the plight of those seeking more markets for forest fiber and residuals. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman John Boozman (R-AR), in opening remarks during his panel’s consideration of the Fix Our Forests Act, underscored his belief that forest-derived liquid biofuels should be eligible under the RFS mandate. He noted, however, that his committee does not have jurisdiction over the Clean Air Act and pledged to work with Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chair Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) on a solution.

The issue takes on added complexity with the fact that the entire forest products value chain is not in agreement. While forest landowners have been pushing hard to create a market pathway in the RFS, the pulp and paper sector continues to oppose these efforts. The opposition is borne out of concern that potential demand for forest fiber, should forest-based liquid transportation fuel production actually scale, could threaten affordability and availability of their feedstock. Advocates for the pulp and paper industry have been effective in communicating these concerns with key committee chairs in Congress. In recent communications from Congressional leaders, it is clear that any viable legislative fix would have to include language protecting wood fiber sourcing areas around pulp and paper facilities. Negotiations are ongoing around specifics and whether it is even possible to fashion language that would thread the needle between need for increased market demand and protections for existing users of forest fiber.

Despite EPA’s inaction on rewriting a RFS biomass definition, the issue shows no signs of abating. The Hardwood Federation will continue to work with our upstream supplier allies and our brethren in the softwood sector in trying to find a workable solution to this problem. Healthy markets for the forest resource are the engines that power the cycle of sustainability. Without them, forestland conversion to agriculture or development is inevitable. The Federation team will continue to work this message in our meetings with Members of Congress in hopes that a compromise may ultimately be forged.

Your American Hardwoods Promotion \$s at Work



Interested in learning more? Email info@hardwood.org today!



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Hardwood Manufacturers Association
2681 Sidney Street, Office 128
Pittsburgh, PA 15203

Phone 412.244.0440
Email info@hardwood.org

Web HMAmembers.org
HardwoodInfo.com

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