The Link

Newsletter | October 2026

HMA

Building a Stronger Industry

by Ian Faight
Executive Vice President, HMA

Just like that, HMA's 2026 Fall Regional Meeting is in the books. Thank you to the more than 50 attendees who were able to go on the road trip through Tennessee and Virginia. It was a great experience all around with excellent tours, networking opportunities, an informative presentation, many familiar faces, and quite a few new people attending their first HMA Regional.

These Regional Meetings would not be possible without the hospitality of our tour hosts. Thank you to the **New River Hardwoods** sawmill in Roan Mountain, Tennessee; the **New River Hardwoods** sawmill and millworks facilities in Mountain City, Tennessee; the **American Wood Fibers** plant in Marion, Virginia; the **Koppers** tie treatment plant in Salem, Virginia; and the **Stella-Jones Corporation** tie treatment plant in Goshen, Virginia. On behalf of the HMA and all attendees, we appreciate you opening your doors to our members.

A major thank you also goes out to Virginia Tech's Dr. Brian Bond, who gave a presentation on the latest developments on hardwood cross-laminated timber, capabilities of thermally modified hardwoods, and updates on Virginia Tech's programs and research.

Of course, I also have to shout out our generous sponsors: **Baillie Group**, **Kittrell Appraisals**, and **Stella-Jones Corporation**. Your extra financial support enables us to provide all attendees with the first-class experience they come to expect from HMA events.

HMA's Board of Directors also held its Fall Board Meeting as part of the Regional. During the meeting, the Board was updated on HMA business matters, promotion activities, and collaborations. Another important topic was membership development. As many of you know, HMA's membership has been limited to domestic sawmills and concentration yards. With that said, HMA's Board also recognizes the importance of industry suppliers and vendors to the HMA, its members, and events. During the meeting, the Board unanimously voted in favor of establishing an associate membership category specifically for industry suppliers and vendors to become an integral part of our Association. HMA President Brian Schilling made the announcement during dinner, also noting that one Board seat will be reserved for vendors per three-year term going forward, ensuring vendors have a voice and representation. Vendors and suppliers interested in becoming an HMA associate member can email me at **ian@hardwood.org** for details.

Now with the Fall Regional Meeting in the rearview mirror, it's time to turn our attention to the **HMA's 2027 National Conference and Expo**. The three-day event will take place at The DeSoto in historic Savannah, Georgia, **Monday–Wednesday, March 22–24**. Planning is underway and you'll be receiving more information in the mail and your email in the weeks ahead. Keep a look out and mark your calendars!

Enjoy the fall weather and seasonal activities!

Ian

HMA's Fall Regional Meeting Recap in Photos

Click and image to view more photos from each tour stop.

New River Hardwoods Sawmill | Road Mountain, Tennessee

New River Hardwoods Sawmill | Mountain City, Tennessee

New River Hardwoods Millworks | Mountain City, Tennessee

American Wood Fibers | Marion, Virginia

Koppers | Salem, Virginia

Stella-Jones Corp. | Goshen, Virginia

Presentation | Roanoke, Virginia

Fall Regional Meeting attendees heard a presentation by Dr. Brian Bond, Virginia Tech, on the latest developments with hardwood cross-laminated timber, thermal modification, and the programs and research at the University.

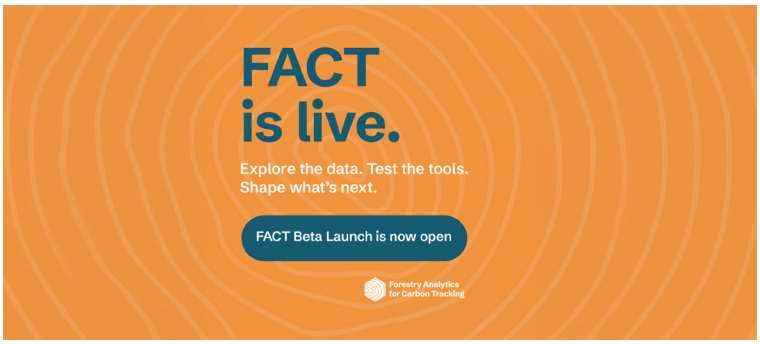
Photo courtesy of Miller Wood Trade Publications.

U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities Announce the FACT Data Platform

The Forest Service and U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities recently announced the Beta launch of the **Forestry Analytics for Carbon Tracking** (FACT) platform, a science-based platform that addresses the growing challenge and need for reliable forest sector carbon data at no cost to users.

Landowners and businesses face increasing pressure to report and communicate carbon information, but existing data can be fragmented, inconsistent, and costly to aggregate. FACT compiles previously siloed public and private data into one free, accessible, and transparent place, strengthening the competitiveness of U.S. forest products in domestic and global markets.

"The Forest Service is committed to giving landowners access to information that supports active and effective forest management," said Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz. "FACT demonstrates what is possible when the public and private sectors work together around transparent, standardized data."



The FACT Beta launch serves as a working release and active improvement period during which the platform will continue to be optimized, functionality will evolve, and new information will be incorporated. Valuable input gathered during this stage will shape the platform ahead of its full Version 1 release, which is planned for summer 2027.

To explore the FACT Beta and test its tools, visit **forestryanalytics.org**.

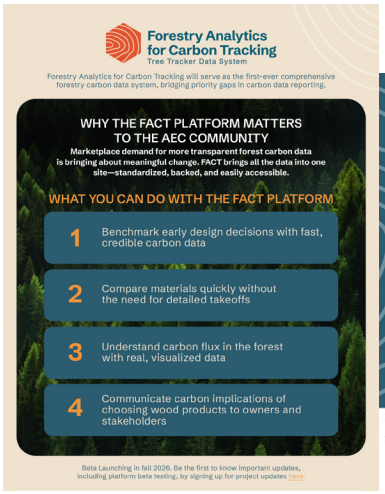
FACT is being developed through a public-private effort led by the Endowment, the Forest Service, and the forest sector, with input from scientists, engineers, and practitioners. The effort is supported through a collaborative agreement including the American Forest Foundation, American Wood Council, Composite Panel Association, Decorative Hardwoods Association, Hardwood Federation, Hardwood Manufacturers Association, National Alliance of Forest Owners, National Hardwood Lumber Association, National Wood Flooring Association, and Woodpack Global.

"Forest and harvested wood product carbon data has been scattered across public and private sources for years, making it challenging for landowners, manufacturers, and researchers to work from a consistent foundation of information," said Pete Madden, president and CEO of the Endowment. "FACT will make standardized, transparent data easier to access and use, strengthening the competitiveness of American forest products while supporting U.S. jobs and rural economies."

FACT will complement tools and datasets people already use across the forest products value chain rather than replacing them. The platform is being designed to:

- Provide forest land managers with a standardized method to convert their forest inventories to carbon stocks and create small area carbon estimations.
- Give harvested wood product manufacturers the tools to determine and report the carbon impacts of their operations.
- Support the consideration of embodied and displaced carbon estimates in design and architectural applications.
- Advance research by identifying gaps in primary carbon data.

As forest carbon research advances and published Life Cycle Assessments and Environmental Product Declarations are updated, FACT will continue incorporating new information. This approach will allow the platform to evolve as science, data, and user needs change.



Hardwood Flooring: Six Solid Choices for Your Home

When it comes to home flooring, solid American Hardwoods™ have been our gold standard since the nation's founding—and they still are. Few materials can match the durability of oak, walnut, maple, ash, and other favorite species, which can be sanded and refinished for decades, outlasting kids, pets, foot traffic, and trends—and somehow looking better for it. They're also remarkably practical, available in multiple widths, grades, and finishes, and easy to install. "American hardwoods are grown, harvested, and milled right here, giving architects and builders a reliable, high-quality supply," notes Ian Faight of the American Hardwood Information Center. "Nothing rivals hardwood's warmth and natural variation, and as a low-emission, renewable resource, it supports healthier interiors and everyday well-being." Here are six examples of what it can do for your home.

In East Greenwich, Rhode Island, this low-slung modern home by Estes Twombly + Titrington Architects blends into its riverside setting. Inside, hard white maple runs underfoot through the kitchen, dining, and living area—an expanse of 5-inch-wide boards from Vermont Plank Flooring, finished with the company's Killington Peak stain, which draws out the wood's warm, golden-brown tones. Clear-finished maple window frames, trim, and cabinetry continue the material palette, grounding a light-filled, sustainably minded interior. Photo by Warren Jagger.

Circled by a delicate wrought-iron balustrade, a flight of select-grade ash treads winds gracefully up the custom spiral stair in a new shingle-style house by Arnold Design Group in Charlestown, Rhode Island. The light-toned wood from Vermont Plank Flooring gives the traditional architectural element a clean, modern look—one that extends to the landing, which comprises 7-inch-wide boards in the same wood, some laid in a herringbone pattern with walnut accent borders for added visual interest. A clear, low-sheen Craftsbury finish plays up ash's naturally pale, subtly striped grain throughout. Photo by Emily O'Brien.

Architect Stephanie Horowitz of ZeroEnergy Design used old-growth white oak, quartersawn for extra stability and a distinctive ray-fleck grain, for the flooring in a house in Wellesley, Massachusetts, constructed to rigorous green-building standards. The dining room's solid white-oak table, left with its natural splits and knots intact, echoes the floor's warm tone underfoot, while wire chairs and vintage milk-bottle prints keep the look from feeling precious. True to the house's eco-minded design, the flooring is not covered by rugs or carpet, which Horowitz avoids as sources of dust and allergens. Photo by Eric Roth.

In a 19th-century Boston townhouse renovated by Stern McCafferty Architecture + Interiors, roughly 4,000 square feet of select-grade walnut from Vermont Plank Flooring runs throughout, including this child's bedroom, where a built-in daybed nook is wrapped in birch-tree wallpaper. Milled in 6-inch-wide planks and finished on-site with Hartland—a water-based, satin-sheen treatment—the wood comes from black walnut trees, slow-growing natives of the eastern U.S. prized for their fine grain and rich, chocolate-brown heartwood. The flooring honors the home's history while giving the interior a cleaner, more contemporary feel. Photo by Eric Roth.

In a whole-house renovation in Dighton, Massachusetts, natural character-grade white oak from Hull Forest Products extends into unexpected territory: the primary bathroom, where 8-inch, live-sawn planks run past the vanity toward a freestanding tub and glass shower. It's a bold choice, but a sound one—white oak's tight, tyloses-blocked cell structure resists moisture better than many woods, and its density and dimensional stability help it withstand humidity and heavy foot traffic. Even so, area rugs and prompt spill cleanup remain essential. Finished on-site with clear, water-based polyurethane, the reward is underfoot warmth and beauty nothing else can match. Photo by Design Imaging Studios.

On a Rockport, Massachusetts, peninsula, Ruhl Studio Architects raised an existing house on concrete pilings, both to clear flood requirements and to give the upper-level unbeatable ocean vistas. Red oak from Vermont Plank Flooring, laid in 6-inch-wide boards and finished with low-sheen Waltham stain for its warm white overtones, gives the open kitchen, dining, and living space a light, airy foundation. Designed for three generations under one roof, the house pairs the flooring with white-painted poplar walls and steel stairs for a clean, resilient backdrop to the million-dollar view. Photo by Chris Becker.

Hardwood Media Walls for Modern Interiors

by Wendy Silverstein

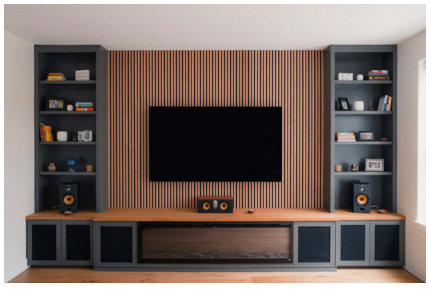
Flat-screen televisions retired the bulky entertainment armoire from the living room or den, but left a new problem: a large black rectangle—plus speakers, components, and cables—that needs a home. Increasingly, the answer is a built-in media wall that spans the room, organizing screen, storage, and ancillaries into one composition. American Hardwoods™ are ideally suited to the job. Stable and precisely machinable, they accommodate the tight joinery, concealed wiring, and speaker openings that integrated technology demands, while their rich warmth and characterful grain temper the hard presence of screen and equipment. Three projects, in walnut, white oak, and cerused oak, show some of the handsome possibilities.

Walnut media wall in the den of an Edina, Minnesota, house by Charlie & Co. Design. Photo by Steve Henke

This newly built house by **Charlie & Co. Design** commands a peninsula on Minnehaha Creek in Edina, Minnesota, its classic exterior giving way to a clean-lined, open interior. In the den, the media wall is a deep walnut-lined recess: vertical panels with flowing grain back the screen, and an open bay at one side displays a sculptural ceramic vessel. The walnut's warm umber strikes a middle tone between the dark-stained oak floor and the plain white walls, while a long, floating painted cabinet across the base picks up the floor's darker tone, grounding the composition and keeping A/V equipment out of sight.

The cerused-oak media wall in a Costa Mesa, California, family room by Brandon Architects. Photo by Ryan Garvin

Tradition reigns in the family room of this house by **Brandon Architects** in Costa Mesa, California—not least on the media wall. Classical pilasters, a crown-molded cornice, and paneled cabinet doors frame the screen in a strictly symmetrical composition, echoed by the matching sofas facing each other. All the oak millwork is cerused, a process in which white pigment is rubbed into the open-grained wood's pores, highlighting its characterful figure while lending it a soft, weathered-gray finish. Backlit shelves on either side complete the balanced effect, displaying a collection of quirky objects above a neat row of cupboards concealing electronics.



The white oak slatted media wall by Rip City Craftsman in a Portland, Oregon, living room.

For this contemporary Portland, Oregon, living room, **Rip City Craftsman** designed and built a media wall that folds screen, sound system, storage, and fireplace into a single, crisply tailored unit. White oak slats rise to the ceiling behind the screen, their vertical rhythm adding warmth and texture while their diffusive properties enhance room acoustics. A thick white oak counter tops the painted lower cabinets, doubling as a hearth for the linear electric fireplace set beneath the television. Flanking bookcases with adjustable shelves and integrated LED lighting, together with fabric panels in the cabinet doors concealing additional speakers, complete the elegant picture.

Wendy Silverstein is a former editor at Architectural Digest, Home, Kitchen & Bath Customer Planner, and Home/Style magazines. A consultant to the design industry, she works closely with interior designers, architects, and other professionals in the field.

American Hardwoods™

HMA Promotion $s at Work

Visit **HardwoodInfo.com** for more inspirational content to share with your audiences and prospective customers. Features like ***Hardwood Flooring: Six Solid Choices for Your Home*** and ***Hardwood Media Walls*** are posted regularly.

To learn more about the American Hardwood Information Center's promotion and education initiatives, reach out to **info@hardwood.org**.

A Deep Dive into Key Issues on Captiol Hill

by Dana Lee Cole
Executive Director, Hardwood Federation

Hardwood Economic Update

The Hardwood Federation has received good questions about the state of our economic relief effort; what the current status is, what the path forward looks like, and how funds will be distributed. As with many issues buried in the murkiness of Congressional action, there are some misunderstandings about our goals and where we are. We hope the below will provide clarity and resolve any confusion.

- The Hardwood Federation has secured $200 million in hardwood producer relief in the pending agriculture supplemental package now awaiting action in Congress. It marks the first time the federal government would extend to hardwood producers the kind of relief that supports crop and livestock producers.
- Getting here took years of work. With support from House Agriculture Committee Chairman GT Thompson, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman John Boozman, and their colleagues, the industry has made its case in Washington.
- Our immediate priority is getting this funding across the finish line. Once it is approved, the next step is working with the USDA to determine eligibility criteria and how funds will be allocated. Despite some reports, no formula has been finalized, and input from all 31 of our member associations will be crucial to getting it right.
- Our goal is to launch a program that reaches domestic hardwood producers, not one limited to just companies that export.
- Just as important, this effort would set a precedent and a process within the USDA for supporting the hardwood industry in the future as markets and global demand evolve.
- This would be a watershed moment for hardwoods and for the rural communities and forests that depend on them. We are on the cusp, and we are working with our allies to finish the job by the end of 2026.
- With Congress recessed until after the election, action on the supplemental bill will be delayed until after the election.

Hardwood Products to Be Included in US-China Board of Trade Discussions

Following Chinese President's Xi's visit to Washington, D.C., during the last week of September, the Trump Administration **announced** the next steps in establishing a U.S.-China Board of Trade to manage trade of non-sensitive products between the two countries. Included in the announcement are lists of U.S. and Chinese products that will be considered and may qualify for better trade treatment in the future. The Hardwood Federation has been working diligently over the past year to encourage the Administration to include hardwood on the list of products to be discussed by the Board of Trade and we are pleased to see that the list includes a wide range of hardwood products, including logs, lumber, and finished goods.

While it is a positive development that hardwood in various forms is included in this preliminary list, it is not an announcement or guarantee that current tariff rates on U.S. wood exports to China will be reduced or that purchase agreements of U.S. hardwood logs or lumber will be established. Rather, it is the next step in the process to developing a proposed list of products for better trade treatment that will be considered by both China and the U.S. in future talks.

Over the past several years, covering both Trump Administrations as well as the Biden years, the Hardwood Federation Board and staff have communicated with the Administration on a regular basis about the importance of maintaining and expanding global markets to support the domestic hardwood industry. This includes Hardwood Federation Board of Directors meetings with officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Trade Representative during the June Fly-In, and Executive Director Dana Lee Cole's participation in a U.S. Small Business Roundtable held in July. In both cases Federation representatives highlighted the need to include hardwood lumber in upcoming discussions. The SBA specifically noted the inclusion of hardwood lumber on the list in their **announcement**.

We are pleased that the Administration has heard our message and included hardwood products in the next step of their current process. This is a significant win but must not be considered a final victory. We will continue to work with all our member associations to help the Administration understand the challenges and opportunities faced by the U.S. hardwood industry and to ensure that our products make the final cut of products to receive favorable trade terms with China.

Hardwood Industry Testifies Before House Agriculture Committee

The U.S. hardwood industry was well represented during a House Agriculture Committee meeting addressing the topic of "Increasing Demand and Opportunities for Homegrown Products Here and Abroad." Tyler Shields, Chief Operating Officer of Bingaman and Sons in Kraemer, Pennsylvania, was invited by Chairman GT Thompson, (R-PA) to join representatives from the farming and fresh produce sectors.

You can view the entire hearing **here**, Tyler's comments begin at the 37 minute, 40 second mark. We appreciate Tyler encouraging Committee members to support the Hardwood Federation's work to secure economic relief for hardwood producers during his prepared comments.

Kentucky Hardwood Mill Pain Highlighted In Spectrum Media

A two-part series (**Part I** and **Part 2**) on the severe struggles facing the domestic hardwood industry recently appeared in Spectrum News outlets in Kentucky. Reporter Erin Kelly has been covering the story for several months, as a result of the Hardwood Federation's work with Monument Advocacy to create local coverage of the issue in key states. To date, we have over 40 media hits at the national, state, and local levels. We will continue to reach out to press contacts to create additional coverage.

Farm Bill Passed Out of Senate Ag Committee

In mid-September, the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee voted to move the Agricultural Act of 2026 to the Senate floor. The vote was along party lines, 12–11.

As we have noted, there are many Hardwood Federation–supported provisions in this bill. Among them are:

- Reauthorization of both the Wood Innovation and Community Wood Grant programs.
- Forestry and forest products workforce development language modeled after the Jobs in the Woods Act
- Reauthorization of the Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels program, which provides direct payments to wood pellet producers.
- Binding biomass carbon neutrality language
- Reauthorization and modernization of the Forest Inventory and Analysis Program

The bill will not likely see action before the November mid-term elections. Democrats remain opposed to the measure around the SNAP cost share issue which poses challenges for floor consideration. The HF team will continue to press ahead in hopes that the measure can clear the upper chamber later in the fourth quarter.

Tariff Relief for Building Materials Proposed

Legislation has been introduced in the House which seeks to lower housing costs by establishing a tariff exemption process for key building materials. The bill introduced by Rep. Nanette Díaz Barragán (D-CA) is titled the **Housing Tariff Exclusion Act** (H.R. 10416) and is pending in the House Ways & Means Committee.

The bill would automatically exempt critical home building materials from the Administration's current and future tariff regimes, as well as give importers a process to seek exemptions for additional materials.

Key provisions of the Housing Tariff Exclusion Act include:

- Establishing a Commerce Department process for U.S. businesses to request tariff exclusions for home construction goods.
- Requiring fast-track exemptions for commonly used home building products within 15 days of application.
- Providing objective review of other home building products when tariffs would increase U.S. construction costs.
- Covering all tariffs except anti-dumping, countervailing and safeguard tariffs.
- Allowing businesses to seek reimbursement for tariffs paid before an exclusion is granted.

Companion legislation is pending in the Senate.

HARDWOOD FEDERATION

Follow the Hardwood Federation on LinkedIn

The Hardwood Federation is on **LinkedIn**! Check out the Federation's posts, including updates on their efforts and activities in D.C., press coverage, and hardwood industry related federal policy news and action!

Participate in the Hardwood Industry Benchmarking Study

The National Hardwood Lumber Association (NHLA), in collaboration with HMA and other allied associations, is reminding hardwood sawmills and concentration yards that the industry's ongoing **Hardwood Sawmill and Concentration Yard Benchmarking Study** is entering its final phase, with data collection scheduled to close on **October 30**.

The study is designed to provide participating operations with confidential, data-driven insights into their performance relative to similar facilities across the hardwood industry. Mills and concentration yards that have not yet submitted their information are encouraged to take advantage of this free opportunity before the deadline.

Participating companies contribute selected operating data from Fiscal Year 2025—including production, lumber recovery, labor productivity, operating costs, inventory management, energy use, and safety performance. The information is standardized, anonymized, and analyzed to develop meaningful industry benchmarks.

Participating operations will receive a confidential benchmarking report highlighting operational strengths, identifying opportunities for improvement, and comparing performance against peer facilities.

Valuable Insights at No Cost

The study is intended to provide hardwood manufacturers with objective performance metrics that support informed business decisions. Participants will be able to:

- Compare production, recovery, labor productivity, costs, energy consumption, and safety performance against similar operations.
- Identify opportunities to improve yield, recovery, productivity, and operating efficiency.
- Support decisions involving capital investments, equipment upgrades, staffing, production planning, and cost management.
- Contribute to a stronger industry data set that benefits the broader hardwood sector.

Participation is *free*, with no consulting fees, subscription costs, or report charges. Funding support is provided from the United States Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Inc. (the "Endowment"), a not-for-profit corporation that works collaboratively with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative, and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests and forest-reliant communities.

Confidentiality Remains a Priority

All data collection, standardization, and analysis are being conducted by The Beck Group, an independent consulting firm serving the forest products industry. Individual company information is kept strictly confidential and will not be shared.

Results released publicly will be presented only in aggregated industry categories, ensuring that no company-specific information or identifiable data is disclosed.

The Beck Group also is available to help participants understand data requirements, organize information, answer technical questions, and, when necessary, assist with completing the survey process.

"This is not an audit, inspection, grading review, or certification program," NHLA emphasized. "It is a free business-improvement resource that helps hardwood sawmills and concentration yards compare their operations with similar facilities. The Beck Group manages all data confidentially, and each participant receives a customized report with peer comparisons and practical opportunities for improvement."

Hardwood sawmills and concentration yards interested in participating are encouraged to **submit their fiscal year 2025 data** before the October 30 deadline to ensure inclusion in the final study results.

For more information or assistance with participation, contact The Beck Group's Analyst, Hannah Hammond, via email at **HannahH@beckgroupconsulting.com**.

The Link is published each month exclusively for members of the Hardwood Manufacturers Association. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the HMA; HMA staff welcomes comments and questions.

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