

The Link

Newsletter | July 2024



What's New at the HMA?

by Ian Faight
Executive Vice President, HMA



Our Spring Regional Meeting is in the books and the feedback I heard in person and in the weeks since has been great. I get to travel to a lot of industry events these days and I must say, the vibe feels different at HMA meetings. Granted, I may be biased and I'm normally running around with heightened senses ensuring everything goes smoothly, but it just

feels different—more like a community of peers, rather than a gathering of acquaintances. Nevertheless, to the nearly 80 attendees, thank you for taking the time to be with us in Tennessee. I hope you enjoyed the tours and camaraderie, and were able to learn something to take back to your day-to-day operations. I have some more “thanks yous” to share.

- Thank you to our tour hosts: HMA members, **Thompson Appalachian Hardwoods** and **Middle Tennessee Lumber Co.**; and industry friends **Mayfield Lumber Co.** and **Clark Hardwoods**. I enjoyed seeing your facilities, and I've heard the same from countless attendees.
- And thank you to our meeting sponsors: **Farm Credit Mid-America**, **Frank Miller Lumber Company**, **Koppers**, **Mayfield Lumber Co.**, **Middle Tennessee Lumber Co.**, **McGriff Insurance Services - National Forest Products Practice**, and **New River Hardwoods**. Your extra support is greatly appreciated and helped us deliver an exceptional experience for all.

I also want to give a personal shout out to HMA's Vice President Brian Schilling of Pike Lumber Company, who went on all four tours with a pair of crutches.

Now on to our Fall Regional Meeting, which will take place in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, October 15–17. Details can be found on page 3, and more info will be coming your way. I hope to see you there.

For now, enjoy the summer and I'll talk to you soon!

NextGen Leaders Council Seeks New Members

Do you have an up-and-coming, future leader, who could benefit from professional and personal development? HMA's NextGen Leaders Council is looking for 10 new members to begin a two-year term this fall. Membership is open to anyone under the age of 40, who is employed by an HMA member company. Two spots also are reserved for industry suppliers.

The Council will be under the tutelage of industry veteran Steve James, president and CEO of Frank Miller Lumber Company and a certified John C. Maxwell coach, trainer, and speaker.

For more information or to nominate a Council member, email Ian Faight at ian@hardwood.org.



Spring Regional Meeting in Photos

Thompson Appalachian Hardwoods | Huntland, Tennessee



Mayfield Lumber Co. | McMinnville, TN



Clark Hardwoods | Erin, TN



Middle Tennessee Lumber Co. | Burns, TN



We're Heading to Iowa this Fall

Have you heard the news? HMA's Fall Regional Meeting will take place in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, **Wednesday-Thursday, October 16-17**. We're looking forward to excellent tours, comradery, and the beautiful fall foliage in The Hawkeye State.

To date, confirmed tours include **Kendrick Forest Products'** facilities in both Edgewood and Muscatine, Iowa, as well as **Bruggeman Lumber, Inc.**, in Sand Springs, Iowa.



Our base of operations will be the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Cedar Rapids (350 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401).



Meeting registration, hotel reservation details, and sponsorship opportunities will soon be available at HMAmembers.org.

There also will be an HMA Board of Directors Meeting on Tuesday, October 15. HMA members arriving early may attend, but participation is reserved exclusively for HMA Officers and Board members.

Revisit 2024 NatCon Learning Sessions

It's been several months since HMA members convened in Charleston, South Carolina, for our 2024 National Conference. On the docket were a number of learning sessions that offered valuable insights, market updates, and new ways of thinking.

If you'd like a refresher or to watch a session that you missed, videos and slides of each presentation are available in the Members Only section of HMAmembers.org.



Staying Social with Real American Hardwood

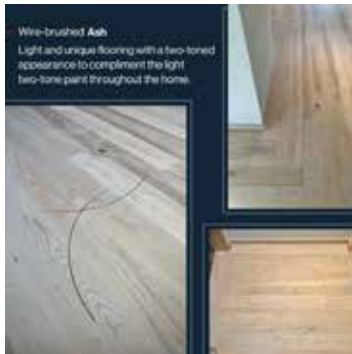
by Ian Faight

Executive Vice President, HMA | Digital Community Manager, RAHC

In June, the Real American Hardwood Coalition (RAHC) took to social media to feature a one-of-a-kind flooring project, share a woodworker's inspiring story, and celebrate nature. Here's a brief recap to get you caught up.

Defining Luxury

The RAHC continued its Hardwood Makeover series by showcasing a jaw-dropping flooring job by Goodman Custom Flooring. The project features wire-brushed ash in varying widths in a two-tone finish. To add a luxurious touch, small-to-medium-sized brass inlays were placed randomly around the floor. Take a look on [Instagram](#).



Meeting a Maker

To celebrate National Week of Making, the RAHC collaborated with Char Miller-King, a woodshop teacher and influencer, better known as The Wooden Maven. Char, who was recently featured on Good Morning America, produced a video to share her inspirational story, why she enjoys introducing kids and adults to woodworking, and why she prefers creating with Real American Hardwood®. Hear Char's story on [Instagram](#).

Bringing Nature Indoors

Did you know your indoor environment has a direct affect on your mood, stress levels, and overall mental health? It's true, and research shows that nature and wood products can provide a mental boost. To spread the word, the RAHC shared a series of photos showing how homeowners are bringing nature indoors with Real American Hardwood cabinetry, millwork, furniture, and flooring. See the post on [Instagram](#).



Explore the Outdoors

Now that summer is in full swing, the RAHC took to social media to encourage its followers to get outside and explore all that nature has to offer. From hiking and camping to barbeques and s'mores to sunrises and sunsets, there's a lot to take in. The post closed with a simple question: How do you enjoy nature? See the post on [Instagram](#).



Finding the Right Fit for Your Insurance Program

by Lindsey DiGangi

Assistant Vice President – Marketing, Pennsylvania Lumbermens Mutual Insurance Company



While your business insurance renews once a year, managing your risks is a year-round undertaking. Your business and your risks can change with every decision you and your employees make.

As business leaders, you're pulled in many directions, so having the right relationships to help you with managing your insurance program is key. The first step is identifying the role of those you trust with your insurance.

Your insurance broker: Your broker is the person who represents you and your business to the insurance carrier. They help you to identify your unique risks and offer coverage type and limit recommendations, which are then presented to an insurance carrier for consideration. They stay updated on changes in your business that may affect your insurance needs and assist in claims reporting in the event of a loss.

When choosing an insurance broker, you should look for someone who is communicative and responsive, and someone who is knowledgeable of your business and seeks right-sized solutions that work for you.

Your insurance carrier: Your insurance carrier is the company that is transferring risk from your balance sheet and putting it on theirs. They are providing a promise to pay in the event of a covered loss in exchange for an annual premium. Your carrier will determine eligibility and pricing for your particular risks. They will also provide you with tools and resources to manage your risks proactively.

When choosing an insurance carrier, you should consider overall value. While price is one component that may seem top of mind, responsiveness, expertise, and understanding of your business also provide tangible value that shouldn't be overlooked. While you may have never had a claim, the fact is that a loss can occur at any time. Having an insurance partner who understands your business and has taken the time to know you leads to fast and fairer claims handling so you can turn your attention back to business.

As a member of the hardwood industry, you understand the importance of relationships in successfully selling the value of your products and your business. Don't underestimate the value of relationships in your insurance buying process. Your insurance carrier and your broker can provide the support to right-size your coverage, help you manage risk proactively, and respond quickly and fairly in the event of a loss. Be comfortable with who you choose to partner with.



Upcoming Training Opportunities From NTC

Northcentral Technical College (NTC) is offering two training opportunities at its Wood Technology Center of Excellence in Antigo, Wisconsin.

Kiln Drying Short Course

NTC and the Great Lakes Kiln Drying Association are offering a Kiln Drying Short Course, **August 13–15**. The workshop will focus on drying systems, controlling lumber quality, species specific drying, wood structure and drying science. With more than 20 breakout sessions, participants will be prepared for maintaining a successful kiln operation. For more information and to register, visit ntc.edu.

Band Saw Filing Certificate Program

NTC is offering their accredited Band Saw Filing Certificate Program, **September 16–October 11**. Designed for current saw filers, saw filer trainees, and sawmill managers, this program provides an opportunity to get hands-on, intensive training to prepare learners for careers in the saw filing profession. Learn more and register at ntc.edu.

The Latest from Capitol Hill

by Dana Lee Cole

Executive Director, Hardwood Federation



The Latest on the Farm Bill

On June 10, Senate Agriculture Committee minority staff reached out to the Hardwood Federation to brief them on a **farm bill framework** which was released the following day by Agriculture Committee Ranking Member John Boozman (R-AR). In the Senate, this is the most important step forward on the farm

bill front since Agriculture Committee Chair Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) unveiled the **Democrat framework** on May 1. You will recall that on the House side, Agriculture Committee Chairman GT Thompson (R-PA) released the House version of the bill on May 17.

While the legislative frameworks in the Senate don't include specific text, the GOP version lays out some key priorities for the hardwood industry:

- Doubling funding for USDA's trade promotion programs, the Market Access Program, and the Foreign Market Development Program. These vital programs support the American Hardwood Export Council's work around the world and have not been increased since 2002. The House passed version of the Farm Bill also includes this increase.
- The framework modernizes the Forest Inventory and Analysis program, which collects, processes, analyzes, and reports on data necessary for assessing the extent and condition of forest resources in the US. While not explicitly noted in the framework, staff assures us that considering the carbon storage value of wood products is also a high priority for the Ranking Member, and will most likely be made clear in future language.
- Increases funding for the Community Wood Facilities Program and Wood Innovation Program, both of which have funded hardwood projects. Accelerating adoption of wood in the built environment and identifying ways the federal government can utilize wood projects in their facilities are also priorities for Mr. Boozman.

According to GOP staff, Sen. Boozman's framework includes input from a broad base of stakeholders and is intended to jump start the legislative process, which has stalled this spring over funding issues. We will continue to review proposals and language as they emerge from both Senate Democrats and Republicans...and we look forward to a bipartisan Senate bill emerging at some point in the next several months. The Federation will keep you posted.

House Lawmakers Unveil "Fix Our Forests Act"

On June 18, Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-AR), chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, teamed up with Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA) to introduce the **Fix Our Forests Act**, (H.R. 8790), a bipartisan bill intended to reduce the amount of time it takes to process a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) permit for forest management projects. So far, the bill has 11 Republican and 5 Democratic cosponsors. The lawmakers cite the growing threat of wildfires, which Rep. Peters points out as the largest source of air pollution in his home state of California, as a key motivator for pushing the legislation. Committee staff briefed the Hardwood Federation team prior to dropping the bill to answer questions and concerns. The bill is in line with Hardwood Federation policy positions. Chairman Westerman stated that he will plan a mark-up of the legislation in the Natural Resources Committee to move the bill forward.

Senators Conduct Hearing on Workforce Issues

On June 12, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee **conducted a hearing** to receive public input on the "Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act" (WIOA), our nation's bedrock statute that authorizes and funds workforce development and apprenticeship programs, including those for the forest industry. The House passed its version, "A Stronger Workforce for America Act" this spring by an overwhelming margin with broad bipartisan support. While a comprehensive Senate companion has not been unveiled, the hearing is a step in the right direction. We are close to the process and will update you on this effort as soon as we know more.

Rep. Wenstrup Introduces Small Business Tax Relief Measure

On June 4, Rep. Brad Wenstrup (R-OH), a member of the House tax-writing panel, introduced the S Corporation Modernization Act of 2024 (**H.R. 8614**), a bill that would simplify tax rules for small businesses and help them remain in the family. The bill seeks to help small businesses by increasing their access to capital and growing the list of eligible shareholders to include more employees, non-resident aliens and retirement accounts. While a path forward for the bill is uncertain, the pro-business measure could be attached to a broader end-of-year tax package following the November election.

Understanding Consumers in a Social Media Dominated Landscape

by Sara Skwaryk

Communications and Administrative Coordinator, HMA

Social media. When standing alone, it can mean so many things to many different people. So, let's narrow it down to what it may mean to you. As a business owner or member of a company, you might have been encouraged—or perhaps felt pressured—to create online accounts to keep up with the transition many businesses have been making. However, once online, you found that your posts and effort weren't achieving the results you were hoping to see.

When posting online, it is important to go into it with a plan. It may sound like a lot, but in understanding your method of approach, this will mean less time spent in the future thinking over what is going to make your brand successful on social media. A well thought out social media presence begins with understanding your audience and who you are trying to reach. In a **study** conducted by the International Society of Wood Science and Technology (SWST), consumers were noted to use social media to garner information on products, evaluate different brands, and go over other customer reviews prior to making a purchase. Specifically, 84% of U.S. consumers that were surveyed indicated they used social media to gather information on the wood products available to them.

Knowing that such a large percentage of consumers are conducting their wood product shopping this way is a sign businesses need to be developing a strategy for their presence on social media.



It takes time to build a social media presence that is sustainable and successful, but understanding your audience and where you should place your content is half the battle. Hopefully, with these small bits of information, you have a foundation to begin planning your own social strategy to bring your company to life.

I encourage you to read the full survey from SWST, titled, **Factors Affecting Social Media Adoption among Wood Products Consumers in the U.S.**



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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