

The Link

Newsletter | February 2025



Building a Stronger Industry

by Ian Faight

Executive Vice President, HMA



The year is off to a fast start and our first HMA event of 2025 will be our **Southern Regional Meeting, Monday-Wednesday, March 10-12**, in the Memphis, Tennessee, area. The event will kick off that Monday with HMA's Board of Directors, Officers, and Past Presidents gathering for our Spring Board of Directors Meeting. And then on Tuesday and Wednesday, we have three exciting tours planned.

In the spirit of industry collaboration, we also will welcome members of the Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association for their 2025 Annual Meeting, which will be held on Monday as well.

I'm looking forward to our tours and catching up with HMA members during our time in the Volunteer State. Details can be found on the next page and online at HMAmembers.org.

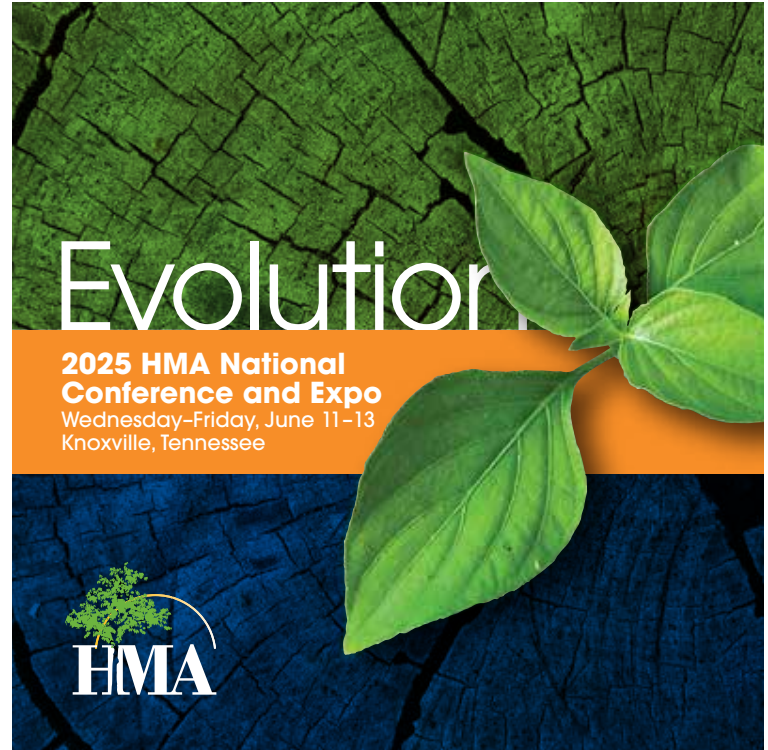
Later this year, the "Marble City" will become the "Hardwood City" when we return to Tennessee for our **2025 National Conference and Expo, Wednesday-Friday, June 11-13**, at the Knoxville Convention Center. This year's theme is *Evolution*, and we're preparing an informative slate of learning sessions that you won't want to miss. And we're also adding optional tours this year. So I hope you're planning on joining us. It'll be time well spent!

Registration opens February 10 at HMAmembers.org. Sponsorships are available! And be sure to book your room at the Marriott Knoxville Downtown. Rooms are available at a discounted rate of \$187/night.

And while we're talking about HMA events, we're also making arrangements for our Fall Regional Meeting, which is being planned in the Northeast. Stay tuned for more updates.

That's all for now!

Ian



2025 Policy Survey: Make Your Voice Heard!

As the Hardwood Federation prepares to fight for the industry in 2025, the team is looking for your feedback to focus on the issues that have the greatest impact on your business.

The Federation is asking you to complete a quick, three-minute survey to share your opinion. Please submit your completed survey by the end of the day on Monday, February 10.

[Take the survey online.](#)

Register Today for Our Southern Regional Meeting

HMA's 2025 Southern Regional Meeting will take place **Monday-Wednesday, March 10-12**, in Memphis, Tennessee. And if you have yet to register, secure hotel accommodations, and/or make your travel arrangements, now is the time to take care of business. You won't want to miss this opportunity to tour our lineup of facilities, see the latest technology in action, and network with industry colleagues.

All the details can be found at HMAmembers.org.

Registration Costs

- **\$275** | HMA Members, Promotion Contributors, and 2024 National Conference Exhibitors
- **\$600** | Non-Members

If you're a first-time HMA Regional Meeting attendee, we're offering a \$25 discount on your registration. Email Ian Faight at ian@hardwood.org for details.

Hotel Accommodations

Our base of operations will be the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Memphis (5069 Sanderlin Avenue, Memphis, TN 38117).

Book your stay **online** or by calling **800.222.8733**. Be sure to mention the Hardwood Manufacturers Association to secure our discounted room rate of \$155 (plus taxes and fees).

A hot breakfast will be available on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 11 and 12.

Tour Locations

Classic American Hardwoods | Memphis

Established in 2001, Classic American Hardwoods, Inc., is known as one of the most respected and recognized hardwood lumber companies in the world. Boasting a forward-thinking and customer-oriented approach to hardwood lumber production, sales, and service, Classic American Hardwoods has grown from a 17-acre parcel into a 43-acre facility with five production lines, a green yard, and kiln operations.

Shomaker Lumber | McKenzie, Tennessee

Shomaker Lumber Company is a family owned and run sawmill located in West Tennessee. Working in the wood industry for more than four generations, the company specializes in making high-end, high-quality products. As the business changes, Shomaker has made it a point to remain versatile in production to meet the needs of new customers.

Marietta Wood Supply | Marietta, Mississippi

Founded in 1978, Marietta Wood Supply, Inc., produces a large variety of crossties and dimensional lumber products. HMA members will get a first-hand look inside their brand new mill.

Southern Regional Meeting Sponsors

Thank you to the following companies for going the extra mile to support HMA's Southern Regional Meeting. Your contributions are greatly appreciated and will help ensure a successful event!



There's still time to add your company to the list! Contact Ian Faight at ian@hardwood.org for details. Available opportunities include:

- **\$1,000 Gold Sponsor** | Choice of co-hosting Tuesday's bus transportation, lunch, cocktail reception, or dinner. *This sponsorship includes a complimentary registration valued at \$275!*
- **\$500 Silver Sponsor** | Choice of co-hosting the registration gift bags, Tuesday's bus refreshments, or Wednesday's bus transportation!

Reminder: NTC Programs in March

Northcentral Technical College (NTC), HMA's partner in education, is offering two courses in March. The Mill Technology Certificate program and the Band Saw Filer Certificate program offer students opportunities to learn with hands-on experience from experienced instructors. Both courses will be taught in person at NTC's 27,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art Wood Technology Center of Excellence in Antigo, Wisconsin.



MILL TECHNOLOGY CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Monday, March 17 – Thursday, April 17, 2025 8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.

Learners develop knowledge and skills via a short-term hands-on immersive learning experience, using state-of-the-art equipment in NTC's training sawmill.

- Log and Lumber Grading
- Kiln Drying
- Mill Operations
- Lumber Manufacturing
- Sawmill Safety
- Maintenance Upkeep



Mill Technology Certificate

The new Mill Technology Certificate program is open to all hardwood industry stakeholders and is geared to shape the next generation of leaders in the industry. Training topics include:

- Hardwood species identification, uses, and markets
- Hardwood veneer and plywood production
- Physical and mechanical properties of wood
- Reducing machining defects in wood products
- Steps to reduce product failure from wood movement

The course is **free** and will run **March 17–April 17**, and is limited to 12 participants. All tuition, materials, housing costs, and meal stipends are covered through a Workforce Innovation Grant.

Interested participants may apply online at [NTC.edu](https://www.ntc.edu/). Direct questions to ce@ntc.edu or **715.803.1965**.

Band Saw Filer Certificate

The Band Saw Filer Certificate program is a hands-on, intensive training that prepares learners for careers in the saw filing profession. This is the only accredited Band Saw Filing Certificate program in the U.S.

Over four weeks, students will learn to

- Maintain, align, and tune band saw grinders
- Use measuring tools and equipment
- Apply trade-based formulas
- Bench band saws (level and tension)
- Fit band saws (swage, shape, and grind)
- Weld band saws using MIG and Oxy Acetylene torch equipment
- Maintain saw guides
- Align band mill
- Practice personal safety when handling saws

Participants will practice these fundamental skills under the direction of an expert instructor utilizing NTC's modern saw filing facility.

The spring session will run **March 25–April 17**, and the cost is \$1,320.

For more information and to apply, visit [NTC.edu](https://www.ntc.edu/). If you have questions about this program, contact the NTC Career Coaches at admissions@ntc.edu or **715.803.1645**.



BAND SAW FILER CERTIFICATE

- ✓ FOUR WEEK COURSE
- ✓ BENCH, FIT, AND REPAIR SAWS
- ✓ ALIGN BAND MILLS TO INCREASE SAW LONGEVITY AND SAWING ACCURACY
- ✓ NTC OFFERS THE ONLY ACCREDITED BAND SAW FILING CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN THE UNITED STATES.

Check out <https://www.ntc.edu/> for more information!



March 25-
April 17, 2025



Antigo, Wisconsin
NTC, Wood Technology Center of
Excellence



Continuing to Educate Architects and Interior Designers

Over the past year, more than 300 architects and interior designers completed continuing education units (CEUs) that are readily available through the **American Hardwood Information Center**. The CEUs—*American Hardwoods in Carbon-Neutral Architecture and Design* and *Thermally Modified Hardwood and its Role in Architectural Design*—are available for online and in-person sessions.

Starting this year, we're saying "thank you" by sending complimentary *American Hardwoods Collection* sample kits to these professionals to use as an informative tool when they're making specifications and product recommendations. The kits feature 20 samples of the most commonly used domestic species; a stain simulator; and a species guide filled with information about the sustainability of American hardwoods, their use in green design, and in-depth profiles of each species—including strength and mechanical properties.

If you'd like to support HMA's work in educating architects and interior designers, reach out to Ian Faight at ian@hardwood.org.



Staying Social with Real American Hardwood

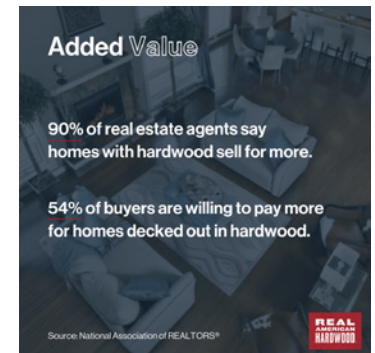
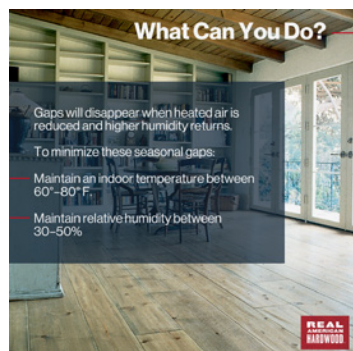
by Ian Faight

Executive Vice President, HMA | Digital Community Manager, RAHC

In January, the Real American Hardwood Coalition (RAHC) continued to share informative posts on social media to engage with its followers. Following is a brief recap of what you may have missed.

Winter Weather Advisory

For homeowners, seeing gaps form in their Real American Hardwood floors can be a startling discovery. To help ease concerns, the RAHC shared a thoughtful post to let folks know seasonal gaps occur naturally and will go away once humidity levels return to normal! See the post on [Instagram](#).



An Investment in Real Luxury Flooring

Did you ever wonder why real estate listings boast about homes having hardwood floors? Those in the industry know the facts! And the RAHC shared some facts and figures to inform its followers on why Real American Hardwood floors are a wise investment.

See the post on [Instagram](#).

The Latest from Capitol Hill

by Dana Lee Cole

Executive Director, Hardwood Federation



White House Orders Suspension of Federal Financial Assistance, Ag Export Programs Cleared

On January 27, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memorandum instructing federal agencies to suspend allocation of 2,600 federal financial assistance and grant programs by 5 pm on January 28,

pending a review to determine whether they comply with the flurry of executive orders the president has issued since starting his second term. The memo also required departments and agencies to submit a completed questionnaire providing details about each program by February 7. For the next 48 hours, the action was dizzying:

- OMB issued a memo on Monday calling for a broad pause of federal spending.
- A federal court blocked the funding pause from going into effect on Tuesday.
- OMB issued a memo on Wednesday rescinding Monday's funding-freeze memo.
- White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt wrote on X (Twitter) on Wednesday that the funding freeze is still in effect as outlined in signed Executive Orders.
- Another judge said Wednesday he'd block the funding freeze, citing Leavitt's statement.
- Despite the flood of activity, confusion about program funding remains, although some clarity has emerged.

The White House action caused significant confusion and concern among recipients of federal funding, including the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), which relies on U.S. Department of Agriculture grants to support their efforts to develop overseas markets for the U.S. hardwood industry. Following AHEC inquiries to USDA and Federation outreach to House and Senate Agriculture Committees, it was a relief to see USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) alert, clarifying that the agency's export authorities had been reviewed and cleared by the new Administration and would "resume normal operations for all years up to and including 2024." Although this is a positive development, both the Federation and AHEC are still unclear if normal operations will impact 2025 programming.

Dock Workers, Port Operators Avoid Work Stoppage

In a sigh of relief for U.S. supply chains, on January 8, the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and U.S. Maritime Alliance (USMX) struck a tentative deal on a six-year labor contract, thereby averting a work stoppage. To establish business certainty, both parties have agreed to continue operating under the current contract until each party can ratify a final, six-year deal. This action follows sustained advocacy from industry, including submission of a **letter** from the Hardwood Federation and coalition partners on December 6, urging the ILA and USMX to return to the negotiation table. Recently, the Federation worked directly with hardwood ally, Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA), to rally congressional support from House members to urge completion of negotiations. The Federation also has engaged officials from the Department of Commerce, sharing anecdotes from the hardwood sector to illustrate the operational difficulties that a work stoppage would cause. Read the joint statement between the ILA and USMX [online](#).

House Passes "Fix Our Forests Act"

On January 23, House lawmakers handily passed the **"Fix Our Forests Act"** (H.R. 471). The bipartisan bill aims to reduce the amount of time it takes to process environmental permits for forest management projects. House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bruce Westerman (R-AR) and Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA), who led the bipartisan charge on the bill, cite the growing threat of wildfires as a key motivator for pushing the legislation.

USFS Withdraws Proposal to Overhaul Forest Management Plans

On January 10, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) published a **notice** in the Federal Register, formally withdrawing a proposed environmental assessment that would have paved the way for wholesale amendment of forest management plans, triggering a "one-size fits" all approach to old growth forests. Fortunately for hardwoods, the agency's decision is consistent with Hardwood Federation **comments** filed in September, urging the agency "to take no action" with respect to the proposal. Ultimately, USFS action would have removed even more acreage from sustainable management. In more good news for hardwoods, the USFS will now continue to address old growth through the 2012 Planning Rule, which governs the forest planning process, an outcome that the Federation urged the USFS to continue within the context of comments filed in September.

Elements for an Impactful Website

by Sara Skwaryk

Communications and Administrative Coordinator, HMA

As we've settled into 2025, you may be considering the projects your team might want to take on in the coming months. With this in mind, I recommend considering adding a website revamp to your list. Your website is the first impression customers and industry peers have of your business, so it's important to showcase the assets that make your business special.

Here is a quick list of elements you can bring to your website (if you don't already have them) to help improve traffic and visibility:

Homepage: This is your first chance to make an impact. Start with a compelling headline, followed by a description of your company and high-quality visuals, like videos, to engage visitors.

About Page: Often the most visited page, the 'About' page should tell your business' story, mission, and include team bios to humanize your business while expanding on what skills and knowledge your team brings to the table.

Products or Services Page: List and describe your products or services with clear pricing and purchasing instructions. Include high-resolution images to help convert visitors into customers.

Testimonials: Display customer testimonials to provide social proof of your business' effectiveness, ideally with names and photos for credibility.

Contact Page: Make it easy for customers to reach you by including your address, phone number, email, and social media links. Include business hours as well.

Email List Signup: Offer a compelling reason for visitors to join your email list, such as free resources, to enhance your marketing efforts.



These are just a few easy examples of things you can incorporate into your website to help customers learn more about your business and products. From here, you can identify what other elements you may want to add or change to make your website a malleable and adaptable platform that connects you with customers and industry peers.

For more information, feel free to review "[6 Things You Should Always Include on Your Business's Website.](#)"



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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