

The Link

Newsletter | July 2025



Building a Stronger Industry

by Ian Faight

Executive Vice President, HMA



Our 2025 National Conference and Expo is in the rearview mirror and for those who were able to join us in Knoxville, I hope you found our learning sessions to be a valuable experience and were able to network and discover new solutions at our Expo. While our event was a little later than normal this year, I appreciate all who were able to spend a few days of their summer with us. Thank you!

This year, we hosted the *Tennessee Trail* during the Expo portions of our event to encourage member-vendor engagement. I'm pleased to say quite a few folks participated, and we selected winners on Friday morning before wrapping things up in Knoxville. Congratulations to **Scott Ferland**, Maine Woods Company, who won a Blackstone griddle and pellet grill; **Roy Zangari**, Meadow River Hardwood Lumber Company, who won a Solo Stove Bonfire Fire Pit + Surround; **Tommy Petzoldt**, East Perry Lumber Company, and **Javan Mallery**, Wolverine Hardwoods, who both won complimentary registrations to our Fall Regional Meeting.

Now we're turning our attention to the Sunshine State. Mark your calendars now for our 2026 National Conference and Expo, which will take place in Jacksonville, Florida, **Wednesday-Friday, March 25-27**. That's right, we're going back to our late-March dates. But before we get there, we're holding a NatCon Planning Call on Tuesday, July 29, 10 am. Details can be found on the right. I hope that you'll consider participating as this call helps shape all aspects of our event. And the timing is perfect with NatCon 2025 fresh on our minds. Send me an email if you'd like to participate or share your thoughts in advance.

That's all for now. Enjoy your summer and I hope to see you soon!



HMA's 2026 National Conference & Expo is set for **Wednesday-Friday, March 25-27**, in Jacksonville, Florida, and we're asking for your participation in a NatCon Planning Call to offer your input on our learning session topics and event theme.

Join us on **Tuesday, July 29**, 10 am Eastern, for a discussion on what issues are affecting our industry and your businesses, what solutions your company has recently implemented or is looking to explore.

HMA is here to serve you and your input matters! If you'd like to participate or share your thoughts in advance, email Ian Faight at ian@hardwood.org.



Revisit NatCon Learning Sessions Online

Our 2025 National Conference and Expo is in the books, and if you missed the event or would like to revisit our informative learning sessions, log into the

members-only section of HMAmembers.org to watch videos as your time permits. Check back often as additional presentation videos are uploaded.



Developing Leaders at Live2Lead

Members of HMA's NextGen Leaders Council will be participating in John Maxwell's 2025 Live2Lead event on **Tuesday, August 26**, 9 am–6 pm, at the Orlando World Center Marriott in Orlando, Florida.

This annual event brings together a distinguished group of speakers who share their insights and experiences in leadership. To date, confirmed speakers include Tiffani Bova, Jesse Cole, Craig Groeshel, Anthony Trucks, and John Maxwell himself. Additional speakers will be announced as we approach the event date.

A limited number of additional seats are available to HMA members. To secure your seat to witness these exceptional speakers live on stage, contact Ian Faight at ian@hardwood.org.



Kiln Drying Short Course

HMA's partner in education, Northcentral Technical College, is offering a Kiln Drying Short Course, Tuesday–Thursday, August 12–14, at its 27,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art Wood Technology Center of Excellence in Antigo, Wisconsin.

Designed for kiln operators, purchasers, sales representatives, production supervisors, plant managers, and all who deal with wood moisture related issues, this workshop is packed with valuable information. Participants will focus on drying systems, controlling lumber quality, species-specific drying,



wood structure, and drying science. In addition, more than 20 breakout topics will be covered to help you maintain a successful kiln operation.

For more information and to register, visit ntc.edu.

The Latest from Capitol Hill

by Dana Lee Cole

Executive Director, Hardwood Federation



Tax Reform Makes Progress

The clock is ticking on the Trump Administration's July 9 deadline to secure individual trade agreements with more than 60 countries; the deadline for China is somewhat longer, August 12, but still approaching rapidly. While we cannot predict exactly if or when

an agreement will be struck, or what it will contain, the Federation believes it is imperative to build on our efforts over the last few months and push hard during the summer months to educate the Administration and Congress about the U.S. hardwood industry and our global footprint. To support current momentum and increase and enhance outreach to high level decision makers the Hardwood Federation Executive Committee is committing funds to support a short-term, focused activity related to reminding policy makers about the destabilizing impact the current climate of trade uncertainty has had on our operations and assuring that the Hardwood industry is included in any tariff relief program developed by the Trump Administration for agriculture interests. This funding is separate from operational funds and will be specifically used for this initiative.

In response to industry requests from both the company and association level, the Hardwood Federation staff has signed a three-month agreement with Monument Advocacy to provide additional strategic advocacy and outreach to Congress, the Administration, and targeted media outlets to enhance our current efforts.

Monument will provide additional resources to the Federation in the following areas:

- Build on current outreach to USDA, Commerce, USTR, White House, and Treasury Department officials to advocate for inclusion in any upcoming relief efforts and expanded access.
- Enhance our work with Federation Congressional champions to push administration action on behalf of the industry.
- Help organize and support direct engagement by hardwood industry companies with Members of Congress, including local mill tours and district meetings during the August Recess.
- Deliver a messaging playbook and digital/social guidance toolkit for use across the Federation's 32 member associations.
- Launch a standalone microsite highlighting the industry's crisis trajectory since 2018.
- Help the Federation expand outreach to national and regional press outlets to elevate visibility and create pressure for federal action.

While these are all efforts the Federation has engaged in over the past several months (and years), this action will provide much needed resources and support to our limited Federation team. Monument will work with the Federation for at least 3 months to achieve the goals of educating the Administration and Congress about the hardwood industry and our export markets and securing financial support.

The Federation Team will work with our member associations and industry leaders to implement the above strategy. We look forward to sharing news of our progress on this exciting effort.

EUDR Reportedly on List of Non-Tariff Barriers to be Addressed with the EU

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that a deal on non-tariff trade issues imposed by the European Union, including the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), appears to be on the horizon. While it is unknown exactly what will be in a final deal when and if it emerges, the Hardwood Federation has confirmed that the U.S. government is pushing hard to ensure a delay of EUDR implementation until the end of 2026 and eliminate the geolocation requirements in the rule. This issue has been a key advocacy effort for the Federation, working in close coordination with the American Hardwood Export Council.

Most recently, the Federation joined a number of allied associations to push trade negotiators from the U.S. Trade Representative and the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture to make this a key issue in ongoing discussions. Our efforts clearly had an impact as all the negotiators are fully aware of the extreme burdens the EUDR geolocation requirement puts on the U.S. wood products industry.

Why is it so Hard to Pass Legislation?

by Dana Lee Cole

Executive Director, Hardwood Federation

If you've been watching the news, including your Hardwood Federation updates, talking to your members of Congress, or attended the annual Federation Fly-in, one thing is crystal clear—passing legislation is harder than ever. While gridlock in Washington is nothing new, the current political climate and the speed and flexibility of policy development under the returning Trump Administration, has added even more complexity to an already cumbersome process. The hardwood industry—like so many others—finds itself waiting on important decisions while policymakers fight over process and priority.

The System is Not Built for Speed

The Founding Fathers did not create a process to move quickly on legislation. The three, co-equal branches of government, the deliberate process required to pass legislation, the two-party system that allows for minority dissention (and tools to further slow things down), and the privilege of public engagement all are intended to ensure proposed legislation has a full review before becoming law. More recently, the rise of social media has created further tensions between the parties.

Reconciliation: Big Promise, Bigger Problems

Reconciliation—a powerful tool to pass budget-related legislation with a simple Senate majority—is supposed to streamline action. But this year's massive reconciliation bill, packed with expiring business tax provisions and new revenue raisers, has become a political lightning rod. Lawmakers are at odds over what stays, what gets cut, and who pays for it. Negotiations have gone late into the night—some running into early morning hours—but progress is slow and compromise elusive.

The Budget Battle

Crafting and passing a federal budget has always involved sausage-making, but in 2025, it's more like trench warfare. Deep divisions remain between fiscal hawks demanding spending cuts and others pushing for expanded investments in economic growth, including infrastructure and workforce development.

The NDAA: Defense and Division

Even traditionally bipartisan efforts like the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) are now sources of partisan wrangling. While the NDAA has long been seen as "must-pass" legislation, this year's version has become weighed down by unrelated policy riders, culture war amendments, and broader geopolitical anxieties.



Last year was an unusual year for the Federation; we actively engaged on the NDAA in order to get language encouraging adoption of American red oak for use in military truck beds. We also worked to get some troublesome language out of the bill that would have limited harvesting on federal lands. While the NDAA doesn't usually directly impact the hardwood sector to this degree, its fate is tied to broader legislative momentum. When even the NDAA stalls, it signals trouble for everything else—including Farm Bill reauthorization, export program funding, and rural workforce initiatives critical to our communities.

What It Means for the Hardwood Industry

The Fly-In this year could not have been better timed. With reconciliation negotiations unfolding as our members met face-to-face with over 100 congressional offices and Administration officials, we delivered a clear message: our industry needs action—not delay.

We shared real-world stories of how uncertainty affects mills, markets, and jobs. We made the case that international trade policy must support—not strangle—U.S. hardwood exports. We asked for extension of critical tax provisions. And we reminded policymakers that without a functioning legislative process, we all lose.

Your Voice Still Matters

The disfunction in D.C. may seem overwhelming, but our voices carry weight. Every meeting, every phone call, every email helps break through the noise. Advocacy takes persistence. Most of the time, success happens over the course of many months, or even years. The path forward may be tough, but the Hardwood Federation's commitment to the hardwood industry is tougher.

So while legislation is hard to pass—especially now—it's not impossible. And with your continued engagement, we'll keep pushing forward.

Strategies for Marketing in the Summer

by Sara Skwaryk

Communications and Administrative Coordinator, HMA

Often, the summer months are slower for smaller businesses, as customers—and even employees—are taking time off while buying trends shift. Two years ago, it was estimated that U.S. consumers spent about \$214.1 billion, suggesting that spending is high, but only in certain areas. So, how can your business take advantage of this shift in spending? Or perhaps you're curious about marketing methods to get your business in the swing of summertime. Whatever your reasoning may be, here are a few options that may apply to you as you navigate summertime spending trends:

Whether your goal is to direct calls to your sales team or to visit you in person, you can send around summer-themed materials that offer exclusive discounts or promotions to draw attention to your business and products.

Similarly, something many businesses do in the summer months is embrace the atmosphere by designing marketing materials or updating their website to reflect the season. Consider holidays, events, or seasonal activities as inspiration for your designs. Customers are looking for businesses that are current and engaging, so adding summer-themed design elements is a cost-effective way to show your audience you are present and excited!

Another way to get your audience engaged in your business this summer is to put on in-person events. As folks may have more time off and/or are spending more time in their communities, consider hosting an event or participating in community events as a way to create unique experiences that will drive engagement and brand loyalty.



Another great way to generate buzz around your business during the summer months is by going back to some of the basics. When was the last time you introduced something new or asked your customers for feedback? This is a great time to engage in reviewing what has been the norm to see if there is room for improvement.

Overall, there are several pursuits worth considering in the summer months to boost engagement with your business. Start by identifying what your goals are, and with these as your anchor, explore opportunities with an open mind to see what works best for you and your business!



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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