

# The Link

Newsletter | May 2025



## Building a Stronger Industry

by Ian Faight

Executive Vice President, HMA



The countdown is on to HMA's 2025 National Conference and Expo, and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone in Knoxville, June 11-13. Our theme is **Evolution** and we couldn't have picked a better one to describe the transition that our industry is currently going through. We have an informative slate of learning sessions and our Expo will provide excellent networking opportunities.

Plus there's our new **Tennessee Trail**. Attendees are encouraged to take a stroll on the trail, meet our exhibitors, and learn about emerging technologies and services that are leading the hardwood industry's **Evolution**. By completing your **Tennessee Trail** ticket, you'll be entered to win a top-of-the-line Blackstone griddle and other prizes.

And I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize our generous sponsors. Your logos are displayed on the right and your support truly enables us to deliver an exceptional event. If you're still considering a sponsorship, send me an email at [ian@hardwood.org](mailto:ian@hardwood.org) or call me at **412.244.0440** to discuss options.

If you haven't already registered to attend or booked your hotel room, I encourage you to take care of business ASAP. Registration fees increase on May 16. And hotel rooms are going fast—and once they're gone, they're gone. All the details you need to know can be found online at [HMAmembers.org](http://HMAmembers.org).

And bring your families! There's plenty to do near Knoxville! Football fans can take a tour of the University of Tennessee's Neyland Stadium, outdoor enthusiasts can get some fresh air at Volunteer Landing Park, foodies can explore Market Square, and the site of the 1982 World's Fair is right next to our hotel. And don't forget, Dollywood is less than an hour away!

Let's turn the "Marble City" into the "Hardwood City." I hope to see you there!

## Shout Out to Our Sponsors!

Thank you to the following companies for sponsoring HMA's 2025 National Conference and Expo.



TS Manufacturing



## Last Call for Industry Suppliers

A limited number of booths are still available for the Expo portion of NatCon 2025. If you'd like to secure a spot to meet with potential customers, seal the deal by emailing [info@hardwood.org](mailto:info@hardwood.org).





## Experience the Hardwood Industry's Evolution

HMA's **2025 National Conference and Expo** is just over a month away. We hope to see you at the Knoxville Convention Center in Knoxville, Tennessee, **Wednesday-Friday, June 11-13**. This year's theme is *Evolution* and our schedule is packed with timely and informative topics to equip you with the knowledge and know-how to lead your business forward in our ever-changing industry. And you won't want to miss the industry's premier networking opportunities.

All the details can be found at [HMAmembers.org](https://HMAmembers.org).

### Register Today and Save

Registration is available at [HMAmembers.org](https://HMAmembers.org). As a reminder, HMA's signature event is open to all hardwood lumber producers, processors, and suppliers—members, non-members, and stakeholders.

- **HMA Members & Promotion Contributors | \$650**
- **SCMA Members | \$650**
- **Non-Members | \$800**

*Note: Rates increase by 10% after May 16.*

### Book Your Stay

Reimagined and redesigned, the Marriott Knoxville Downtown will be our home away from home for our stay in the Volunteer State. Located next to the 1982 World's Fair Park, the modern hotel offers posh accommodations, good eats, and a state-of-the-art fitness center. Learn more at [Marriott.com](https://Marriott.com).



Book your room online at [tiny.cc/natcon2025](https://tiny.cc/natcon2025) or by calling **888.236.2427**. Be sure to mention "Hardwood Manufacturers Association" to secure our discounted room rate of \$187/night.

## It's Almost Tee Time

HMA's third annual NatCon Golf Tournament will take place at Dead Horse Lake Golf Club on **Wednesday, June 11**. Tee times begin at 8 am, and accommodations will be made for golfers attending HMA and SCMA meetings. Golfers are responsible for their own transportation.

The cost is \$75 and includes golf cart rental (driving range not included). Registration is available at [HMAmembers.org](https://HMAmembers.org). Spots are limited, so sign up today!

A number of sponsorship opportunities also are available. Funds raised will be donated to the Real American Hardwood Coalition. And remember, you can be a sponsor even if you're not golfing.



Questions? Email golf organizer Peter McCarty at [PeterM@tsman.com](mailto:PeterM@tsman.com).

## On the Agenda in Knoxville

The hardwood industry is evolving. And that means adapting to an uncertain economy, managing log issues, selling residuals, shifting production priorities, and waiting for breaking news out of Washington, D.C.

Now is the time to prepare your company for what comes next. Following is a brief preview of the learning sessions that are on tap in Tennessee. Our full schedule can be found online at [HMAmembers.org](https://www.hmamembers.org).

### An Evolving Economy

What's going on with the economy and what's in store as we progress through 2025?



To guide us through the cloud of uncertainty, we're welcoming **Shawn DuBravac** to NatCon.

A *New York Times* best-selling author and top 30 futurist, Shawn will provide us with a current look at the U.S. economy and a forward-looking analysis of trends to watch.

A well-regarded trendcaster, Shawn routinely advises companies and executives on market opportunities and industry strategy. He is president and founder of Avrio Institute, a consulting, research, and advisory services firm.

For over a dozen years, Shawn served as chief economist for the Consumer Technology Association, the U.S. trade association representing more than 2,000 consumer tech companies. He has been widely published on the topics of technology, finance, and economics, and his keen insights have made him a highly sought-after speaker and commentator. His analysis has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wired*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Barron's* and on-air with CNBC, Bloomberg, CBS and other media outlets.



### From Forest to Mill

**Scott Dane**, executive director of the American Loggers Council, will be with us in Knoxville to discuss issues facing the forest management, timber harvesting, and log hauling sectors at both the state and national levels.

How is timber transportation evolving? Fresh off a Washington, D.C., Fly-In,

Scott will share the latest news and developments from our Nation's Capital.

### Trend Watch: Residuals

Manufacturing hardwood products produces a lot of residuals. And while these are not wasteful wood products, producers face a dilemma when it comes to offloading this resource.

**Carrie Annand**, executive director of the American Biomass Energy Association, will take the stage to discuss the industrial market for chips, sawdust, and forest residuals in the U.S.—particularly with biomass power plants in the hardwood industry's neck of the woods.



### Trend Watch: Hardwood Ties

While the lumber market continues to face challenges, the industrial market is trending in a different direction. Moderator **Claire Getty** (left), Thompson Appalachian Hardwoods, will lead a candid discussion with **Jason Dallas** (center), Stella-Jones Corporation, and **Tony Machamer** (right), Koppers, on the state of the hardwood railway tie industry and trends to watch.



### The View from Capitol Hill & Around the World

**Dana Lee Cole** (left), executive director of the Hardwood Federation, and **Tripp Pryor** (right), international program manager for the American Hardwood Export Council, will be with us to discuss

our industry's pressing topics: taxes, tariffs, European Union Deforestation Regulation, and AHEC's solution. Attendees also will get a sneak peek at AHEC's new documentary on American hardwoods.



# Staying Social with Real American Hardwood

by Ian Faight  
Executive Vice President, HMA | Digital Community Manager, RAHC

In April, the Real American Hardwood Coalition (RAHC) continued sharing informative posts, as well as inspiring project photos showcasing the natural charm and character of Real American Hardwood® products. Following is a brief recap.



### Kitchen Inspiration

Kitchen renovations are atop many homeowners' to-do lists. To inform followers the RAHC shared an informative post.

Over the past several years, design trends have shifted as homeowners desire to have a closer connection to nature. And savvy designers are helping achieve that vision by infusing kitchen designs

with natural and timeless materials like Real American Hardwood cabinetry—and embracing neutral tones like those offered by oak, maple, hickory, and walnut.

See what's trending in kitchen designs on [Instagram](#).

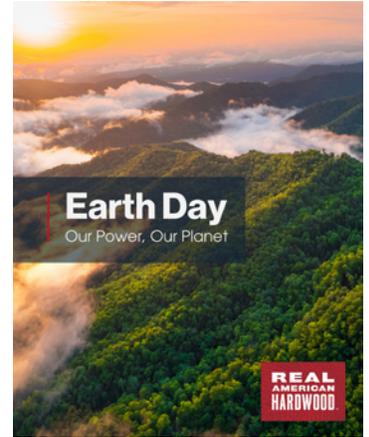
### Our Power, Our Planet

April 22 marked the 55th anniversary of Earth Day. To celebrate, the RAHC shared an educational post relating to this year's theme, *Our Power, Our Planet*.

It's no secret, Real American Hardwood flooring, cabinetry, furniture, and millwork help beautify our homes. Did you know properly managed forests provide a sustainable supply of these products and help keep our planet healthy?

The post provided information to empower consumers to choose these natural materials over highly-processed alternatives to help preserve our collective home, Earth.

Get the facts on [Instagram](#).



### Food for Thought

Thinking about upgrading the heart of your home? Here's some food for thought.

Over the past several years, design trends have shifted as homeowners desire to have a closer connection to nature. And savvy designers are helping achieve that vision by infusing kitchen designs with natural and timeless materials like Real American Hardwood cabinetry—and embracing neutral tones like those offered by oak, maple, hickory, and walnut.

Scroll through to see what's trending this year in kitchen designs.

### The Power to Choose

Making Better Choices for Our Planet

In the market for new flooring? Consider this! Real American Hardwood® is an abundant, renewable, and sustainable resource that's nurtured by nature.

American forests grow enough wood to produce 1,000 sq. ft. of ¾" solid red oak flooring in 1.84 seconds\*.

And while trees are growing, they absorb CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere, releasing the oxygen and using the carbon to grow. The carbon is stored in products produced from the tree, accounting for roughly 50% of their dry weight.

Source: US Forest Service, Forest Inventory and Analysis Program

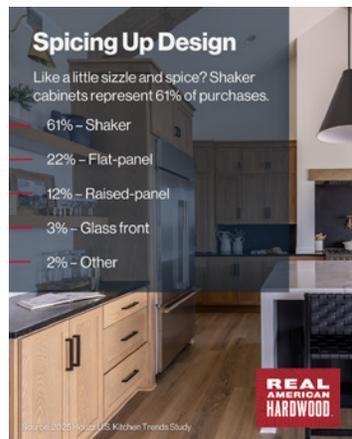
### The Power to Choose

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Now consider how much plastic goes into 1,000 sq. ft. of "luxury" vinyl tile (LVT).

- 570,000 plastic straws\*
- 70,000 plastic bags\*
- 27,000 plastic bottles\*

Source: Greenpeace, Plastic Economy 2024: Global Consumption



### Life Cycle Costs

for Flooring in Commercial Buildings

Real wood flooring may have a higher upfront purchase price than alternatives like vinyl tile, but the cost over its entire life cycle is lower. Also consider that both solid and engineered wood flooring can be refinished and repaired.

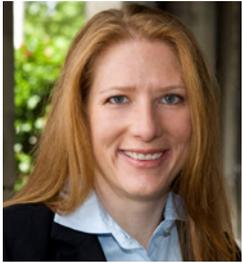
Material Type	Installation Cost <sup>1</sup> (per sq. ft.)	Life Cycle Cost <sup>2</sup> (per sq. ft.)	Estimated Useful Life	Cost Per Year <sup>3</sup> (per sq. ft.)
Quarry Tile	\$9.53	\$71.31	75 years	\$0.95
Ceramic Tile	\$9.03	\$72.29	75 years	\$0.96
Porcelain Tile	\$7.36	\$73.59	75 years	\$0.98
Real Wood	\$13.00	\$75.76	75 years	\$1.01
Engineered Wood	\$13.00	\$75.76	75 years	\$1.01
Limestone	\$24.30	\$70.68	75 years	\$0.93
Travertine	\$24.30	\$70.68	75 years	\$0.93
Granite	\$26.65	\$70.69	75 years	\$0.93
Marble	\$26.65	\$70.69	75 years	\$0.93
Hybrid-Strandboard Carpet	\$5.88	\$25.41	5 years	\$5.07
LVT	\$5.96	\$25.61	5 years	\$5.12
Carpet Tile	\$5.25	\$25.57	5 years	\$5.11
Rigid Core	\$5.96	\$25.61	5 years	\$5.12
epoxy terrazzo	\$10.66	\$33.22	75 years	\$0.44
Laminate	\$6.49	\$28.45	20 years	\$1.42
Reconstituted Granite	\$11.49	\$35.48	15 years	\$2.36
MSP	\$2.99	\$29.48	15 years	\$1.96
Sheet Vinyl	\$7.01	\$28.48	15 years	\$1.89

Notes:  
<sup>1</sup> Initial installation costs include the flooring material and installation labor costs.  
<sup>2</sup> Life cycle costs are estimated based on a cost of maintaining real floors that is 2% of the initial installation cost.  
<sup>3</sup> Cost per year are the life cycle costs divided by the estimated life of a commercial building (75 years).  
 Sources: National Wood Flooring Association, Decorative Hardware Association

## The Latest from Capitol Hill

by Dana Lee Cole

Executive Director, Hardwood Federation



### Trade Talks Ramp Up

On April 30, administration officials made a flurry of statements assuring Congress, the business community, and the public that progress is being made on reaching deals with trading partners. While no specific countries were mentioned, it is anticipated that India is on the top

of the list for a potential near-term announcement. Discussions also are underway or will soon be initiated with Japan, South Korea, Guyana, and Saudi Arabia. With the conclusion of the Canadian elections, there is hope that U.S.-Canada negotiations will begin soon.

### China Talks Inching Closer?

In addition to the above chatter, state-run Chinese media has indicated that the U.S. has reached out to initiate talks with China regarding the ongoing tariff escalation. China Central Television, which regularly signals Beijing's views on trade, made the statement on social media. It cited unidentified people with knowledge of the matter. This is slightly different messaging than has been issued over the past few weeks. The Trump Administration continues to express confidence that talks will happen "soon."

### E.U. Proposal Coming Next Week

The European Union is planning to share a paper with the U.S. next week that will set out a package of proposals to kick-start trade negotiations with the Trump Administration. The paper will propose lowering trade and non-tariff barriers, boosting European investments in the U.S., cooperating on global challenges such as tackling China's steel overcapacity and purchasing U.S. goods like liquefied natural gas and technologies. If no deal is reached, the E.U. is prepared to reinstate tariffs that were paused in anticipation of negotiations with the U.S.

### White Oak Restoration Funds Proposed

In early April, Rep. Andy Barr (R-KY) reintroduced the White Oak Resilience Act (H.R. 2405). This measure empowers the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service to lead white oak restoration projects and establishes a White Oak Restoration Fund to support public-private partnerships focused on regeneration, reforestation, and sustainability of this critical hardwood species that is the life blood of the bourbon industry in Mr. Barr's home state.

The legislation enjoys bipartisan support and passed the House last Congress. More information on the legislation may be found [here](#).

### Forestry Workforce Bill Gets New Life

Senators Jim Risch (R-ID) and Angus King (I-ME) announced that they are reintroducing the Jobs in the Woods Act (JWA). This legislation, which was pending in the last Congress, would stand up forestry and forest products industry-specific job training programs. It is modeled after a successful program developed by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Recruiting qualified workers into our sector continues to be a challenge and the enactment of JWA would be a critical step in addressing this issue.

The Hardwood Federation will be looking to build support for this bill on a bicameral, bipartisan basis with the goal of having its provisions folded into a Farm Bill reauthorization measure later this year or next. Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA) is the lead in the House, and we are currently looking for a Republican co-lead for this important bill. Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer was the GOP cosponsor last Congress, but she is now the Secretary of Labor.

### Hardwood Federation Supports New Legislation

The FRESH Act or Freight Restriction Elimination for Safer Hauling Act of 2025 is sponsored by Rep. Mike Collins (R-GA). The bill, which has not yet officially been introduced, is a close cousin to the Safe Routes Act and would simply allow trucks hauling "perishable commodities" to access the interstate highway system at weights in excess of 80,000 pounds. As we know, many states allow heavier rigs to travel on their state roads, but these rigs are forbidden from accessing the interstate due to the 80,000 maximum gross vehicle weight limit cap. The term "covered commodity" includes raw logs and forest products, pulp wood, chips and biomass. The sponsor reached out to the Federation for our endorsement which we have provided. We will be working to build out cosponsors for both this bill and the Safe Routes Legislation recently introduced by Rep. Tony Wied (R-WI).

The Community Wood Facilities Assistance Act sponsored by Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA) was brought back to life in early April after failing to move forward last session. The legislation, among other things, would double the authorization for the Community Wood grant program from \$25 to \$50 million. Rep. Gluesenkamp Perez is joined by Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME) and Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA) as cosponsors. The press release with more details on the legislation can be found [here](#).

## How to Navigate Times of Crisis

by Sara Skwaryk

*Communications and Administrative Coordinator, HMA*

As our industry continues to face challenges and changes on what seems like a daily basis, it is more important than ever to have a proper crisis plan in place to help facilitate communications with the public and employees to prevent dissatisfaction or negative perception.

Leaders can easily mismanage crisis situations due to a lack of preparation. It is a tight line to walk, but avoiding communication completely or communicating very little—in hopes that the lack of detail will downplay the situation—typically backfires. Another common mistake is when leaders jump into communicating on an issue and its tone lacks a sense of empathy or humanity towards the issue or concerns at hand.

So, when creating an effective crisis communications plan, there are three core components that should be considered:

### Concern

Displaying active concern for the safety and well-being of employees due to operational impact and/or because they have been affected personally by the issue is a foundational rule to abide by when creating a crisis plan for your business.

### Empathy

Showing empathy towards employees and/or affected parties establishes a sense of humanity to let folks know they are being valued and heard.

### Clarity

Establishing clarity in your communications allows you to offer your stance on the issue and focuses on purposeful messaging about the current state of the situation and where it will go from there.

Additionally, it's important to consider all the other avenues in which a crisis plan will have to navigate. An effective communication plan will include:



- A breakdown of key goals for the plan and communication efforts
- List of key stakeholders, including: employees; board of directors; and outside organizations, such as contractors, service providers, and customers.
- How communication efforts will be handled in the future and who from the leadership team will be aligning on future developments.
- A distribution plan for how information will be shared across channels and key groups.
- A list of frequently asked questions from an employee and customer perspective.

A crisis communications plan is about understanding the core values of your business and turning those values into talking points for employees and outsiders to feel their concerns are being addressed during times of uncertainty. Every situation is different, but knowing how to respond, alleviates the pressure of having to figure everything out on the spot.

To learn more about crisis communications planning, read *How Leaders Can Support Their Employees in Times of Crisis or Disaster* on [Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.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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