

The Link

Newsletter | October 2022



A Message From HMA's President

by Tommy Petzoldt
President, HMA



Greetings, HMA!

I hope you've had an enjoyable summer. It's been especially hot and dry in my part of the country, and unfortunately, as the summer temperatures rose to record-breaking highs, our hardwood markets experienced a disappointing slow-down. So I say, "Goodbye summer! Hello fall!"

Call me crazy, but I'm looking forward to more favorable fall days. Yes, the market continues at a slow pace, but challenges are nothing new to any of us. And yes, we all remember more prosperous times, but the good news is that ours is a resilient industry comprised of resilient, forward-thinking people who are up to the task of navigating tough lumber markets. And more good news, there are significant resources available to us.

I'm pleased that HMA is playing a considerable role in the Real American Hardwood Coalition (RAHC), our industry's effort to secure the future of the hardwood industry by increasing domestic markets and sales of Real American Hardwood™ products. In July, RealAmericanHardwood.com—the initiative's consumer-facing website—went live, and it was an important milestone in the furtherance of the RAHC's mission. It's an impressive website that reflects an excellent program that will benefit all of us. (Linda tells me much more lies ahead.)

Another resource for us is the [HMA](https://HMA.org) and its valuable member services! In a few weeks, our Fall Regional Meeting convenes in Missouri, and I'm looking forward to hosting you at [my place](https://myplace.org), East Perry Lumber Company, and the first tour on October 19.

Take it from me, the Regional is going to be quite a gathering.

- You're going to see some very impressive operations when we tour HAVCO Wood Products, W.W. Wood Products, Inc., and McGinnis Wood Products, Inc.
- And at our Wednesday evening reception and dinner, we'll hear from Brian Brookshire, Executive Director of the Missouri Forest Products Association, as he reviews the forest products industry in Missouri.

We find ourselves in challenging times. The Fall Regional is a resource offering an opportunity to connect. I hope it's on your calendar because I look forward to seeing you!



On the Agenda for the Fall Regional Meeting

HMA's Fall Regional is just weeks away, and we're mixing things up for this 'Meet me in St. Louis' event. For full details on the when/what/where for our upcoming confab, visit HMAmembers.org. You'll not want to miss any of this.

And if you'd like to attend, take care of business at HMAmembers.org.

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National Conference 'Bulletin Board'

Keep a close eye on your email, snail-mail, and [HMAmembers.org](https://www.hma.org), because once the Fall Regional is a wrap, all the details for HMA's 2023 National Conference and Expo—March 22–24 at the JW Marriott Nashville—will be heading your way! Until then, and so that you can begin your planning, here's a sneak-peek of what's in store.

Agents of Change

We're building our 2½ day event around the theme **Agents of Change**. And we're compiling a dais of presenters that will speak to the issues currently impacting all industry stakeholders—leadership, communication, innovation, technology, manufacturing, domestic and global economies, and hardwood market trends and forecasts.



On the Agenda

Among the presenters is **Dr. Chris Kuehl**, analyst, economist, thought-leader, managing director, and co-founder of Kansas-based, Armada Corporate Intelligence. As Armada's economic analyst, Dr. Kuehl has worked with a wide

variety of private clients and professional associations. His presentation, titled **"Trends and Forecasts,"** will include a current assessment of the U.S. economy and a forward-looking analysis of trends to watch.

Other presentations on the 2023 Conference agenda:

- **"Implementing Agents of Change with Effective Communications and Leadership,"** Steve James, certified John C. Maxwell coach, trainer, speaker and CEO, Frank Miller Lumber Company
- **"Hardwood Markets: A Forward-Looking Conversation,"** Judd Johnson, editor, *Hardwood Market Report*
- **"Industry Updates,"** from association executives and representatives of the American Hardwood Export Council, the Hardwood Federation, and the Real American Hardwood Coalition
- **"Taking Your Operation to the Next Level,"** panels of industry experts and HMA members addressing today's challenges and tomorrow's strategic solutions

All of the Conference details will soon be at your fingertips. Plan to join us in Nashville. And remember, all hardwood lumber producers and processors are welcome to attend.



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General Learning Sessions • Swag Bag Snacks

A New Tool for Consumers, Specifiers, and Designers

Everyone loves the look and appeal of hardwood. But misinformation abounds. And all too often, both consumers and prosumers, misled by false product claims, opt for vinyl or plastic hardwood look-alikes, rather than the 'real deal'—chemical-free, healthy, uniquely beautiful, and environmentally friendly Real American Hardwood™ products.

To clear-the-air about American hardwoods, the Real American Hardwood Coalition recently launched RealAmericanHardwood.com. And for everyone looking to learn more about Real American Hardwood products, this avant-garde website is a must!

- It takes visitors on a digital journey to discover *how* and *why* they should choose Real American Hardwood flooring, cabinetry, millwork, furniture, and other goods for their homes and workplaces.
- The site offers interactive modules that engage visitors by comparing the appearance, durability, value, home health, and environmental attributes of Real American Hardwood products to faux, wood-look alternatives.
- And it provides project inspiration, maintenance tips and environmental facts, plus explores how hardwood is influencing lifestyles and culture."

For an eye-opening experience, visit RealAmericanHardwood.com. Then spread the word!



Photos courtesy of the National Wood Flooring Association

Get Excited for What's Coming

The Real American Hardwood Coalition is partnering with CANVAS United, the creative minds behind RealAmericanHardwood.com, on a multi-dimensional promotion plan. And believe us when we say: the Real American Hardwood brand will become iconic! Watch the teaser video below.



Make a Real Impact

One way your company can help promote Real American Hardwood products—and our industry—is to be more active on social media and engage with the RAHC.

Like, comment, share, follow, and subscribe! And be sure to use #RealAmericanHardwood across social platforms.

- Instagram: @RealAmericanHardwood
- Facebook: @RealAmericanHardwood
- Twitter: @RealAmericanHwd
- YouTube: @RealAmericanHardwood



Managing Your Social Media Community

by Ian Faight

Marketing, Communications, and Digital Content Director, HMA

So you've set up profiles for your company on targeted social media platforms—such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. And you've even been posting regular content highlighting the products and services your company offers, different aspects of your day-to-day operations, employee anniversaries and accomplishments, and other newsworthy internet finds. You're doing great, but that's only part of managing your online platforms.

Social media is all about building connections and effectively managing your community helps nurture existing relationships with your audience and attracts new followers and potential customers. Here are several other important areas to invest some time:

Engage with Your Audience

Don't post a photo and call it a day. Spend some time scrolling through the feeds on your active social platforms. Like, comment on, and consider sharing content posted by other companies, brands, and individuals. If you see something interesting or relevant to your business, ask a question to get a dialogue going.

Does your company use a specific hashtag with posts? If so, make sure you're following and checking the hashtag to see if your company is being mentioned inside or outside of your community, so that you're aware of what's being said.

Proactively engaging with your audience is integral to building a community.

Moderate the Comments

Make sure you're responding to comments and questions in a timely manner to keep conversations active and to show you care. Ideally, you'll be able to respond within an hour or at least a day.

And don't be afraid to weed out spam that's littering your comment section, and be sure to block fake/bot accounts. This also helps prevent malicious links or malware from potentially affecting your community.

But what about negative comments? Keep reading.

Respond to Complaints

Not all comments are going to be positive. And if you run into negative posts or feedback, don't ignore or delete them. Instead, respond in a timely manner and try to take the conversation offline by providing a phone number or email address for the disgruntled person to contact you directly. This shows your community—and potential customers—that concerns are being actively addressed by a real person.

How you respond can affect your company's reputation, so take your time to carefully understand the complaint and respond accordingly.

Keep Track of What's Working

Are you noticing certain posts that are performing better than others? What do they have in common?

If it's a particular content type (photo, video, article share, etc.), try incorporating more of those posts into your monthly schedule.

Are you checking what hashtags are getting the most engagement and incorporating them into your posts? As a general rule of thumb, don't overdue it with hashtags either. While you can incorporate up to 30 hashtags on Instagram posts, try to limit Facebook and Twitter to about 5. And make sure they're relevant.

Looking for Help?

There isn't a one-size-fits-all plan for social media. And your company's strategy should be informed, strategic, built to build your business' reputation, and achieve goals.

If you're looking for more pointers, HMA is here to help. Email ian@hardwood.org today.



Hardwood Federation Industry Tidbits

by Dana Lee Cole

Executive Director, Hardwood Federation



USTR Extends China Tariffs Pending More Review

On September 2, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) **announced** that Section 301 tariffs on China would continue, pending further review of the trade sanctions, which cover various types of flooring, plywood, and

mouldings. In May 2022, USTR kicked off the **statutory four-year process** to review China tariffs by notifying industry reps of the possible termination of the tariffs and opportunity for industry to request continuation. Because USTR received more than 400 requests for continuation, the tariff actions have not terminated. USTR will provide details on the next steps in the four-year review process in subsequent notices.

Fish/Wildlife Service Moves on Tri-Colored Bat Regulation

On September 13, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) **proposed** to list the tricolored bat as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, as a result of major population decreases caused by white-nose syndrome. The proposal could lead to new rules expanding buffer zones within the bat's habitat and seasonal restrictions on forest management practices. USFWS will accept comments on the proposal through November 14, 2022, and the Hardwood Federation will offer comments similar to those submitted regarding action on the northern long-eared bat. Comments can be made **here**.

Federation Partners with Farm Bill Allies

To leverage our top ag priorities, the Hardwood Federation (HF) team is preparing for the next Farm Bill by joining forces with the "Forests in the Farm Bill" (FIFB) Coalition and the Forest Climate Working Group (FCWG).

- **FIFB** convenes every five years to help shape forestry, biomass energy, and forest products policy as part of the larger Farm Bill package. This year, HF is serving on a FIFB subgroup to explore programs within the Farm Bill to increase demand for forest products.
- **FCWG** represents a diverse group of participants focused on forests and forest products as a solution to climate challenges, and HF is participating in the FCWG's efforts to identify common forest related priorities for inclusion in the Farm Bill.

Additionally, we are working with colleague organizations that rely on and support the Market Access and Foreign Market Development programs.



Bipartisan Senate Posse Pushes Ag Exports

And on September 23, Senators Angus King (I-ME), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Tina Smith (D-MN), and Chuck Grassley (R-IA) introduced the **Cultivating Revitalization by Expanding American Agricultural Trade and Exports (CREATE) Act of 2022**, which would double funding for USDA's Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD) Program. These two programs are critical to expanding global market access for U.S. produced agricultural exports, including hardwood products.

There is limited time on the current Congressional calendar to move the bill forward before year end, but our industry remains optimistic that because a bipartisan group of senators are in agreement on the need to increase support for international agricultural market development, this bill will be reintroduced when a new Congress convenes in January.



Looking for New Market Opportunities?

The *Forest Products Journal – Special Issue* included a research article on “**Wear Resistance and Hardness Assessment of Five US Hardwoods for Bridge Decking and Truck Flooring.**” part of a series of articles “bringing academia, industry and government entities together to work on innovation and applied technologies.” The following information may fit with your long-term plans.

Background

- The U.S. military has been using apitong as flooring for its tactical trailers for several decades. However, this wood has become increasingly rare and many of its subspecies are critically endangered, making it unavailable for future use. Therefore, finding sustainable alternative materials has become a critical need.
- Among currently available options, U.S. hardwoods offer the greatest potential for a sustainable and cost-effective material that can perform well in a wide range of environmental conditions. Therefore, the objective of this study was to evaluate the wear and surface hardness characteristics of five U.S. hardwood species and rank the species for their suitability for bridge decking and trailer flooring applications.

In this study

The wear resistance and hardness of five hardwood species—ash, hickory, red oak, sweetgum, and white oak—were evaluated for potential use in high-wear environments such as bridge decking and trailer flooring. (*Trailer and truck decking and flooring need to have appropriate levels of abrasion resistance, compression strength, biological durability, and flexural strength.*)

The complete findings are available [here](#).

Conclusion Summary

Sweetgum, with the lowest density, had the greatest thicknesses loss and thus lowest wear resistance.

White oak had the least thicknesses loss, thus highest wear resistance among the five hardwood species tested. (It is surmised that white oak’s higher density, as compared to red oak, accounted for its superior performance.)

Hickory, with the highest density, had the highest hardness among the hardwood species tested, but it had relative higher thickness loss, thus lower wear resistance compared to ash, red oak, and white oak. Hickory, with the highest Specific Gravity and acceptable changes in thickness loss, had the best abrasion resistance.

Hickory can be a potential candidate for use in the trailer flooring and truck decking.

This study was conducted through a cooperative research agreement (FS 20-JV-11111133-032) between Mississippi State University and USDA Forest Service, Forest Products Laboratory, and partially funded by USDA Forest Service, Forest Products Laboratory.

The authors also acknowledge the U.S. Endowment for Forests and Communities for its contributions to this research.



Member-to-Member Insights

In a recent newsletter distributed by HMA member Baillie Lumber Company, Marketing and Communications Director Tony Cimorelli addressed the importance of ongoing communications within a company, and offered these "Tips to Improve Communication in the Workplace."

- Start with your company mission, goals, and values. Communicating this vital information ensures that employees throughout the business understand what's important and where their energies should be directed.
- Make sure communications are targeted to the right audience. There is information that everyone should know. There is information that's better aimed towards a specific audience, within a specific department.

- Funnel updates and other information into selected channels. With today's technologies, it's possible to communicate across a wide array of channels and platforms. Businesses are better served by choosing one or two key communications channels. This ensures employees know where to go to stay updated on company operations and policies.
- Pay close attention to your messaging. It's the business leader's responsibility to be clear and direct in communications, so as not to contribute to overkill.

Bottom Line: Relevant, timely, and transparent communications are vital to keeping your business moving forward. For the entire article, visit [Baillie.com](https://www.baillie.com).



OSHA eTools

Looking to augment your existing safety program? If so, take a closer look at OSHA eTools, the agency's highly illustrated and user-friendly, interactive web-based training tool. It's available 24/7. It's free. And it covers a wide range of occupational safety and health topics.



For the wood products industry:

- The **Sawmill eTool** provides information on topics such as log breakdown/handling, sawmill machinery and operations, dry kilns, lumber storage, and plant-wide hazards.
- The **Logging eTool** outlines the required and recommended work practices that may reduce logging hazards.
- The **Woodworking eTool** provides information on assembly, production, finishing chemicals, shipping and more.

These 'stand-alone' training modules also enable the user to answer questions and receive reliable advice on how OSHA regulations apply to their work site. Visit [OSHA.gov](https://www.osha.gov) to learn more.



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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