

The Link

Newsletter | October 2024



Building a Stronger Industry

by Ian Faight

Executive Vice President, HMA



Well, another season is in the books, and while our industry and your businesses continue to face challenging times, as well as the uncertainty over the upcoming election, it is my hope that brighter days are ahead.

With that said, times like these are when associations like the HMA are most valuable to their members. We provide opportunities to learn, develop, discover new ways of doing

business, and see new technologies that could help improve your operations. More importantly, we provide opportunities to catch up, talk shop, and express—and hopefully ease—concerns.

One of these opportunities is **HMA's Fall Regional Meeting**, which will take place Tuesday–Thursday, October 15–17, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

On Tuesday, HMA's Board of Directors, Officers, and Past Presidents will be gathering for our Fall Board of Directors Meeting, while members, promotion sponsors, and industry suppliers will be catching up and relaxing with industry colleagues. And then on Wednesday and Thursday, we have a great lineup of tours on our schedule, excellent networking opportunities, an update on the European Union Deforestation Regulation, and we'll spend time taking in the fall foliage and corn fields at the Field of Dreams movie site.

It's just days away, and if you've been on the fence about attending, there's still time to register and a limited number of hotel rooms are available. If you can't make it, I encourage you to consider sending someone who hasn't experienced an HMA Regional Meeting before. It truly is an invaluable experience—especially for those who do not get to travel or see other operations in action very often.

I hope to see you in Cedar Rapids. And if not, I'll see you at the next one.



Fall Regional Meeting
October 15–17



Gold Sponsors



Silver Sponsor



There's still time to secure extra exposure for your company. Contact Ian Faight at ian@hardwood.org for details. Available opportunities include:

- **\$1,000 Gold Sponsor** | Choice of co-hosting Wednesday'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, Wednesday's bus refreshments, or Thursday's bus transportation!

What's on the Agenda in Cedar Rapids?

In just a couple weeks, **Tuesday-Thursday, October 15-17** to be specific, HMA members will be traveling to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, for our Fall Regional Meeting. And it's sure to be time well spent in the Hawkeye State. While the countdown is on, there's still time to register and book hotel accommodations. All the details can be found at HMAmembers.org.

Register Today

- **\$300** | HMA Members, Promotion Contributors, and 2024 National Conference Exhibitors
- **\$650** | Non-Members

Book Your Hotel Room

Our room block at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Cedar Rapids Convention Complex (350 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401) is nearing capacity. To secure your room, call Jordan Childs-Brandenburg at **319.731.4523**.

A hot breakfast will be available on Wednesday and Thursday, October 16 and 17.

Schedule of Events

Our event will kick off with HMA's Fall Board of Directors Meeting on **Tuesday, October 15**. HMA members arriving early may attend, but participation is reserved for current Officers and Board members.



On Wednesday, we'll head to Edgewood, Iowa, home of **Kendrick, Inc.**, to tour their Kendrick Forest Products sawmill, Forever Cabinets by Kendrick plant, and their Kendrick Home and Shimlee operations wood sign/home décor operations.

Our next stop will be in the town of Dyersville, Iowa, to walk the bases at the Field of Dreams movie site and sit down for lunch.

We'll then be on our way to **Bruggeman Lumber**, for a tour of their sawmill and dry kiln operations in Hopkinton, Iowa. In addition to green and kiln dry lumber, the company specializes in pallet material, rail ties, compost, and custom sawing for trailer flooring and farming operations.



Day one wraps up with an HMA-style networking reception and dinner. Tripp Pryor, international program manager for the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), also will be with us to present the latest updates on the **European Union Deforestation Regulation**, actions AHEC is taking, what it means for our industry, and steps your company should take.



On day two, we'll visit Kendrick Forest Products' newest sawmill in Muscatine, Iowa. And Before we head to the airport, we'll have one final stop to see the solid hardwood competition up close at the **HNI** manufacturing plant in Muscatine. HNI is a global manufacturer of industry-leading brands of wood and laminate furniture for the home, office, hospitality, healthcare markets.



HMA's 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, which will kick off at HMA's 2025 National Conference and Expo, June 10-12, in Knoxville, Tennessee. 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 Steve James, a consultant and certified John C. Maxwell coach, trainer, and speaker. Steve is a familiar face in the industry and will be a valuable asset in shaping the next generation of hardwood industry leaders.

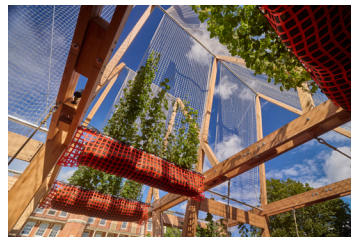
If you'd like to nominate an employee to join the Council, email info@hardwood.org.

Vert Highlights the Future of Wood in Urban Areas

As we see temperatures rise, while biodiversity in urban areas declines, there is an urgent need for innovative design and product development that aims to tackle these issues. In response to these challenges, the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), Stefan Diez's industrial design studio Diez Office, and urban greening specialists, OMC°C, collaborated on an innovative demonstration project, called Vert, to showcase the capabilities of glue-laminated timber (glulam). The experimental structure debuted at Chelsea College of Arts during the London Design Festival in September.



The modular structure consists of a series of red oak glulam triangles that hold suspended biodegradable nets, providing a framework for climbing plants that are rooted in textile planters at the base of each net. The project rises from a deck crafted from thermally modified red oak, further highlighting advancements made in hardwood product manufacturing.



Photos by Petr Krejci

"Vert offered a tangible solution for urban greening, integrating sustainable materials and modular timber construction to create a multifunctional space," said David Venables, European Director for AHEC. "The idea perfectly aligned with our commitment to sustainability and our mission to highlight red oak's structural and environmental characteristics, inspiring the design and architectural community to consider it as a valuable material option."

A red oak showcase, Vert ultimately serves as a case study of how to cool cities, support a living ecosystem with diverse plant species, provide habitat for insects, and beautify urban landscapes.

Read more about Vert at americanhardwood.org.

Staying Social with Real American Hardwood

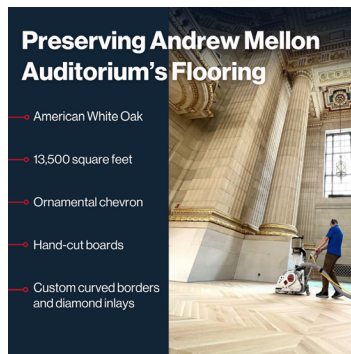
by Ian Faight

Executive Vice President, HMA | Digital Community Manager, RAHC

Last month, the Real American Hardwood Coalition (RAHC) continued to share our industry's stories through informative posts on social media. From showcasing a marvelous restoration project and highlighting tree science to discussing railway ties and previewing an annual industry event for families in Ohio, there was a little bit of something for everyone. Here's a brief recap to get you caught up.

Renovating History with Hardwood

Each month, the RAHC features a stunning project to showcase the attributes and Naturally Authentic® character of Real American Hardwood® products. And in September, the RAHC showed that hardwood makeovers aren't just for homes. A post featured the Andrew Mellon Auditorium, a national historic landmark in Washington, D.C. Originally constructed in 1934, the grandiose venue was due for a refresh, including the restoration of its original 13,500-square-foot ornamental chevron floor. Highly skilled tradesmen from Universal Floors, Inc., hand-cut and installed new, solid rift- and quarter-sawn American white oak utilizing laser technology and fishing line to ensure accuracy. The project is a testament to preserving historic architecture, skilled craftsmanship, and Real American Hardwood. See it on [Instagram](#).



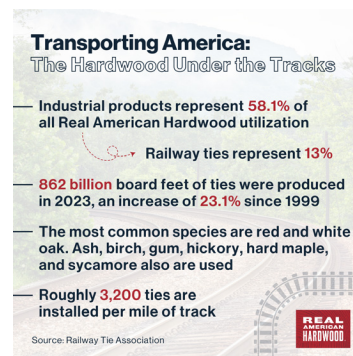
Nature Provides a Vibrant Display



As summer turned to fall, the RAHC took the opportunity to educate followers on why hardwood tree leaves change colors and shed in fall. Of course, the RAHC also encouraged followers to take in the vibrant display produced by Mother Nature and to share photos from their fall adventures. Take a look on [Instagram](#).

The Hardwood Under the Tracks

The RAHC not only utilizes social media to promote common hardwood products—such as cabinetry, flooring, furniture, and millwork—it also highlights lesser known applications—including industrial products. An informative post provided facts and figures about the crucial role Real American Hardwood crossties play in supporting the American economy and infrastructure, as well as ensuring our railways are a reliable, efficient, and environmentally friendly mode of transportation for raw materials, finished goods, and people. See the post on [Instagram](#).



Fall Family Fun

Each year over the first full weekend of October, the Paul Bunyan Show, hosted by the Ohio Forestry Association, attracts 15,000 attendees to the Guernsey County Fairgrounds in Cambridge, Ohio. The fun-filled, three-day event shines a spotlight on forestry, wood products, and industry careers.

What will families be able to enjoy while there? Lumberjack competitions, equipment demonstrations, crafts, shopping, delicious food, and so much more.

The RAHC shared a brief video to preview the event, and in less than a day, it received more than 4,000 views on social media. Give it a watch on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#).



The Latest from Capitol Hill

by Dana Lee Cole

Executive Director, Hardwood Federation



Atlantic, Gulf Coasts Brace for Labor Stoppage at Ports

As talks between the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), representing dock workers, and the U.S. Maritime Alliance (USMX), which represents ocean carriers and port terminal operators, along the Eastern and Gulf Coasts continue to stall, the threat of a strike that

could strangle supply chains, including the import and export of hardwood products, appears to be imminent. As of October 1, port operators cannot guarantee availability of cargo for pick-up at the port or delivery to overseas markets. On the advocacy front, the Federation and its partners in the ocean shipping coalition prepared a letter to the President to use available tools to end a work-stoppage.

On September 17, the Hardwood Federation joined 176 industry groups and partners in the ocean shipping coalition in a letter to urge the Biden Administration to engage dock workers and port terminal operators and avoid a strike following the upcoming expiration of the current labor contract. Closure of these ports, which handle "more than 68% of all containerized exports and more than 56% of containerized imports," according to the National Association of Manufacturers, would paralyze the nation's supply chains. The letter called upon "the administration to immediately work with both parties to resume contract negotiations and ensure there is no disruption to port operations and cargo fluidity if a new contract is not reached by the expiration date."

Lawmakers Urge President to Press for EUDR Delay

As the compliance date for the E.U. Deforestation Rule (EUDR) approaches, on September 20, 73 House lawmakers, including 62 Republicans and 11 Democrats, sent a letter to President Biden requesting that he intervene on behalf of the forest products sector. Specifically, the letter urged the European Commission to delay implementation of the new regulations that threaten the export of hardwood products. The requested delay, which would run for two years beyond the upcoming compliance date in early 2025, is necessary to avoid trade disruptions and promote sustainable forestry practices, according to the lawmakers. The messages to the President are similar to those made by the Hardwood Federation and AHEC, who have met with the U.S. Trade Representative twice in the past year expressing concerns about the rule's adverse impacts on hardwood exports in the event the EUDR moves forward as planned.

House Passes Bipartisan "Fix Our Forests Act"

On September 24, House lawmakers passed the industry-supported "Fix Our Forests Act," (H.R. 8790) by a vote of 268 to 151, 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. Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-AR), Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, joined Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA) to move the bill, which has 17 Republican and 6 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, which aligns with industry advocacy, in June to address concerns.

Industry Opposes Old Growth Amendments to Forest Management Plans

The Hardwood Federation has filed comments with the USDA, urging federal regulators to reject environmental assessments that will open the door to amendment of forest management plans. This would potentially lead to adopting a "one-size-fits-all" definition for "old growth forest" that will remove even more acreage from sustainable management. As an alternative approach, industry argues that the USDA should continue to address the old growth issue through the locally led forest planning process, governed by the 2012 Planning Rule. Such an approach promotes transparency and best forestry practices that account for the high degree of variability in old growth forests. Furthermore, industry is concerned that undertaking wholesale amendment of existing forest plans will further strain agency resources which are already burdened by work related to wildfire mitigation.

Federal Court Supports Boiler MACT Flexibility

On September 3, a Federal Appeals Court issued an environmental decision favoring industry, and ruled that current limits on industrial boiler emissions are sufficient to comply with requirements under the Clean Air Act. The court also found that current standards only apply to boilers manufactured after 2020, as opposed to those built after 2010, which will save mills the expense of moving forward with costly retrofits. On this issue, the federal court invoked the new Loper doctrine, whereby it found that although there's ambiguity on industrial boiler rules within the federal statute, there is no requirement to defer to EPA's interpretation of the law in making a final decision.

Harnessing the Power of AI to Create Content

by Sara Skwaryk

Communications and Administrative Coordinator, HMA

Is your company struggling to create online content? Whether due to staffing shortages, lack of ideas, or if there's just not enough time in the day, artificial intelligence (AI) is a powerful tool to help get you started. And AI can be as involved in your business as you want it to be. As your knowledge expands, and you understand what does and doesn't work for your company, you have the ability to alter the application and grow your business.

After exploring the foundational ways AI can help your business flourish, you can find ways to integrate it into your marketing and content creation processes to continue to give your brand the competitive advantage you may be seeking.

To get your creative juices flowing, here are some ideas from CO, a U.S. Chamber of Commerce organization, to suggest where you can implement AI to boost content:

Content Ideas and Outlining

Tools, such as ChatGPT, can provide ideas for content as you may be considering starting a blog for your business, or even as you begin to utilize social media more. ChatGPT can help provide ideas for photo captions and ways to engage with your audience.

Maybe your business is considering a YouTube channel or a podcast—there are AI platforms available to help assist with recording and editing these materials, allowing you to explore the medium without being a pro.

There are even tools—such as Midjourney or DALL-E—that have the ability to create visuals, while other apps, like Synthesia, can produce realistic videos from simple scripts.



AI Best Practices

With all this AI talk, you may be hesitant for fear of doing something wrong. Or, maybe you're worried your content won't be in your brand's authentic voice. As with most technologies, there are best practices to help guide your use of this new resource.

First, adhere to search engine guidelines and regulatory standards to avoid penalties and ensure high-quality content.

Always fact-check and refine AI-generated content to ensure it is accurate and aligns with your message. Use AI-generated content as a draft and revise it to match your brand's voice, ensuring it reads naturally.

And most importantly, be transparent about when you're using AI to maintain authenticity and ethical standards with your audience.

AI has the power to significantly impact the everyday functions of your business—you just have to know where to start! Let these points be a guide to help you begin your adoption of this helpful technology.



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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