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Federal Legislative Outlook 2015

At HMA's National Conference and Expo in Nashville, Hardwood Federation (HF) Executive Director, Dana Lee Cole, presented the **Washington D.C. Outlook for 2015**. Her comments included a review of current HF "top priority" issues, a plea for greater involvement at the grassroots level, and a hearty 'thank you' for the ongoing support of the HMA and its many member companies. If you missed it, here's a brief recap.

HF Priority Updates

National Forest Management – Senate Natural Resources Chair, Lisa Murkowski, is avid "regarding the need to address federal forest management reform. House leadership also understands the need for reform," and a national bill is preferred. In addition, "both the House and Senate have introduced bipartisan Wildfire Disaster Funding bills," overhauling existing federal policy and boosting funding for fire prevention. Discussions will continue through 2015.

EPA Regulations – "There will be lots of EPA oversight in both the House and Senate. EPA's proposed reductions in **ozone** will be challenged." Issues surrounding **carbon** regulations will continue because there is no clear statement that biomass is an alternative fuel and that it is carbon neutral. There is much concern about the definition of **Waters of the U.S.** and "what will require a federal water quality permit, and what will not."

Transportation/Truck Weights – The current "short term transportation bill expires at the end of May" and putting a long term bill into place is high priority. It could include gas tax and increased truck weights, but getting both included will be "an uphill battle."

Northern Long Eared Bat (NLEB) – The forest products industry has gotten Capitol Hill's attention. NLEB is being decimated by White Nose Syndrome, **Not** by forestry. Focusing on habitat control is not going to save it. And while the conversation is far from over, "latest word is that it is likely that a **threatened designation** will be made with a 4d rule, which offers flexibility. This is an improvement, but there would still be questions about how flexible the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would be on interpretation; how state jurisdictions would react; when new guidance would be released."

We are ALL Advocates

Before addressing questions from the audience, Dana thanked the HMA for its ongoing support and then made a request.

"My colleagues and I reach a significant number of federally elected officials, but there are a lot of state and local officials that we simply don't have the time or resources to connect with. That's where YOU come in."

- Get in front of your local, state and federally elected officials and let them know what is going on in our industry and what it takes to run your business. Visit their local offices. Attend meetings. Most of all, **invite them to tour your facility**.
- A first-hand look at your operations; seeing your employees in action will “resonate with members at all levels. You are their constituents and ultimately they answer to you. Hearing directly from business executives in their districts is an effective way to reinforce the message we convey here in Washington.”
- Step-by-step directions for planning a tour for officials are provided in a "**Facility Tour Guide**," available from the HF. Contact the Federation to learn more.