



LOGGERS CONVENE IN NATION'S CAPITAL FOR ANNUAL FLY-IN



SWPA members Chris Lands – Bates, Hewett & Floyd Insurance Agency – Palatka, FL / Charles Johns – Johns & Conner, Inc. Hilliard, FL / Kevin Johns – Deep South Timber, LLC Hilliard, FL and Richard Schwab – M.A. Rigoni, Inc. Perry, FL (not pictured) make the trip to Capitol Hill to represent the FL and GA loggers, as part of the ALC Annual Fly-In. SWPA is a major contributor to the American Loggers Council.

April 8, 2019, Hemphill, TX— The American Loggers Council (ALC), the national association of professional timber harvesters, organized its annual fly-in April 4-6 to connect loggers to key decision makers in Congress and the Trump Administration. The event enjoyed record participation as loggers from across the nation convened in Washington DC.

ALC's membership, made up of state logging associations and individual loggers, returned to Washington DC at a time of divided government. Recognizing the capital's polarized political environment, loggers reached out to both Republican and Democratic lawmakers on Capitol Hill to advocate for an industry primarily composed of small, family-owned businesses.



"Loggers understand the importance of working across the aisle and reaching out to lawmakers who may not know about our industry or have misconceptions about what we do in the woods," said ALC Executive Vice President Danny Ductor. "The small businesses in our industry provide the wood products that Americans use every day, yet we operate on razor-thin profit margins, and like other industries, we are seeking to replenish an aging workforce of loggers and log truck drivers."



"Our legislative agenda has been well-received on Capitol Hill, because members of both parties agree that loggers are essential to the health of America's forests and economy."

To help recruit the next generation of loggers, ALC members advocated for the bipartisan "Future Logging Careers Act" (HR 1785 and S. 818) to extend an existing agricultural exemption allowing 16- and 17-year-olds in family logging businesses to work in mechanized logging operations under parental supervision.

"Like farming and ranching, the timber harvesting profession is often a

family run business where the practice and techniques of harvesting and transporting forest products from the forest to receiving mills is passed down from one generation to the next," Ductor said. "Timber harvesting operations are also very similar to family farms with sophisticated and expensive harvesting equipment that requires young family members to learn how to run the business, including equipment operation and maintenance, prior to reaching the age of eighteen." ALC is also committed to improving the safety of loggers and log truck drivers. That's why members advocated for the "Safe Routes Act," soon to be introduced with bipartisan support, to allow more log trucks to utilize federal interstates for short-haul trips, as a safe alternative to state, county and local roads.



"Safe and efficient log hauling is essential to our industry and the nation's economy, but inconsistent weight standards are putting American lives at risk," Ductor said. "Since the spring of 1997, the ALC has urged Congress to allow the industry's trucks to haul state-legal weights on the Federal Interstate Highway System, which often provide safer routes to mills. As fatal log truck collisions increase, there is ample data suggesting this reform would save lives by routing log trucks away from schools, crosswalks, city intersections and railroad tracks."



Because many communities continue to suffer from catastrophic wildfires and smoke, loggers also advocated for better management of federally-owned forests. In recent years Congress has provided the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management new tools and resources to treat fire-prone landscapes at a faster pace. In addition, President Donald Trump last December signed an Executive Order prioritizing forest management activities- including logging- to reduce excess fuels. The American Loggers Council is working to assure these new tools and resources are fully utilized to decrease the size and intensity of wildfires.

"We urge members of Congress to fund the Forest Service and BLM with the adequate dollars necessary to ensure implementation of all authorities while at the same time request a quarterly progress report that will detail the number of projects implemented, the number of acres treated, and the type of project and what authorities were utilized in its implementation," Ductor said.



Increasing the pace and scale of forest management activities on federal lands also requires stable markets for wood fiber, especially for low-value materials that can't be used for lumber. ALC believes the United States has an important opportunity to promote the conversion of woody biomass into renewable energy, which would support forest restoration on federal lands while protecting families who own small woodlands. Wood utilization can help reduce greenhouse gases and help governments at all levels meet climate goals.

"Wood utilization promotes healthy forests and communities," Ductor said. "In addition to providing green and renewable energy, it provides local and rural employment. As a rule of thumb, each megawatt of wood-fueled electricity supports approximately five full-time jobs: one direct job in the power generation facility and four indirect jobs in surrounding forests and communities."

The ALC fly-in concluded with its Board of Directors meeting, where members discussed developments on Capitol Hill and the progress that's being made on the loggers' legislative priorities. The board also voted to approve the Ohio Logging Standards Council as its newest voting member, bringing the total number of states being represented by ALC to 36.

"As the logging industry changes and faces new challenges, the American Loggers Council is committed to working with policymakers and the political spectrum to ensure our national forest products industry remains competitive," Ductor said. "We are 'loggers working for loggers' and we are proud of what we do for all Americans."

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