Association joins campaign to prevent logging permits

The Florida Forestry Association has joined a partnership at the national level to overrule a decision by the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, that would put in place a new water control standard that could have major impacts on logging and forest operations. At its quarterly meeting on August 3, in High Springs, the FFA Executive Committee voted unanimously to put financial, political and staff resources behind efforts to restore the historically successful Best Management Practices (BMPs) treatment to forest operations through a coordinated legal, legislative and outreach campaign led by the National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO) in Washington, DC. Congressional action and possible Supreme Court intervention are among the two immediate strategies.

The 9th Circuit decision effectively struck down the silvicultural exemption that has been a successful component of EPA’s regulation of water since 1976. Under the court ruling, private forest landowners would be forced to obtain a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for roads on their land. EPA’s definition of “forest road” is still not known.

“Coming up with remedies to this court ruling is critical to keeping Florida’s working forests working,” said Bryan Olmert, Association President. “Waiting on EPA for a logging permit could bring timber harvesting to a standstill. As a logger and a landowner, I can’t imagine having to apply for an industrial stormwater runoff permit for new and existing logging roads. I am proud our Association will lead the Florida effort to help solve the regulatory headaches that this ruling has created. We are calling on our members to step up to the plate as we engage in this important battle,” Olmert concluded.

What you can do

The Executive Committee is asking each member to contribute an amount equivalent to 10% of your Association member dues. An invoice in that amount was mailed to Association members the first week of October. A form was also provided if you choose to contribute less than that amount.

Forestry, wood and paper back on top

Agriculture, natural resources and related industries are a significant force in the economy of Florida. Forestry, wood and paper product manufacturing are shown to be the leading agriculture commodity group in terms of total economic output in Florida, according to the latest report on output and value-added contributions of food and fiber commodity groups in the sunshine state.

The Economic Contributions of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Industries in Florida in 2009 (FE897) was completed in August. IFAS economists Alan W. Hodges, Mohammad Rahmani, and Thomas J. Stevens prepared the 19-page analysis. The economic contributions of these industries were evaluated for 2009, to update previous reports and provide further information on economic trends in the wake of the recession of 2007-2009. The historical progression of forest products value to Florida’s economy has been:

- 2009: $14.60 Bn
- 2008: $12.96 Bn
- 2007: $16.46 Bn
- 2006: $16.72 Bn
- 2003: $16.63 Bn

The 2009 report was published by the UF Department of Food and Resource Economics, August 2011, and is available at: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fe897.

Ag Commissioner calls on Senators to help protect silviculture exemption

Florida Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam sent letters in August to Florida Senators Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio, asking them to support S. 1369, the Silviculture Regulatory Consistency Act. The bill would codify EPA’s regulations treating forestry operations, including forest roads, as nonpoint sources under the Clean Water Act.

“We are grateful Commissioner Putnam has joined our campaign to help restore the historically successful Best Management Practices (BMPs) treatment in protecting water quality, by calling on Congress to affirm forestry as a nonpoint source,” says Jeff Doran, FFA Executive Vice President. “The Commissioner recognizes the hardship the 9th Circuit ruling could have on logging and forest operations. We appreciate him going to bat to help protect our growers and users from burdensome permitting requirements,” stated Doran.
Swing for Shands' Kids!
The 17th Annual Tommy Usher Log-A-Load For Kids Golf Classic is set for October 20, at the Chiefland Golf and Country Club. Co-sponsored by Farm Credit, Usher Land & Timber and the Florida Forestry Association, this tournament will raise money for Shands Children's Hospital through the Children's Miracle Network. The event has raised more than $350,000 throughout the past 16 years.

Opportunities to get involved are available by entering a team, becoming a sponsor, making a personal donation, or buying chances to win a set of PING Golf Clubs donated by N.G. Wade Investments. All proceeds from this event directly benefit children in need at Shands, Gainesville.

For more information, contact Torie Hardee at 386.462.4201 or vhardee@flcfm.com. Donations and door prize ticket payments may be mailed directly to Farm Credit of North Florida (attention Torie Hardee), 12300 NW US Highway 441, Alachuca, FL 32615. All checks should be payable to Log-A-Load For Kids.

Patsy Nathe recognized with highest honor
Patricia J. “Patsy” Nathe, a central figure in the success of R.J. Nathe & Sons timber and logging business in Pasco County, is this year’s recipient of the Distinguished Service Award (DSA). Florida Forestry Association’s highest honor. She received a standing ovation as she received the coveted DSA during the awards presentation held on September 8, in conjunction with the FFA 2011 Annual Meeting in St. Augustine, FL.

In presenting the Award, Jeff Doran, Executive Vice President, recognized Nathe for her reliability and twenty-plus years of service in communication, government relations and leading the logging community. “Patsy speaks up and out about the vital importance of our forests on Florida’s economy and environment every chance she gets,” Doran said. “Her imprint is carved on the Florida State Fair, and every year over 35,000 people experience the Forest Discovery Center thanks to Patsy’s efforts to help build and maintain that outreach post.” Politicians at the local, state and national level know ‘Miss Patsy’ for her advocacy efforts on behalf of timber growers, wood producers and forest business. There has never been a time when our Association called on Patsy Nathe for help that she has not responded. I don’t know of any person in Florida who has given so much to preserve our heritage and our future,” Doran stated.

New name, same great service
Florida’s Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ Division of Forestry went back to its roots in September, reviving its original name as the Florida Forest Service. During an event at the Suwannee Forestry Center in Lake City, the service’s new logo was unveiled by state agriculture commissioner Adam Putnam, forest service director Jim Karels and State Representative Elizabeth Porter and others.

Organized by the Florida Board of Forestry in 1927, the agency was originally named the Florida Forest Service. In 1969, it was incorporated under the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and renamed the Division of Forestry. The new name and logo are the result of a measure passed by the state legislature during the last session to change the name.

The Florida Forest Service protects and manages the state’s more than one million acres of public forest and 16 million acres of commercial forestland. The service also protects more than 26 million acres of Florida’s natural resources, homes and business from wildfire. Changing the division’s uniforms, equipment and buildings to the new logo will occur as each is repaired or replaced due to normal wear and tear.

Association recognizes the “Best” of Florida
Recognizing outstanding individuals and organizations has long been a part of the Florida Forestry Association’s Annual Meeting. That tradition was carried on during the Association’s September 7-8 Annual Meeting, with the spotlight on Florida’s Outstanding Tree Farmer, Logger, Legislative and Sustainable Forestry Award winners.

Following names those outstanding individuals and businesses, who took center stage as tribute was paid to their services and commitment to greatness. These folks truly represent the BEST of Florida Forestry!

Outstanding Tree Farmer - Ellis and Sara Smith
Outstanding Logger - T.W. Byrd's Sons Logging, Inc.
Outstanding Legislator (House) - Representative Steve Crisafulli
Outstanding Legislator (Senate) - Senator Alan Hays
Audubon Sustainable Forestry - Pinellas County Utilities

Complete details on the award winners, as well as Annual meeting speaker presentations and photos can be viewed at http://www.floridaforest.org/conference.php

Association encourages NRCS to realign tree planting options
Florida Forestry Association staff met with key officials of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in Gainesville on September 15, to relay the urgent need for a federal reforestation cost share program that better meets the needs of forest landowners. The shortfalls of the existing Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) cost share program were discussed, along with ways to remedy the problems to address today’s reforestation needs.

FFA’s recommendations included raising the allowable tree planting density to levels traditionally used to achieve a fully stocked commercial pine stand, and to expand the species selection to include all southern yellow pines typically grown in Florida plantations. While the NRCS officials were unwilling to make an immediate commitment to modify EQIP, they did indicate the timing was good, seemed receptive to our issues, and open to giving our recommendations serious consideration as they plan for next year’s program.

Florida Energy Summit
The 2011 Florida Energy Summit being held October 26-28, in Orlando, will serve as a launching point for future energy policy in the state of Florida. Previously known as “Farm to Fuel,” the 2011 Florida Energy Summit will reflect the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' new role as the state's leader in issues relating to energy conservation and efficiency, renewable energy and energy policy. Visit http://floridaenergysummit.com/summit/2011.html for more details.
Plywood plant to close at Hawthorne

Georgia-Pacific has announced plans to shut down its Hawthorne plywood mill in November. The closing will eliminate 400 jobs. According to GP spokesperson Trish Bowles, Palatka, “Weak demand in the housing and remodeling markets has made the mill unprofitable for several years. GP employees will work through November 7th, or until they are released by supervisors. The mill could reopen if market conditions improve,” Bowles said.

SAF/SFRC Symposium

The 41st Annual Society of American Foresters/School of Forest Resources and Conservation Symposium will be held November 8-9, at the Paramount Plaza Hotel (2900 SW 13th Street), in Gainesville. Leading experts from around the SE will discuss a wide spectrum of issues related to managing our public forest and aquatic resources. The Symposium will provide ideas, tools and information for virtually all of Florida’s forest landowners and managers. The John Gray Lecture will keynote the Symposium, and will be presented by Dr. Franklin Boteler, Asst. Director, Institute of Bioenergy, Climate, and Environment, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA, Washington, D.C. The early registration fee is $135 (prior to October 15), and $155 thereafter. The Symposium provides 8 CFE Category 1 continuing education credits. Pre-registrations can be mailed to Pat Minogue, University of Florida, 155 Research Road, Quincy, FL 32351.

One more chance to get SFI training

A Master Logger 3-day workshop has been scheduled for November 15-17, in Perry, FL. This additional workshop was approved by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative State Implementation Committee (SFI SIC), due to numerous requests by companies and loggers needing to obtain their Florida Master Logger designation by the end of the year. The SFI is the forest certification program that most Florida forest products companies participate in, and requires loggers to be trained through the Florida Master Logger program to meet the SFI Standard. Florida Forestry Association is the only official provider of the program. Plans are to hold the next workshop in June of 2012, at a location to be determined. For more information or to register, contact Debbie Bryant at 850.222.5646 or debbie@forestfla.org. The 3-day workshop registration form is also available on the Association’s web site at http://www.floridaforest.org/_resources/files/3DayForm.pdf.

House extends highway funding

U.S. House of Representatives unanimously approved a measure on September 13, to extend the current highway funding and spending measure for another six months. The current Continuing Resolution’s scheduled expiration of September 30, has been moved to March 31, 2012. The measure, expected to pass the Senate without difficulty, authorizes the continuation of current federal highway, transit, and highway safety programs during that period. This gives a six month window for Gross Vehicle Weight reform advocates to make their case within a defined Surface Transportation Reauthorization process. Florida Forestry Association continues to work with national allies to keep the pressure on, and to make sure that improving the efficient use of our existing highway systems by enabling three six-axle trucks to do the work of four five-axle trucks becomes a central element of Surface Transportation Reauthorization in today’s “do more with less” policy environment!

A familiar face in state lands director post

Clay Smallwood, former president of St. Joe Timberlands, has taken over the job of director of State Lands at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. As director, Smallwood will play a key role in state lands purchases and identifying surplus conservation lands to be sold. Smallwood retired from St. Joe in 2010, where his responsibilities included oversight of lands sales and leases. His appointment was confirmed by the Governor and Cabinet on September 20, in Tallahassee.

Senate seeks to block H-2B Wage Rule

Senators Mikulski, Landrieu, and Graham successfully inserted language into the Senate Appropriations Bill on September 21, that would prohibit the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) from enforcing its H-2B Wage Rule. Although this legislation has yet to come to the floor for a vote, this development sends a very strong message to DOL. Meanwhile, DOL is clearly feeling the heat and has announced a 60-day delay in the H-2B Wage Rule, moving the effective date to December 11, 2011. DOL is theorizing that many H-2B users will finish their employment season by then and will not feel compelled to continue litigation or pursue legislative action against the Wage Rule. This Rule will drive up reforestation labor costs in most states to unaffordable levels. All forestry contracting companies that use H-2B workers must pay foreign or domestic workers in the tree planting industry, the DOL prevailing wage. The Florida prevailing wage for a level 3 worker would increase by $8 per hour!

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