



Loggers Newsletter

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Welcome to the second issue of the *West Virginia Loggers Newsletter*. Each newsletter will bring you timely information on research, methods, technologies, issues, regulations, and value-added opportunities affecting the logging and forest products industry in West Virginia.

The WV Logger Survey (summer 2001) has provided valuable information on your needs and operational characteristics. Thanks to all who returned the survey enclosed in the last issue. Your time and effort are much appreciated. I take to heart all of your comments and always welcome feedback. Look for another survey early next year on job and equipment configuration.

The vast majority of you preferred or strongly preferred the *WV Loggers Newsletter* (88%) and magazines such as *Timber Harvesting* (69%) as a way of getting current and timely educational information on logging in WV. The WV Forestry Association and trade associations such as the Forest Resource Association also scored high at 47%. For those who preferred workshops, evenings and Saturdays scored higher than weekdays.

The highest scoring educational and training needs in order of ranking were:

1. *logging safety issues*
2. *logging cost analysis*
3. *forest & logging aesthetics (making the log job look good)*
4. *logging regulations*
5. *profitable business management*
6. *road location and construction.*

Lowest ranking was computer training.

Ninety-two percent agreed or strongly agreed

that the newsletter was about right in length and 87% agreed or strongly agreed the content met their needs. 56% said they will change or modify some of their practices and only 38% would read an internet-based newsletter. Incidentally this newsletter is available on-line at the web address listed at the top of this page.

The top barriers cited toward increasing profits were: Workers Compensation, stumpage prices, and finding and keeping good labor. Ranking next with a tie were: weather, company cut & haul rates, fuel cost, and low timber prices at the mill.

Responding loggers had an average of 16 years in logging and averaged 46 years in age. Average scheduled hours per week is 42 and average operating weeks per year is 46. Profitability in 2000 was rated as average with 2001 predicted as between average and poor. Average logging cost was estimated at \$115 per MBF. Average tract size was 140 acres on 9 tracts per year.

John Bouch, owner of Professional Timber Harvesting Company, Mahaffey, PA, received the Forest Resource Association's Appalachian Technical Division Outstanding Logger Award in September. He is a 3rd generation logger producing 3.2 million board feet per year. His operation consists of a TF120 Bell feller buncher, 1 Timberjack 460D grapple skidder, 1 Timberjack 240C cable skidder, a Prentice 410E loader and a CTR slasher.

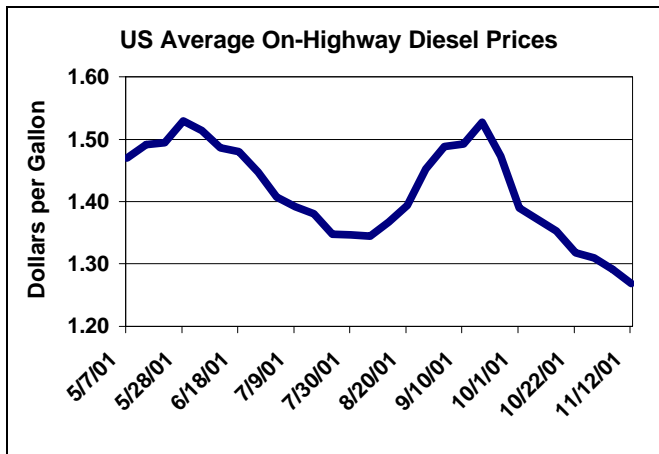
John made some interesting comments to me at the ceremony. He buys his own timber and emphasizes forest management and timber stand improvement to landowners. He calls

most diameter limit cuts high grading that leaves the worst trees.

John is a member of the state Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Implementation Committee and believes in logger training. He says: *“think with your head not your arms. Work smart not hard. SFI training gives loggers the “push” they need to stop bad legislation and knowledge to answer landowners questions.”*

Bouch has worked hard to cut his equipment and labor costs and diversify his business. He made a decision several years ago to diversify his business rather than expand the logging end. In addition to the logging job, he now owns or operates a vehicle repair shop, fuel service, rental apartments, a hydraulic repair shop, and a chain saw shop.

Fuel costs are on a downtrend according to the latest Department of Energy figures.

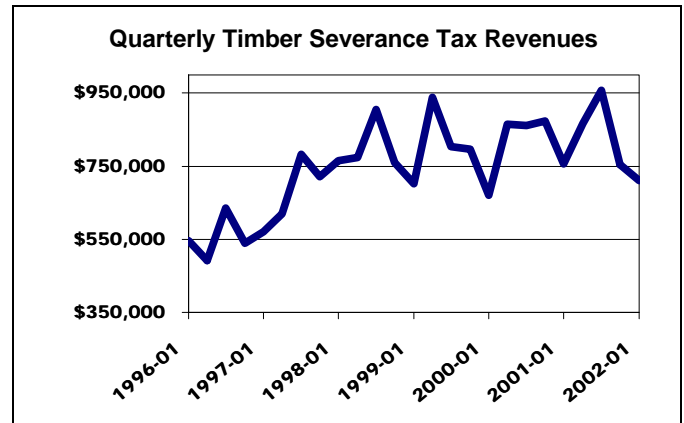


New home sales in September were off 4% from a year ago while housing starts were up 4%. Building permits were down 3%. The logging industry will be affected depending on which way these trends go in the near future.

Horse loggers please send me your name, address, and phone number if you are interested in being placed on a list made available to landowners. An increasing number of landowners are showing interest in low-impact, low-volume logging systems.

West Virginia Timber Severance Tax collections for fiscal year 2001 were up 1.9%

over year 2000. Although this indicates a healthy pace in the timber economy, revenues for the last quarter of fiscal year 2001 and first quarter of fiscal year 2002 (ending September 2001) show declines over the same period last year. This trend, if it continues, will indicate a slowing in the West Virginia forest products industry.



Retaining logging workers is becoming a challenge for some contractors. Several contractors and companies have told me of recently losing workers to higher paying mining jobs. This is a high priority issue facing loggers if we are to maintain and develop a professional workforce in this industry that operates in a safe and sustainable way. Please call, E-mail, or write to me with your ideas and suggestions.

Extremely competitive Appalachian hardwood lumber markets are still the rule according to the weekly *Hardwood Market Report*. Recent business is tied heavily toward established buyer/seller relationships. Uncertain economic conditions are causing some hesitation from buyers. Interest in ash and basswood continues to be limited due a diminishing domestic furniture market. Demand and pricing for quality hard maple is steady. Market conditions earlier this year caused some mills to reduce log inventories going into the summer. Some of these mills now have low log inventories of red oak going into winter. These mills have expressed concern over sufficient supply of logging crews this winter to meet production needs. Lower grades of red oak are in heavy demand by the strip flooring market. White oak demand is down due to the high U.S. dollar and lowered exports to Europe.

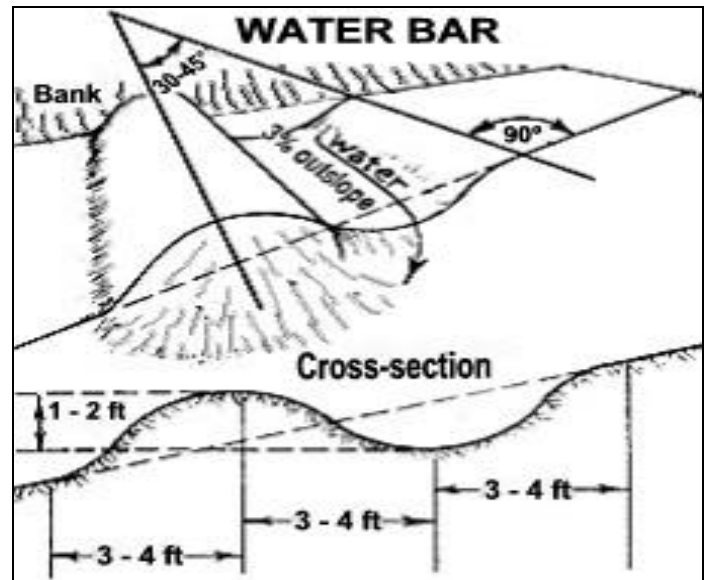
WV Logging Sediment Control Act final statistics for the year ending 2000 show where compliance problems are occurring. A total of 2,368 inspections and investigations out of 3,204 notifications found the problems listed below:

| Problem | Total | % |
|---------------------|--------------|----------|
| No notification | 274 | 19 |
| No license | 223 | 15 |
| Job not reclaimed | 197 | 13 |
| Skid / haul road | 157 | 11 |
| No certified logger | 140 | 10 |
| No sign | 115 | 8 |
| Muddy water | 112 | 8 |
| Other | 80 | 5 |
| County / state road | 71 | 5 |
| Operating in stream | 52 | 4 |
| Tops in stream | 39 | 3 |

No notification was at the top of the list of cited problems. DOF suggested contractors develop a reliable “system” for getting notification forms in to the district office. It is important to fill out the forms correctly and accurately since by signing the form the logger agrees to do the job as described on the form. The use of topographic maps is highly recommended although tract sketches are OK if tied in with known reference points.

A BMP workshop at Stonewall Jackson State Park on 10-24-01 covered areas the WV Division of Forestry is concentrating on. David Lilly, Rudy Williams, and David Hardesty taught the workshop. Roads that are too steep, insufficient or improper reclamation, and filter strip activity are problem areas throughout the state. Log jobs that are visible to the public need extra attention to make sure they look good (aesthetics). Stream crossings, landing size, and number of roads should be properly planned and constructed.

Proper water bar installation is critical when closing skid and truck roads. Deep “tank traps” are not necessary. Properly angled berms one to two feet in height and tied into the bank will usually do an adequate job as shown in the diagram.



WV LSCA reclamation requirements as stated in the new June 2001 booklet are: “The following areas will be **SEEDED**:

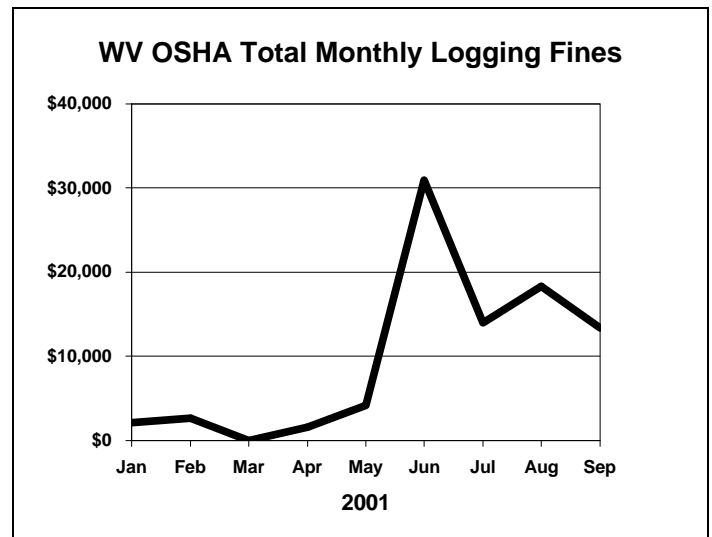
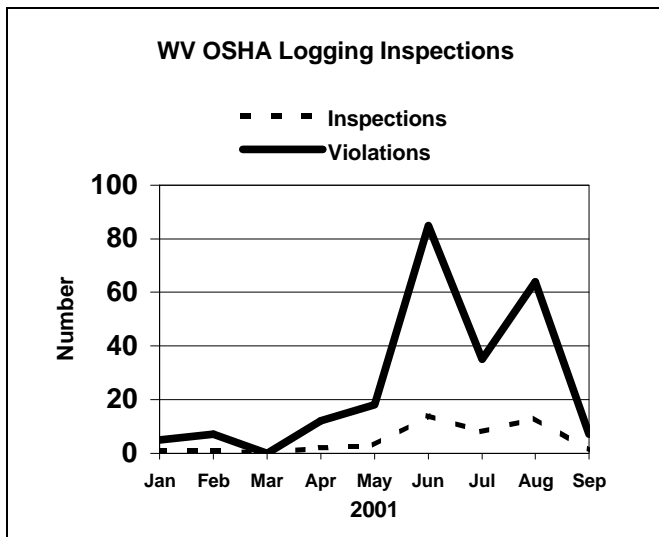
1. *Truck haul roads that:*
 - Exceed 10% slope.
 - Are within the streamside management zone (SMZ).
2. *All skid roads and trails that:*
 - Exceed 15% slope. (Lopped slash can be placed on roads to supplement seeding.)
 - Are within the SMZ.

The following areas will be **SEEDED** and **MULCHED**:

- All landings.
- All mineral soil disturbed within the SMZ.
- Any road that disturbs mineral soil and exceeds 20% slope.

Seeding and mulching will be more successful if each section has the high berms removed, outsloped, surface smoothed, then water barred, seeded and mulched immediately after no longer needed. Landing and road fills inside the SMZ will be seeded immediately after construction. All compacted exposed areas should have a seedbed prepared by scarifying the surface to a depth of 2” to 3”. All seeded areas should have the seed covered by dragging with a dozer blade, chain, brush or cable.”

OSHA has picked up the pace of logging compliance inspections starting in May. The rankings of the OSHA logging and other standard categories of fines year-to-date through September in WV are listed in the next several charts. A lot of attention is being given to the tree harvesting and personal protective equipment requirements.



Rich Jeffries with the OSHA Charleston, WV office, said at a recent workshop that the greatest amount of logging fatalities occur with tree fellers and machine operators depending on the region. He emphasized that it is critical to have a site-specific felling plan where hazards are identified and operations and / or personnel are separated by a minimum of 2 tree lengths. Jeffries also indicated that inspectors pay considerable attention to proper notching and felling. Seeing splits is an indicator of poor felling technique. He emphasized that felling should move uphill rather than downhill.

This winter looks to be a critical period for the logging industry in West Virginia. The slowing U.S. economy has put many economic indicators at a break point. Loggers in WV are not immune. Some mills are concerned about having enough logging capacity going into winter to keep pace with demand for certain species after working down inventories this spring and summer. On the other hand, some loggers feel there are too many contractors in the business. Additional pressures are coming from environmental groups seeking to pass more logging regulation in the upcoming WV legislative session. Add steep workers compensation rates with stepped up OSHA inspections and loggers have their plate full! Stay involved, be ready to adapt rapidly to changing conditions, take the OSHA Logging Standard seriously, follow WV LSCA BMP's and use good business management principles. I will be scheduling several Business Management for Loggers workshops in the coming year. This will be a great opportunity for loggers to learn basic business skills and how they apply to their operations.

| Rank | Category | Total Fines Y-T-D Sept. (\$) |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | Tree harvesting | 20,725 |
| 2. | Personal protective equipment | 17,290 |
| 3. | Other general requirements | 15,285 |
| 4. | Training | 14,175 |
| 5. | Machines & vehicles | 10,295 |
| 6. | HazCom | 7,700 |
| 7. | Hand tools (chain saws) | 855 |
| 8. | Blood born pathogens | 450 |

Contact Roger Wright at the WVU Appalachian Hardwood Center (304 293-7550 ext. 2463) if you need any help with the new OSHA Logging Standard or developing your compliance program.

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