

THE MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF TIMBERMEN

MARCH 2025

TIMBER TALK

DEDICATED TO REPRESENTING THE NEEDS OF SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE FOREST PRODUCT INDUSTRY

INSIDE

- Timber Buyers Demand Fixes For Ongoing State Timber Sales
- Remembering Mary Harmon: A Champion For Michigan's Timber Industry

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MAT Board of Directors -
Brock VanOss not pictured

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IN THIS ISSUE

- 4-5 President's Message and Executive Director's Report
- 5 MAT Hires New Operations Administrator
- 6-7 Welcome New Members
- 9-10 Sponsor Spotlight: Forest/Loggers/Mauck Insurance Agencies
- 12-13 Remembering Mary Harmon: A Champion for Michigan's Timber Industry
- 15 2025 SFI Continuing Education Training Schedule
- 16-17 Timber Buyers Demand Fixes for Ongoing State Timber Sale Problems
- 18 MAT Speaks Out Regarding Solar Development on Public Lands
- 19-20 Legislative Update with MAT Lobbyist Jason Wadaga, Updates on ESTA Legislation
- 22-23 History Across Michigan's Regions: Region 1 – Henry Ford's Historic Alberta Sawmill
- 23 David Holli Honored with Carl V. Pellonpaa Lifetime Achievement Award





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We invite you to join us at the annual Timbermen's Convention, taking place April 24-25, 2025, at Kewadin Casino in Sault Ste. Marie.

It's always a great time to see old friends and make new connections across Michigan's forest products industry.

Please register using the information below!

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www.michigantimbermen.com/timbermens-convention

OR

SCAN ME





PRESIDENT

Vaughn West

Michigan Association of Timbermen

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello to all our members. Hope the winter has been nice for our loggers; there has been lots of frozen conditions and lots of snow to dredge through. It's a blessing for loggers to have frozen ground to get to some sales, and yet driving on icy back roads and highways is a challenge for our truck drivers. The timber industry has some of the best drivers out there considering what they drive through - sun, snow, rain, mud, ice - the complete gambit.

We have new and exciting news for the new year; we have a new addition at the MAT office. We have hired Julianne Jahn as the Operations Administrator, and she will be working closely with Justin on all things. Please watch for her at the convention and introduce yourself and get to know her. Since both Justin and Julie live in Sault Ste. Marie, we have opened a satellite office there to help with their workload, cutting down a bit on travel. They still man our primary office in Newberry each week.

Our Annual Convention is in Sault Ste Marie this year. Please come and support us, our vendors and suppliers, who buy space to show their products. See the latest offerings out on the market and take some classes for your SFI Credits. We are always looking to bring you the latest and most up to date information possible. We truly appreciate our members and work hard for them.

We are looking forward to meeting all of you and helping promote the Forest Industry.

Vaughn West
MAT Board President



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Justin Knepper

Michigan Association of Timbermen

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Late winter is always a busy time for the Michigan Association of Timbermen, and this year is no exception. As we push through these final weeks of the season, our team is engaged in several key initiatives that are shaping the future of our industry.

First and foremost, we are deep into planning for our annual convention, now less than two months away. This event is always a highlight each year, bringing together industry professionals, partners, and stakeholders for valuable networking and discussions. Finalizing the agenda, securing speakers, and coordinating logistics are all in full swing as we prepare for another successful gathering.

Simultaneously, we are organizing our Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) continuing education courses. Many of these sessions are scheduled for the spring breakup period, providing valuable learning opportunities during this seasonal transition. This year, we're focusing on several key topics: maximizing hardwood grade, best practices in forest road construction and maintenance, and crucial safety insights from

log truck and forest equipment expert Jimmie Locklear of Forest/Loggers/Mauck Insurance Agencies.

On the political front, our Board of Directors has been highly engaged, making frequent trips to Lansing to meet with legislators and advocate for the timber industry. A special thanks goes to MAT Board Vice President Jim Maeder and our lobbyist, Jason Wadaga, for their dedication and efforts in ensuring our voice is heard at the state level.

Meanwhile, political activity at the national level is also gaining momentum. We are proud to have MAT board member Joe Doyle, our American Loggers Council representative, heading to Washington, D.C., next month for the DC fly-in. He will be joining forces with the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association and other Great Lakes area associations to meet with key national-level elected officials. These discussions are critical in shaping policies that impact our industry across the Country.

As always, we appreciate the hard work and dedication of our members, staff, and partners who help drive MAT forward. Your commitment ensures that our industry remains strong, sustainable, and well-represented. Stay tuned for more updates as we move into the busy months ahead.

Sincerely,
Justin Knepper- Executive Director, Michigan Association of Timbermen

MAT HIRES NEW OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATOR

Michigan Association of Timbermen Welcomes Julianne Jahn As New Operations Administrator



Julianne Jahn has recently joined the Michigan Association of Timbermen as our new Operations Administrator, focused on member support and service; office management; convention and event planning; book keeping; and many other daily tasks and projects to keep our office running smoothly.

Julianne, who goes by "Julie," comes to MAT with a plethora of experience in the customer service and financial management fields, with a background in sales and event planning as well. She grew up in between Manistique, Michigan and Las Vegas, where her father was a police officer for many years.

She now lives in Sault Ste. Marie and works with Executive Director Justin Knepper between MAT's new satellite office in Sault Ste. Marie and our primary office in Newberry. Julie is enjoying the job so far, focusing heavily on our April Timbermen's Convention planned for Kewadin Casino in Sault Ste. Marie. Please give her a warm welcome next time you see her!

Feel free to contact
Julie at:
(906) 293-3236
or
jjahn@timbermen.org.



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MAT was established in 1972 for the purpose of reducing costs and increasing profits of small forest industry businesses while ensuring a continued supply of timber. As a member you should enjoy all the benefits we have to offer. To join or renew, simply fill out the membership form at www.michigantimbermen.com/join and return to the MAT office. If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at 906.293.3236

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KIRBY WENDT - COMMITTED TO CUSTOMER CARE



A native of McMillan, MI, Kirby Wendt grew up in the Newberry area with connections to the forest products industry, as his grandfather worked as a logger. After graduating from Newberry High School, Kirby moved to Lansing and started his career in the banking sector. Eventually, he returned home to the Upper Peninsula, where he built a strong background in customer service management, working at various restaurants and businesses in the Newberry area.

In 2015, Kirby joined Forest Insurance, where he has excelled—helping customers navigate their insurance needs. Now a Commercial Lines Senior Account Manager, he takes pride in providing the best possible care to his insurance clients. From securing competitive rates to adjusting coverages for proper protection, Kirby ensures that customers have peace of mind when it comes to their policies. As he prepares to celebrate his 10-year anniversary in June 2025, his passion for serving his customers remains as strong as ever.

Outside of work, Kirby is a dedicated dog owner with three beloved pups—Nikki, Teddy, and Stanley. He's a summer enthusiast who enjoys boating whenever he gets the chance, though he's not a fan of the long U.P. winters.

ADAM UHLBECK - PRECISION AND PASSION IN INSURANCE



A Newberry, MI native, Adam Uhlbeck grew up around the trucking and road industries—his father was a log truck driver before spending his career with the Luce County Road Commission. After graduating from Newberry High School in 2000, Adam pursued a degree in Business Management from Northern Michigan University, which led him into retail management roles across Michigan, including Traverse City, Alpena, and Detroit.

Wanting to return home and be closer to family, Adam made the move back to Newberry and joined Forest Insurance Center, where he has built a reputation for thorough, detail-oriented service. Now a Senior Account Manager, he specializes in policy reviews, annual audits, and staying ahead of industry changes to ensure his customers have the best possible coverage. His passion for the finer points of insurance makes him a trusted advisor to the loggers and businesses he serves. In June 2025, Adam will celebrate 10 years with Forest Insurance, a milestone that reflects his dedication to the field.

Beyond work, Adam enjoys traveling and hiking. He also has a competitive edge—he's a tournament poker player, using his strategic mindset and skills whenever he gets the chance to compete.

ALESHA BUFFORD – A STEADY HAND IN INSURANCE



Born and raised in Newberry, MI, Alesha Bufford graduated from Newberry High School in 2015 with plans to pursue a career in nursing. She attended Mid Michigan Community College and later transferred to Grand Rapids Community College, working in assisted living before taking a role as an intake coordinator at the Butterworth Hospital Emergency Room in Grand Rapids. Her time in the ER exposed her to the fast-paced, high-pressure world of emergency medicine, where she handled emotionally and mentally demanding situations every day.

Alesha also worked in retail and customer service, gaining a wealth of experience in helping people through difficult situations. She realized that no matter the role, she excelled at working with people and bringing a sense of calm and clarity to stressful moments.

When her fiancé was offered a job as an arborist back in Newberry, they saw it as the perfect opportunity to return to the U.P. Alesha joined Forest Insurance Center as a Commercial Accounts Manager just a year ago, but she has already made a significant impact. She thrives in the ever-changing nature of the job, assisting customers with claims, coverage issues, and business policy adjustments—often in moments of stress or urgency. Her ability to bring reassurance and solutions to customers makes her a valuable member of the Forest team.

Outside of work, Alesha is passionate about the outdoors, wishing she had more time for hiking and snowshoeing. She and her fiancé enjoy spending much of their time with both sides of their extended family around Michigan.



Mauck Insurance Agency's Dale Kleffman Recognized For Community Contributions

Dale serves many Michigan and Wisconsin clients in the forest products industry, providing exceptional insurance options.

Dale is also active in school sports; he was recently recognized by the Wisconsin Athletic Directors Association as an individual who has made strong contributions within his community.

Here is the official announcement from the Wisconsin Athletic Directors Association:

"As many know, the state of Wisconsin and nation as a whole are seeing a shortage of officials for high school sporting events. Dale Kleffman has been instrumental in helping address this shortage. Dale, who officiates football, basketball, baseball, and softball at the middle school, JV, and varsity levels - has given up a lot of time to grow the number and abilities of our young officials. Dale has hosted umpire clinics, mentored and worked with new officials, and spoke with multiple sports teams to address rule changes and recruit new officials. On behalf of Northland Pines and the Wisconsin Athletic Directors Association, we thank you for your efforts in helping make sporting events possible for our students!"





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REMEMBERING MARY HARMON: A CHAMPION FOR MICHIGAN'S TIMBER INDUSTRY



Who's boss in the Harmon's two-person logging operation?
PHOTO: DIXIE FRANKLIN

Mary Harmon, a lifelong resident of Mikado, Michigan, left behind a legacy of dedication, hard work, and unwavering support for the state's timber industry. Born on January 18, 1949, to Robert and Genevieve Reames, Mary dedicated much of her life to forestry, community service, and education. Her passing on February 3rd, 2025 marks the loss of one of Michigan's great voices for responsible forest management and sustainable logging practices.

Mary and her husband, Charles "Chuck" Harmon Jr., married in 1966 and together built a life centered around their shared passion for the land. Their business ventures, Harmon Logging, Inc. and Harmony Acres, were testaments to their commitment to sustainable resource management. While Mary's background was in accounting, her hands-on work in the timber industry was just as vital. She worked side by side with her husband, running a feller buncher, driving a log truck for six years, and advocating for better industry conditions.

Mary's deep love for Michigan's forests was evident in her activism. As President of the Michigan Forest Resource Alliance (MFRA – now associated with the Michigan Forest Products Council), she worked tirelessly to promote responsible forestry practices, public education, and industry sustainability. She believed that loggers were the true stewards of the land, stating in an Alpena News article from August 8, 1992: "No one has a more viable concern for the future of our forests than loggers do" because of their vested interest in a healthy, well-managed forest.

Her passion extended beyond her work in the woods. Mary was a dedicated community leader, serving as a 4-H beef leader, a Cub Scout den mother, and a Mikado Township Supervisor. She also sat on the Alcona County Soil Conservation Board of Directors. When asked how she managed so many responsibilities, she once remarked, "I've never been bored in my life. If there's anything I could wish for, it would be more hours in the day."

Under Mary's leadership, the MFRA launched numerous educational initiatives to bridge the gap between the timber industry and the public. She stated in a 1992 interview with the Timber Producer magazine,

MARY HARMON

"We as the timber industry have to let the public know what we're doing and why."



MARY HARMON ACCEPTING THE LSTD FORESTRY ACTIVIST AWARD FROM CHAIRMAN KEMP FISHER

REMEMBERING MARY HARMON: CONTINUED

"I started with MFRA because I really believe we're getting a bad shake in the timber industry. The environmental movement is in vogue. The public and our school children are being told that cutting trees is terrible. I know that's wrong and I wasn't going to take it anymore."

As MFRA's president she understood the importance of fostering relationships and mutual understanding, saying, "We [the timber industry] have to let the public know what we're doing and why. We're not just presenting a one-sided story and we're not trying to push logging on anybody. Like medicine, we've come a long way and we've learned the proper management techniques."

Her outreach efforts were extensive, including:

- Organizing tours that brought over 900 people to logging sites and sawmills in Alcona County.
- Traveling to schools as far south as Farmington Hills to educate students about the timber industry.
- Working to create positive interactions with environmental groups to foster a better understanding of sustainable forestry.

Mary Harmon received numerous recognitions and participated in many official gatherings. Her awards include:

- The American Pulpwood Association Lake States Division "Forestry Activist Award"
- The Timber Producers of Michigan and Wisconsin "Award of Merit"
- The Michigan Forest Resource Alliance "Friend of Timbermen Award"

In her later years, Mary and Chuck enjoyed their well-earned retirement, tending to their gardens and relaxing on their deck overlooking their orchard and pond. Even in retirement, her passion for forestry and community never wavered.

The timber industry, the community of Mikado, and all who had the privilege of knowing Mary Harmon have lost an incredible leader, mentor, and friend. Her legacy lives on in the forests she worked to protect, the industry she helped shape, and the countless lives she touched through her tireless advocacy and relationships.



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TOPIC: TRUCKING COMPLIANCE, HIGHWAY SAFETY & LOGGING ROAD BEST PRACTICES

Date: April 3, 2025

Time: 8am-12pm

Location: **Baraga Lakeside Inn**

Address: 900 US-41, Baraga, MI

TOPIC: TARIFFS & TRADE, TRUCKING COMPLIANCE, MACHINERY TECH, FOREST PRODUCTS MARKETING

Date: April 25, 2025

Time: 10am-4pm

Location: **Timbermen's Convention at Kewadin Casino**

Address: 2186 Shunk Rd, Sault Ste. Marie, MI

TOPIC: MAXIMIZING HARDWOOD GRADE

Date: May 13, 2025

Time: 8am-12pm

Location: **Olson Sand, Gravel & Logging/Kretz Log Yard**

Address: W6536 US Highway 2, Quinnesec, MI

TOPIC: MAXIMIZING HARDWOOD GRADE

Date: May 15, 2025

Time: 8am-12pm

Location: **Timber Products**

Address: E11256 M-28, Munising, MI

TOPIC: MAXIMIZING HARDWOOD GRADE

Date: June 4, 2025

Time: 8am-12pm

Location: **Old Pine Tech Site/Maple Hardwoods Log Yard**

Address: 1560 W. Houghton Lake Road, Lake City, MI

TOPIC: TRUCKING COMPLIANCE, TRAILER MAINTENANCE, HIGHWAY SAFETY & LOGGING ROAD BEST PRACTICES

Date: June 5, 2025

Time: 8am-12pm

Location: **Team Wieland Truck & Trailer**

Address: 3165 Wolf Rd, Saginaw, MI

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TIMBER BUYERS DEMAND FIXES FOR ONGOING STATE TIMBER SALE PROBLEMS

Here at the Michigan Association of Timbermen, we're always working to improve the working connections between our timber buyers and our State and Federal timber sales representatives. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources recently hosted their annual Wood Producers Meetings – one in the Lower Peninsula and one in the Upper Peninsula – and received substantial feedback for the second year in a row on a multiplicity of issues.

The Lower Peninsula annual Timber Producers meeting was held at Kirtland Community College in Grayling, and industry concerns were brought to the forefront in a packed room of DNR staff, loggers and sawmill managers. Open discussions with DNR management highlighted ongoing frustrations with state timber sales and the regulatory burdens affecting Michigan's forestry sector.

Key concerns included:

- **DNR Staffing and Contract Processing:** Producers emphasized the need for more efficient processing of timber sale contracts, pointing to delays caused by understaffing.
- **Seasonal Restrictions:** Loggers face extreme challenges due to rigid cutting restrictions, particularly in the winter months exacerbated by shifting weather patterns. Multiple industry representatives voiced concerns regarding the DNR's methodology around Oak Wilt restrictions specifically, which are causing chaos on more and more timber sales.
- **Timber Cruising Discrepancies:** Many in attendance expressed frustration with the inconsistencies in DNR timber cruising, which create difficulties in bidding accurately. This has been an ongoing issue since the DNR adopted new cruising methods a few years ago. Timber buyers of all shapes and sizes, in all parts of the State, have reported anywhere from 10%-30% discrepancies in the number of cords estimated on DNR Timber Sale prospectuses. Timber buyers are finding themselves consistently shorted on these timber sales after harvesting.

- **Natural Pine Management:** Strong opposition has developed over the past few weeks following the meeting related to the DNR's proposed Natural Pine Management approach. Stakeholders had noted that ready-to-bid timber sales have been delayed for over two years, impacting the market and struggling softwood mills

A separate meeting at the Marquette Township Hall for Upper Peninsula timber producers echoed many of these concerns, with additional emphasis on the loss of producers—especially in the eastern UP—due to economic pressures and operational challenges.

Additional key issues raised in the UP meeting included:

- **Saw Log Definition Adjustments:** The DNR stated it is in the process of changing policy to raise the minimum saw log diameter from 10 inches to 11 inches, which could have significant implications for the industry and help with timber cruising estimates, primarily due to rapid taper of a 10" vs. 11" tree.
- **Excessive Sale Restrictions:** UP timber producers do not face the Oak Wilt restriction as heavily, but deal with onerous winter sale restrictions, archeological restrictions in certain areas, and multiple others. One producer humorously noted the difficulty of compliance by saying, "We have to hop three times on one foot on the third Tuesday in February" just to meet regulations.



Marquette Wood
Producers Meeting

TIMBER BUYERS DEMAND FIXES CONTINUED

Other topics were discussed regarding the economy in general, including:

- **Economic Pressures:** The cost of operations has skyrocketed over the last 25 years, yet many loggers are still being paid the same rates, making it increasingly difficult to sustain their businesses.
- **Trucking Shortages:** The lack of short-term trucking capacity is making it harder to move timber efficiently.

The overwhelming sentiment among timber producers is clear: reforms are needed to ensure the viability of Michigan’s logging and milling industry. The ongoing issues of contract processing delays, seasonal restrictions, and timber cruising inconsistencies continue to create instability for those who rely on state timber sales.

Producers & Stakeholders who wish to have their concerns relayed to the DNR are encouraged to contact Executive Director: Justin Knepper (906) 293-3236 or jnepper@timbermen.org



Grayling Wood Producers Meeting

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MAT SPEAKS OUT REGARDING SOLAR DEVELOPMENT ON PUBLIC LANDS

Newberry, Michigan For over 50 years, the Michigan Association of Timbermen has championed the importance of sustainable forest management. Michigan's forests are not only an economic engine but also a cornerstone of environmental health and community well-being. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources' recent proposal to lease 420 acres of public forestland (*now on hold*) in Otsego County's Hayes Township for a solar farm causes us to question whether State-owned land should ever be converted for such uses.

Renewable Energy at the Expense of Forests

The Michigan Association of Timbermen opposes the notion that "renewable" energy initiatives must come at the expense of productive forests. Studies, including those cited by Harvard University (Harvard Gazette, October 13, 2023), highlight the paradox of clearing forests for solar farms: the carbon sequestration benefits of forests often outweigh the emissions reductions achieved by solar panels on the same land.

Mismanagement of Public Resources

Public outrage has been swift. As reported by MLive, lawmakers and citizens alike have criticized the DNR for "selling out" to solar developers. The justification for the project—proximity to high-voltage transmission lines—fails to account for the broader economic and ecological costs. Michigan has ample non-forested lands, such as brownfields and abandoned agricultural properties, that could support solar farms without encroaching on valuable forestland.

While 420 acres may not seem like much compared to the DNR's annual forest management goals of over 40,000 acres, the move may result in the DNR getting a "taste" for revenues derived from the trending renewable energy industry, resulting in more forestland conversion over time. While the DNR may see it as a small effort to diversify its portfolio, if you will, the public sees it as the removal of public land from a multiplicity of uses; solar installations would prevent hunting, hiking, biking, bird watching, and other outdoor uses, not to mention sustainable logging.

A Threat to Timber Industry Stability

The Michigan Association of Timbermen believes the DNR's decision to lease forestland for solar development poses a future risk to Michigan's timber industry. Public lands play a critical role in maintaining the supply of timber necessary to sustain this \$26 billion sector. The area targeted for development includes red pine plantations—a key resource for lumber production—and removing these forests from production could lead to shortages, rising costs, and job losses.

Michigan's timber industry relies on careful forest management to ensure renewable, sustainable resources. Clear-cutting forestland for solar farms not only disrupts this balance but also endangers the livelihoods of loggers, mill workers, and rural communities that depend on the industry.

Protecting Michigan's Legacy

The Michigan Association of Timbermen urges the DNR to halt their efforts to diversify into solar installations and prioritize solutions that balance renewable energy goals with sustainable forest management.

Michigan's timber industry has thrived due to a commitment to responsible stewardship of natural resources. Deforesting public land for solar development jeopardizes this legacy, risking both economic stability and environmental health.

The Michigan Association of Timbermen calls on policymakers, industry stakeholders, and citizens to again prioritize sustainable forest management as one of the primary revenue generators for the Michigan DNR; and to encourage the State to make decisions that prioritize the careful harvesting of our trees, Michigan's renewable resource, for generations to come.

How can you get involved?

The Michigan DNR is accepting public comments regarding the Hayes Township solar development through April 30th, 2025 at 5:00pm. Please email your comments to: DNR-SolarProposal@michigan.gov or mail to: Michigan Department of Natural Resources ATTN: Solar Proposal P.O. Box 30028 Lansing, MI 48909



Example of a clear cut for solar development - photo credit/ CT Mirror

The Michigan Association of Timbermen's staff and lobbyist work to provide Michigan's forest industry effective representation with legislators and government officials on the local, state, and national level to favorably influence public policy and legislation. It's been a busy winter thus far!

EARNED SICK TIME ACT REQUIREMENTS

As you are aware, a long legal battle and Michigan Supreme Court decision from this summer set a February 21, 2025 deadline for the implementation of an Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA) in Michigan.

The act, amongst other provisions, would require:

- Employers of ANY size to offer 72 hours annually of paid sick leave to all employees
- The leave time to be accrued and not be "front-loaded"
- Be separate of current PTO policies
- The ability for 3 days of "no-call, no-show" for employees without retribution from the employer
- A rebuttal presumption against employers
- The ability for a "private right of action" against employers

The legislature went late into the night on February 20th to make changes to the ESTA law.



Jason Wadaga
MAT Lobbyist

NEW ESTA REQUIREMENTS

The legislature passed House Bill 4002 that will make the following changes to ESTA:

- Allow businesses of 10 or less employees to offer 40 hours of sick time as opposed to 72 hours
- A Small business can immediately give employees 40 hours of sick time and not have to track accrual time
- Businesses above 10 employees can front load 72 hours of paid sick immediately
- Excludes overtime, tips and bonuses from the rate employers need to pay employees
- Exempts interns and startup companies
- Sick leave can carry over but can't exceed 40 hours for a small business
- Sick leave can be banked with a PTO if already offered
- Eliminates the 3 day, "no-call, no-show" if the company has a detailed policy on calling in sick
- Allows employers to act against employees that use sick time but aren't sick

The legislature also passed changes to the looming minimum wage increase. Under the compromised legislation passed and signed by the Governor, the minimum wage will increase to \$15 an hour by 2027 with the rate increasing annually based on the rate of inflation.

MAT had gone on record in January of 2025 supporting the original version of House Bill 4002 that included other more business-friendly provisions including an outright exemption for employers with 50 employees or less.

Ultimately, some of the provisions including the exemption were taken out during negotiations.

The Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) will now be tasked with educating employers on the new law. You can view updates from the department at <https://www.michigan.gov/leo>



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE CONT.

MAT CONVENES WORK GROUP AT THE REQUEST OF SEN. JOHN CHERRY

In January, MAT was asked by Sen. John Cherry to organize a work group of like-minded interest groups to work on public policy to promote the growth of healthy, productive forests.

The attendees included:

- Sen. Ed McBroom
- Ruffed Grouse Society
- Kirtland's Warbler Alliance
- Michigan United Conservation Clubs
- Michigan Forest Association
- Michigan Biomass
- Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association
- Michigan Association of Timbermen
- Nature Conservancy



We discussed several items but most importantly to MAT was the creation of a “Industry Development Program” to financially assist loggers with loans and job retention. We also spent a great deal of time discussing the use of state forest land for solar siting.

MAT is very optimistic following the meeting that legislative action would be taken on some of our action items in 2025. We thank Sen. John Cherry and Rep. Ken Borton for their leadership.

30 X 30 LEGISLATION DIES IN LAME DUCK

Legislation that had the potential to drastically alter the way Michigan manages its land died during the abbreviated lame duck session in 2024.

Sen. Sue Shink (D-Ann Arbor) introduced Senate Bill 1124 that would have allowed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to coordinate state efforts and work toward voluntary conservation, restoration, and connection of six regional plans to create a legacy plan that conserved 30% of the state’s total land area of land and water by 2030.

The plan could have only been implemented if approved by the Senate and House committees with primary responsibility of conservation issues. The DNR would have also had to consider in the plan’s development public input, expert opinions, and the plan’s contribution to the environment and access to outdoor recreation.

MAT was actively engaged with the bill sponsor including hosting her at a timber harvest in November of 2023 in Grand Traverse County. While the legislation allowed the DNR to develop a plan, the details were lacking in what exactly that would look like.

The legislation failed to move through the Michigan Senate in 2024 but we fully anticipate that it will be reintroduced in 2025. MAT will continue our advocacy efforts on this policy ensuring that if the bill were to pass, it would include sound, scientific land management practices that do NOT interfere nor reduce timber harvests.





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HISTORY ACROSS MICHIGAN'S REGIONS



REGION 1: HENRY FORD'S HISTORIC ALBERTA SAWMILL

Nestled along a beautiful stretch of Highway 41 in Baraga County, Henry Ford's Historic Alberta Sawmill stands as a testament to the industrial ingenuity and ambition of the early 20th century. Established in 1936, the sawmill was part of Ford Motor Company's broader effort to secure raw materials for automobile production while also fostering a self-sustaining community. Ford had long been interested in vertical integration, ensuring his company controlled every aspect of production, from raw materials to finished vehicles. The Alberta Sawmill was a key piece of this vision.

Located near L'Anse, Michigan, the sawmill was designed to process and produce timber to be shipped to Ford's factories, where it was used for vehicle parts such as wood paneling, steering wheels, and station wagon bodies. The village of Alberta itself was constructed alongside the mill to house workers and their families, offering modern amenities like schools and recreation facilities, in line with Ford's broader vision of a model industrial community. Ford named his new town of Alberta after one of his other sawmill manager's daughters (The Ford Legend, Summer 2024 issue).



Photo Credit:
Baraga County Historical Society

Despite its efficiency and innovative approach, the sawmill's operations gradually declined as the demand for wooden automobile components decreased and new materials like steel and plastic took precedence. In 1954, Ford ceased operations at the Alberta Sawmill, marking the end of nearly two decades of production. However, instead of allowing the site to deteriorate, Ford Motor Company donated the mill and surrounding land to Michigan Technological University in 1954, ensuring its continued use for forestry education and research.

Michigan Technological University's College of Forest Resources and Environmental Science continue to use the property for educational purposes to this day; however, they ceased operating the sawmill in the 1970s. The Ford Motor Company donated funds to turn it into a museum in 1996 (The Ford Legend, Summer 2024 issue).

However, keeping Alberta and its sawmill museum open and operational in the remote western UP has proved to be a continual challenge. The sawmill needs new investment. As of this past year, efforts are underway to continue the stabilization and preservation of the sawmill. It is seen as the “last effort to rescue this unique, complete example of a sawmill town created personally by Henry Ford as a social experiment and demonstration site for advanced technology” (The Ford Legend, Summer 2024 issue).

One of our own MAT board members, Glen Toksdorf of Marquette, has been working hard to raise funds for the sawmill’s restoration. He serves on a volunteer board that oversees the effort.

You can also get involved by sending contributions to The Baraga County Historical Society. Mail to: PO Box 567, Baraga, MI 49908, with a memo for Ford Alberta Sawmill. For more information on the Historical Society, visit [www. Baragacountyhistoricalmuseum.com](http://www.Baragacountyhistoricalmuseum.com).

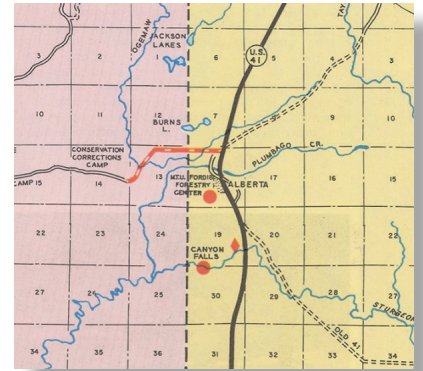


Photo Credit:
Baraga County Historical Society

David Holli Honored With Carl V. Pellonpaa Lifetime Achievement Award



The Michigan Association of Timbermen proudly congratulates long-time member Dave Holli on receiving the esteemed Carl V. Pellonpaa Lifetime Achievement Award. This honor, presented by TV6 in Marquette, recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to Upper Michigan through their professional and personal endeavors.

Holli is the founder of Holli Forest Products, a logging company in Ishpeming. He’s been tremendously active over the years in championing Michigan’s forest products industry, serving as a powerful voice on behalf of loggers across the State. He also has been active in his community; he served six years on the Ishpeming City Council and four terms as mayor.

Dave’s dedication to the timber industry and his unwavering commitment to our community exemplify the spirit of this award. His leadership and passion have not only advanced our industry but have also fostered growth and collaboration throughout the region.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Dave Holli for this well-deserved recognition and look forward to his continued contributions to the timber community.



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