

FEBRUARY 2023

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Official Newsletter of the Maine Forest Products Council



Message from the Executive Director

PAT STRAUCH

According to an analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics' American Time Use Survey, [the Washington Post](#) has found that agriculture, logging and forestry professions have the highest self-reported levels of happiness, and lowest reported levels of stress, of any major industry category. The study cracks this up to a fact that we all know a little too well – these professions all take place outside in nature, which is one of the happiest places you can be!

This study is encouraging, as opportunities to work in Maine's woods are abundant. In fact, according to research done by [FOR/Maine](#), the forest products industry will need to attract 5,000 new workers by 2030, largely due to Maine's aging workforce. Considering the number of workforce development bills in the pipeline this year, it is clear that the Legislature will be focused on addressing Maine's challenging workforce dynamics. This is great news. As an industry, we need to spread the word that opportunities in Maine's woods are abundant, and they're among the best jobs out there.

In other news, the [Bangor Daily News](#) recently reported about a new facility owned by Standard Biocarbon in Enfield that plans to be New England's first mass producer of biochar. This facility, which will be located on the same site as Pleasant River Lumber, will utilize chips, a byproduct of the sawmill operation, to create biochar, a charcoal-like substance that is useful for building soil and helping it retain water for longer while reducing the need for fertilizer. Biochar also sequesters carbon, and it is being researched as a [potential tool for Maine wild blueberry growers](#) to combat the effects of climate change on their crops. This plant, which will produce about 100 tons of biochar per month, is expected to be up and running as soon as April or May.

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Executive Director message (cont.)

The Maine Forest Products Council welcomes Standard Biocarbon to the state, and we wish them well as they bring a new forest-based product to consumers.

On a less positive note, just when you think we have reached a new level of collaboration in Maine, demonstrating to other regions the balance of public-private partnerships that make Maine unique, a coalition of 37 environmental groups have joined forces as the [Environmental Priorities Coalition](#) to promote seven bills they've identified as priority.

Considering that this group purportedly seeks to "secure the future of Maine's forests," it's troubling that our industry is not reflected in their coalition or positions. By working together, our industry has created some real benefits for the people of Maine including unparalleled recreational access, critical wildlife habitat, clean air and water, and important economic resources in some of the most rural corners of the state. Yet several proposals championed by this coalition seek to regulate and control the progress our industry has made without so much as a discussion with us.

The Council will participate in these debates in Augusta to hopefully interject some perspectives of reality into a group seemingly uninterested in recognizing the importance of collaboration and respect for private forestland and wood manufacturers.

Finally, Council had to make the tough decision to postpone our Legislative Breakfast Reception that was to take place on January 26 due to a winter storm. [This event has been rescheduled for March 9](#). Details are on the invitation included within this newsletter.

As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to either [myself](#) or [Krysta](#).

Pat

PS: I am pleased to announce that Stacy Bettencourt of Jefferson has accepted the position as our new office manager! Her first day will be February 21. We think she will be a great fit and look forward to formally introducing her in our next newsletter.

New Member Welcome



Please join us in welcoming Stillwater Environmental Engineering, Inc. to the Council.

Headquartered in Orono, Stillwater Environmental Engineering, Inc. provides a full range of civil and environmental engineering and regulatory compliance assistance to municipal, industrial and institutional entities.

To learn more, visit stillwaterenv.com.

Register now for MFPC/RLDAM Legislative Reception!

**THE MAINE FOREST PRODUCTS COUNCIL
AND
THE RETAIL LUMBER DEALERS
ASSOCIATION OF MAINE**

**INVITE YOU TO A LEGISLATIVE
BREAKFAST RECEPTION
&
PRESENTATION**



THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2023

**THE SENATOR INN AND SPA RESTAURANT
284 WESTERN AVE, AUGUSTA**

07:00 AM - 8:30 AM

RSVP: ADMINASSIST@MAINEFOREST.ORG



[CLICK HERE to Register](#)

presentation, we will discuss the issues of the day, which include carbon sequestration, wildlife management and recreation. You'll also have the opportunity to learn about lumber trends and cross laminated timber opportunities, along with other new and innovative building applications for wood.

ABOUT THE MAINE FOREST PRODUCTS COUNCIL:

Since 1961, the Maine Forest Products Council has been the voice of Maine's forest economy. MFPC represents the diverse needs of Maine's forest products community. Their members are landowners, loggers, truckers, paper mills, tree farmers, foresters and lumber processors, but they are also bankers, lawyers and insurance executives. They represent anyone who has an interest in seeing the Maine woods remain a viable, sustainable resource.

They serve their members by gathering information, bringing groups together to discuss concerns, hosting events, conducting tours and helping people find common ground. They represent members at the Maine Legislature, across the state, in Washington D.C. and across the nation.

ABOUT THE RETAIL LUMBER DEALERS ASSOCIATION OF MAINE:

The Retail Lumber Dealers Association of Maine was established in 1933 with the following purposes:

- To foster the mutual interests of those engaged in the retail lumber business, lumber products, building materials and building specialists in the state of Maine*
- To provide educational training and development for the owners, managers and employees of its members*
- To provide a strong unified voice for the lumber and building material industry before the state government in Augusta*
- To promote networking opportunities among members of this corporation*
- To promote a high standard of business ethics and industry stewardship*



Attention MFPC members:

Our Policy Committee will meet every Friday at 8:30 am during session to discuss legislation, determine positions and look to the weeks ahead. All members are welcome to join.

Email Sue at adminassist@maineforest.org to participate.

With the holiday season now behind us, the 131st Legislature is officially underway. Cloture, the last day for legislators to submit bill titles, was December 30. [The full list of 2,123 legislative requests \(LRs\) was released](#), giving us the first real preview of the session ahead. Of these 2,123 requests, we have identified 225, or just over 10 percent, that may have an impact on our industry this session. We will monitor these proposals as they progress, working with our Policy Committee to take positions as necessary.

There are many familiar topics included in these requests such as Tree Growth and Open Space tax laws, Sunday hunting, water use, energy costs and more. And while it can be difficult to determine what some bills seek to do without seeing language, there are a number of bills that are interesting at first glance, including a bill to promote the forest products industry, to support career and technical education and education in the trades, to support clean Maine-sourced bioenergy, to promote biomanufacturing and development, and to protect landowners and increase safety on ATV trails.

There are also several bills dealing with workforce, childcare and housing issues that will be at the forefront this session. These issues are all part of the broader discussion of what we can do as a state to attract and retain more young families and workers.

Governor Janet Mills has also unveiled her biennial budget proposal, which includes \$400 million for the Department of Transportation to repair infrastructure. This unprecedented level of funding will potentially leverage up to \$1 billion in federal funds to invest Maine’s multimodal infrastructure system.

Once language is drafted for Legislative Requests, they are assigned a Legislative Document number, which will follow the bill through the rest of the legislative process. [The full list of LDs can be found here](#). This list is updated daily with new LDs.

If you are a member and you would like to participate in our weekly Policy Committee calls to discuss these bills as they progress, email Sue at adminassist@maineforest.org. Otherwise, look out for our weekly Legislative Update emails in your inbox. We also plan to include our positions, testimony, resources and information under the “[Legislative Action](#)” section of our website.

State of Maine Legislative Bus Tour

Thanks to the sixty legislators who participated in the Maine Development Foundation bus tour, and to Woodland Pulp, St. Croix Tissue, Inc. and St. Croix Chipping for the opportunity to present during lunch. It's always a privilege to speak with legislators about the future of our industry. Below is an excellent writeup about the day provided by St. Croix Tissue, Inc.



On this snowy Maine morning, a group of over sixty Maine State Legislators arrived at our facility to learn about our business, how we are innovating for the future, and tour our tissue mill. The group spent January 18-20 on the 131st Maine Legislature on a bus tour to Eastern Maine, ending their visits at our facility. The bus tour is a fun and educational biennial offering of the Policy Leaders Academy that gives legislators the opportunity to interact directly with businesses, nonprofits, and community leaders in the region. The Policy Leaders Academy has been a non-partisan educational program of the Maine Development Foundation for Maine Legislators on the Maine economy since 1985.

On the three-day tour participants were able to see and hear about the challenges specific to rural Maine and how collaboration across sectors and organizations creates opportunities. Some of the stops on this year's tour included the University of Maine, The Jackson Laboratory, Downeast Institute, Machias Savings Bank, Indian Township, Woodland Pulp, St Croix Chipping & St. Croix Tissue. We were thankful for the opportunity to educate our legislators on the factors that are essential for driving our long-term growth, how our business operates and functions in our rural community and some of the issues facing both our facility and industry. Legislators attended an informational presentation from mill management that was coupled with a presentation from executive director of the Maine Forest Products Council, Patrick Strauch. Along with the presentation and question/answer session, the group was provided lunch and a tour of our tissue mill.

St Croix Tissue is a state-of-the-art tissue paper manufacturing company in Baileyville, Maine. The facility produces a full range of products for the growing national and international tissue markets, including paper napkins, paper towels, bathroom tissue and facial tissue with two new machine lines that were completed in 2016. St Croix Tissue has a manufacturing capacity of 120,000 tons of tissue per year. Its sister mills, Woodland Pulp & St Croix Chipping have a longstanding history at this site and are owned by the same parent company. St. Croix Chipping is a state-of-the-art chip mill controlled by modern day PLC controls. The mill chips 85 to 100 loads of tree length wood every day that are used by Woodland Pulp. In turn, the pulp mill produces St. Croix Hardwood, a premium Northern ECF bleached Kraft pulp manufactured using hardwood chips from Maine and New Brunswick, Canada with an annual capacity of 400,000 tons. This pulp is sold to paper makers all over the world and St. Croix Tissue consumes a portion of this pulp. Combined, the three mills are the largest employer in Washington County.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service extends effective date to reclassify northern long-eared bat as endangered

THE COUNCIL IS MONITORING THIS ISSUE CLOSELY. A BRIEF COMMENT PERIOD ON THE GUIDELINES IS EXPECTED BEFORE THEY ARE FINALIZED.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is delaying the effective date of the final rule to reclassify the northern long-eared bat from threatened to endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The agency is extending the effective date by 60 days, from Jan. 30, 2023, to March 31, 2023.

The extension will allow the Service to finalize conservation tools and guidance to avoid confusion and disruption for landowners, federal partners and industry with projects occurring in suitable habitats within the northern long-eared bat's 37-state range.

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The Service remains committed to working proactively with stakeholders to conserve and recover northern long-eared bats while reducing impacts to landowners, where possible and practicable. We recognize reclassification of the northern long-eared bat has resulted in questions and concerns regarding compliance under the Endangered Species Act for timber harvest, habitat management, development and other projects. A delay in the effective date provides stakeholders time to preview newly developed guidance and management tools before the rule goes into effect.

The rule reclassifying the northern long-eared bat from threatened to endangered was published in the Federal Register Nov. 30, 2022; the bat remains protected as a threatened species with a 4(d) rule until the reclassification becomes effective on March 31. The northern long-eared bat was listed as threatened in 2015. It now faces extinction due to the range-wide impacts of white-nose syndrome, a deadly disease affecting hibernating bats across North America.

To assist forestry, wind energy, infrastructure and other project managers in the range of the northern long-eared bat, the Service is developing a suite of tools to provide guidance and to streamline processes for projects under the Endangered Species Act. We intend to provide these tools in early March. Once available, users can preview the tools through the agency's northern long-eared bat website.

The Service is not accepting public comment on the extension. A Federal Register notice extending the effective date of the final reclassification for the northern long-eared bat will publish on Jan. 26, 2023 under Docket No. FWS-R3-ES-2021-0140.



University of Maine's Graduate School of Business: We need your help to better understand the brand of our state and how it resonates with Maine business leaders!

The University of Maine's Graduate School of Business, in partnership with MaineBiz and the Catherine Cutler Institute, is conducting research on whether the Maine brand confers a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Led by researchers Caroline Paras, Ph.D. Candidate, Erin Percival Carter, Marketing Professor, and Norm O'Reilly, Dean of the Graduate School of Business, the study's results will be broadly and freely shared with an aim to inform industry about how the Maine brand affects key business decisions.

Please [click here](#) to learn more about the study and to participate in the survey. For more information, please contact Norm O'Reilly at norman.oreilly@maine.edu.

MFS: Skidder Bridge Loan Program Survey

The Maine Forest Service (MFS) skidder bridge loan program provides steel and wooden skidder bridges to the logging community at various locations statewide. Please follow the link below to share your thoughts on the existing program to help the MFS make better informed decisions on enhancing and/or expanding this program to better serve Maine's forest products industry.

There is currently an opportunity to enhance and/or expand the skidder bridge loan program using federal funds from the Inflation Reduction Act legislation which would allow MFS to replace wooden bridges with steel, and/or purchase additional bridges to service new locations around the state. Funds may also be used to administer a cost share program, where qualified participants could purchase skidder bridge panels out-right at a reduced cost. We are eager to hear from the forestry community about how these funds should be best utilized. [Please take the survey by March 1, 2023.](#)

Industry in the News



[FOREST INDUSTRY SEEKS SOLUTIONS AS CLIMATE WARMS](#)



[NEW WOOD PRODUCT COULD ALLOW ASHLAND TO REOPEN MILL](#)



[MAINE FACILITY PLANS TO BE 1ST IN NEW ENGLAND TO MASS PRODUCE BIOCHAR](#)



[MAINE INDUSTRY EXPERTS DISCUSS THE 'ECONOMICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE'](#)



[ANALYSIS: THE HAPPIEST, LEAST STRESSFUL, MOST MEANINGFUL JOBS IN AMERICA](#)

MFPC Regulatory Calendar

Issue/project	Agency	Website	Comment period deadline
RFP for the sale of energy, capacity, or renewable energy credits from qualifying heat and power projects pertaining to Versant Power and CMP	Maine PUC	https://mpuc-cms.maine.gov/CQM.Public.WebUI/Common/CaseMaster.aspx?CaseNumber=2022-00342	Ongoing
Extended Producer Responsibility Program for Packaging	Maine DEP	https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MEDEP/bulletins/32efa46	Ongoing
PFAS in Products	Maine DEP	https://www.maine.gov/dep/spills/topics/pfas/PFAS-products/index.html#:~:text=A%20retailer%20may%20not%20sell,products%20containing%20intentionally%20added%20PFAS	Ongoing

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