THE MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF TIMBERMEN

SEPTEMBER 2026

TIMBER TALK

Dedicated to Represe[illegible] the Needs of Small Businesses in the Forest Products Industry



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MAT Launches Timbermen's Relief Fund

Michigan Loggers Celebrate the 250th

AMERICA 250

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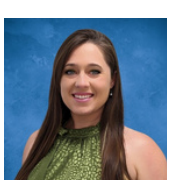
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This edition of Timber Talk is designed by Mallory Ozzello, co-owner and forwarder operator with Northwoods Harvesting of Cheboygan, MI.

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF TIMBERMEN
Stewards of Michigan's Forest Resources
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SEPTEMBER 2026 | SUMMER ED.



PRESIDENT
Bob Bazuin with wife Kourtney

A MESSAGE FROM BOARD PRESIDENT – BOB BAZUIN

Hi everyone,

I want to extend a huge thank you to all the sponsors, exhibitors, and Timbermen members who attended the Forest Product Show. The positive energy and vibe throughout the event made it a major success for everyone involved.

I also want to thank all the volunteers who helped put the kids' area together. It was wonderful to see the children having such a great time while networking was underway. Thank you all for your support and participation.

Best regards,

Robert Bazuin

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OUR MISSION:

The Michigan Association of Timbermen is dedicated to the practice of sustainable forestry, which provides the goods and services we demand without compromising the opportunity to provide the same goods and services for future generations.

STAFF

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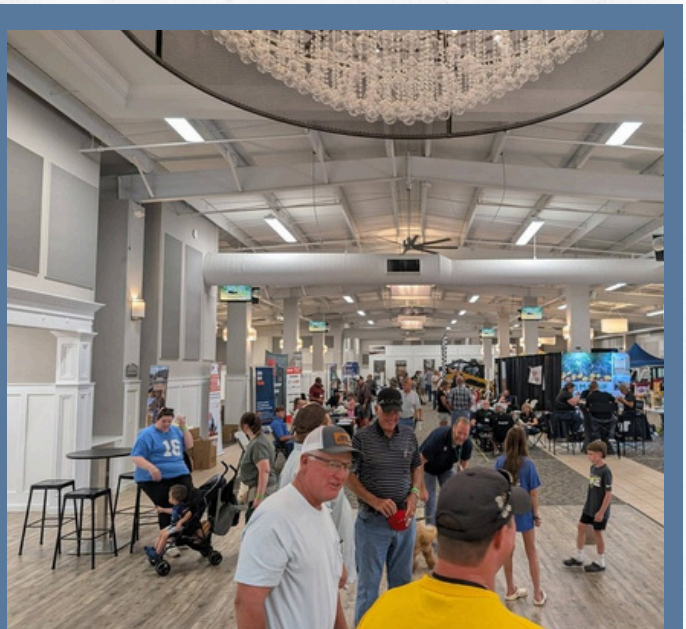
Danielle Murdock, Operations Administrator
dmurdock@timbermen.org | Phone: (906)293-3236



EXECUTIVE Director's Report

A Strong Showing at the 2026 Michigan Forest Products Show

The 2026 Michigan Forest Products Show is officially in the books! The Timbermen's Board of Directors, myself and our Operations Administrator Danielle Murdock spent the last few months working hard to bring the Forest Products Show back to Michigan for the second time in history. 2024 was our inaugural show, and we worked to build on our original momentum.



Attendees enjoy the 2026 Forest Products Show

Michigan now has a major expo every year, with our Forest Products Show happening in Gaylord during the even years, and GLTPA's Logging & Heavy Equipment Expo taking place in Escanaba in the odd years. It's very impactful to have major events like this, bouncing between the northern lower and central upper peninsulas.

Back to the 2026 Michigan Forest Products Show: I want to thank everyone who helped make it such a success. From our exhibitors and sponsors to the volunteers, staff, vendors and attendees, this event truly demonstrated the strength and diversity of Michigan's forest products industry. Seeing the equipment, technology, products and people that make this industry work all in one place was a great reminder of what we represent as an association.

We had a tremendous group of of more than 120 indoor and outdoor exhibitors and welcomed nearly 1,000 people throughout the two-day event. The lumberjack show, equipment displays, demonstrations, vendors and family activities gave attendees plenty to see and do, but perhaps most importantly, the show created opportunities for people in our industry to connect. Conversations between loggers, landowners, manufacturers, suppliers, dealers and other forest professionals are exactly what events like this are meant to foster.

Of course, an event of this size doesn't happen without a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes. I am especially grateful to our volunteers and staff who spent countless hours setting up, directing traffic, moving tables and equipment, installing signs and banners, assisting exhibitors, and solving the inevitable last-minute problems that come with putting on a major event. Our sponsors also deserve special recognition for investing in the show and in the future of Michigan's forest products industry.

As we look ahead, we will be taking what we learned from this year's show and using it to make the next one even better. There is tremendous potential for the Michigan Forest Products Show to continue growing into a premier gathering for our industry. Thank you to everyone who attended, participated, sponsored, volunteered or simply stopped by to support the event. It was a great weekend for the Michigan Association of Timbermen, and more importantly, it was a great weekend for Michigan's forest products industry. We'll see you at the GLTPA's Logging & Heavy Equipment Expo in Escanaba in 2027, and then back in Gaylord in 2028 for the next Michigan Forest Products Show!

GLEN TOLKSDORF Steps Down After 13 YEARS OF SERVICE



MAT board member Brian Nelson (left) presents appreciation plaque to Glen Tolksdorf (right), August 2026.

After 13 years of service representing Region 1 on the Michigan Association of Timbermen Board of Directors, Glen Tolksdorf has stepped down from the MAT Board.

Throughout his time with MAT, Glen has been much more than a board member. He has consistently volunteered his time and expertise to support the association and the forest industry. Glen has helped with MAT's SFI continuing education courses over the years, including teaching and presenting on behalf of the association. He has also represented MAT at student career days, helping introduce young people to forestry and the many career opportunities available in the forest products industry.

He has regularly volunteered at MAT events and activities and has been willing to lend a hand whenever needed. At the board level, Glen brought a thoughtful perspective, strong forestry knowledge and practical experience to discussions and decisions. His insight and participation—and his willingness to cast a vote when important issues came before the board—helped MAT navigate the many challenges facing Michigan's timber industry.

Glen's 13 years of service represent a significant commitment to MAT and its members. His willingness to volunteer, teach, represent the association and share his knowledge has made him a valuable part of the organization.

The Michigan Association of Timbermen sincerely thanks Glen for his many years of service, both on the board and beyond it. His contributions to MAT, forestry education and Michigan's forest industry are greatly appreciated.

Thank you, Glen, for 13 years of dedicated service to the Michigan Association of Timbermen!

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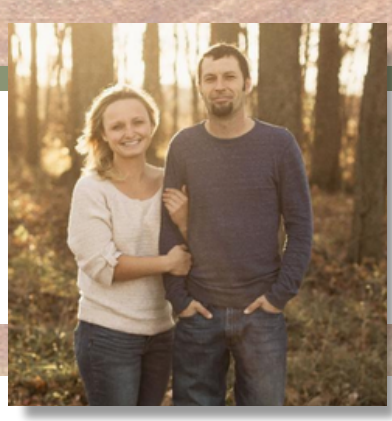
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October 13	**Felch Community Center** 4243 M-69 Felch, MI 49831
October 20	**LP – Newberry** 7299 Co. Road 403 Newberry, MI 49868



A MILLION BOARD FEET
ON FORTY ACRES

The Story Of
Alger County's Kingston Plains



Submitted by Bruce Veneberg, owner of Veneberg Forestry

*Bruce Veneberg has spent nearly **six decades** working in Michigan's forests. After graduating from Michigan State University with a degree in forestry in 1967, Bruce began his career with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources that same year, starting in Newberry. He spent roughly **30 years with the DNR**, including more than two decades managing the Shingleton Forest Area. Bruce retired from the DNR in 1997, but retirement did not take him out of the woods. He began a forestry consulting business in Munising, which he continues to operate today.*



"As I look back on my years, I am thankful for the time I have had working in the woods and for all the people I have met along the way."
— Bruce Veneberg

In January of 1974, I was working for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and I was promoted and transferred to the Shingleton Forest Area. The area consisted of about **360,000 acres of mostly tax-reverted properties in Alger and Schoolcraft counties.**

An interesting part of the forest in Alger County was **the Kingston Plains**. The Kingston Plains contains about 9,000 acres of cut-over white pine which was harvested from 1894 to 1909. This cutting of white pine occurred throughout Michigan and is often referred to as **the White Pine Era.** Those lands lying in T49N - R15W, Sections 9, 16 and 21 containing 1,920 acres were dedicated by the DNR as a "stump preserve" in the late 1940's. The remaining portions of the Kingston were divided between reforestation efforts and wildlife habitat.



The Kingston name came from the White Pine Era. In the period from 1870-1890, white pine was being selectively harvested and loggers were cutting some of the best quality pine logs. Some of these logs were squared with axes out in the woods after they were felled and then shipped through the Great Lakes to the eastern side of Lake Ontario to the headwaters of the St. Lawrence River to a town known as Kingston, Ontario – hence the Kingston name. These squared logs were then shipped down the St. Lawrence to the Atlantic Ocean and on to England where they were eventually sawn for lumber or used as ship masts. The square timber process was an inefficient and wasteful method of

harvesting. One squared timber firm was noted as having produced 200,000 board feet but was wasting 600,000 feet of lesser quality logs, leaving the unused portions to rot in the woods. Squared timber operations ranged from Whitefish Bay to Grand Island.

Initially, the Kingston Plains was too far inland for the logs to be hauled to Lake Superior. The nearest river point on the Fox River suitable for a log drive was over six miles away, and that river flowed southerly to Lake Michigan at Manistique. As a result, the area of pine that would eventually become the Kingston Plains remained uncut until the coming of a railroad. In 1893, Russell Alger built the Manistique Railroad from Seney to Grand Marais. This allowed access to the Kingston area, and the pine was quickly harvested.

As a forester, I have often thought about the first timber cruisers (or landlookers as they were called) in the White Pine Era and their timber cruise volume estimates. For instance, it has been recorded that a good **40 acres of pine at that time could contain a million board feet of white pine**. Nothing like that exists today. It occurred to me that it might be possible to estimate the former volume per acre of the Kingston Plains by gathering data from the original landsurvey notes in which tree diameters were recorded in the 1840's and by counting the preserved stumps that still exist there on the plains.

I made a trip to the Kingston plains and tallied the stumps in a 66-foot wide strip for about 1,120 feet long the west line of Section 16. Pine era landlookers often used the 66-foot wide strip system to estimate timber volumes. Using the 55 trees



Figure 1.—Burned over outwash plain south of Kingston Lake. T. 48 N., R. 15 W.

The cutting began in **1894 and ended in 1909**, at which time the Marais Lumber Company owned by Russell Alger and Martin Smith **closed their Grand Marais mill**. The clearcut pine areas were full of dry pine limbs and tops, and they repeatedly burned which resulted in degraded soil productivity that keeps areas open and treeless to this day.

The large white pine stumps were charred but the resin within the stumps preserved them and the stumps are still visible. The stumps continue to rot away except for the outer fringes of what was primarily pitchy sapwood. An early morning or late evening visit to this stump graveyard provides an eerie idea of what this place once was.

I tallied and the acreage of the strip I tallied them on, my random sample told me an acre would have 32 white pine trees.

The original land survey notes from that area indicated that the white pine **averaged 27 inches** in diameter at breast height. It was routine for the loggers of that day to cut four **16' logs out of one tree**. Using a volume of 780 board feet Scribner Decimal C log rule for a tree that size and height indicates a volume of 24,960 board feet per acre and **a volume of 998,400 board feet on a 40 acre parcel** – almost exactly the landlooker's volume estimate of a "good" 40 of pine.

Cutting still occurs in and around the Kingston Plains, but pine volumes do not approach the original amounts, and it is likely they never will.

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FOREST TO MI FAUCET

Grant Opens Door to Loggers Below the 43rd Parallel



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The Michigan Association of Timbermen is expanding its outreach to loggers, millers, and other forest industry businesses in southern Michigan through a grant agreement with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources as part of the **Forest to MI Faucet – Lower Great Lakes program.**

The grant, administered through the DNR's Forest Resources Division, provided approximately $25,000 **federal funding to the Michigan Association of Timbermen**, to support our association's outreach efforts. The project period runs from October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026.

At the heart of MAT's role in the project is a straightforward goal: recruit 25 loggers who harvest wood below the 43rd parallel to become members of the Michigan Association of Timbermen.

What is the 43rd Parallel?

The 43rd parallel is a line of latitude that crosses Michigan from west to east, roughly through the central portion of the Lower Peninsula. For purposes of this project, the area **south of the 43rd parallel** represents a significant portion of Michigan's southern Lower Peninsula and includes many communities and forest operations that have historically had less direct interaction with MAT. Critically, nearly 80% of Michigan's population lives below the 43rd parallel.

For MAT, this grant provides an opportunity to intentionally reach beyond its traditional membership base and introduce the Association to loggers, landowners and other forest professionals in southern Michigan.

Connecting Forest Management to Clean Drinking Water

Forest to MI Faucet is a program of the DNR that is built around the idea that healthy, well-managed forests can play an important role in protecting drinking water resources.

The DNR grant identifies several objectives related to forest management and source-water protection, including helping natural resource professionals and landowners understand the connections between **drinking water and forest management or protection**.

MAT's participation gives the logging industry a direct voice in that conversation. Professional timber harvesting and responsible forest management are important components of Michigan's forest economy. By connecting loggers with information about forest stewardship, water quality and available conservation programs, the project can help demonstrate how active forest management and source-water protection can work together.

More Than Recruiting Members - An Opportunity for MAT

Although recruiting 25 new MAT members is a specific deliverable of the grant, the project is broader than membership recruitment. For the Michigan Association of Timbermen, the project represents an opportunity to expand the Association's presence in parts of the state where there are active forest products businesses and private forest landowners, but where MAT membership may be less established.

The Association will use the project to make connections with loggers who may not currently be members, introduce them to the resources and advocacy MAT provides, and demonstrate the value of having a statewide organization representing Michigan's timber industry.

The grant also calls for MAT to help encourage policymakers and government agencies to invest in source-water protection and to help forest landowners access available programs and funding.

This fits well with MAT's broader mission of advocating for Michigan's timber industry while promoting responsible forest management and a strong future for the state's forest products economy.

Building Relationships Across Michigan

One of the most important outcomes of the Forest to MI Faucet project may ultimately be the relationships developed through the outreach.

Reaching 25 new loggers is a measurable grant requirement, but the larger goal is to establish lasting connections between MAT and the forest products community in southern Michigan. MAT already serves more than 30 current members in southern Michigan, and we've been connecting our long-standing members with new members that are joining through our grant-funded outreach efforts. These growing relationships with our long-time members and newcomers can help the Association better understand the challenges facing loggers and landowners across the entire state and ensure that the industry's voice is represented wherever decisions affecting forest management are being made.

The Forest to MI Faucet grant gives MAT another opportunity to demonstrate that the Association represents **Michigan's entire timber industry—from the northern forests of the Upper Peninsula to the woodlands of southern Michigan.**

As the project continues through September 2026 and beyond, MAT will be working to build those connections, welcome new members and help demonstrate the important relationship between healthy forests, responsible management, Michigan's forest products industry and clean drinking water.





TIMBERMEN'S RELIEF FUND

Standing With Michigan Logging Families When They Need It Most

A new Michigan Association of Timbermen initiative will provide immediate financial assistance to logging families facing the devastating effects of a workplace death, severe injury or extreme illness.

Logging is a demanding profession, and everyone who works in the woods understands the risks that come with it. Despite improvements in equipment, training, and safety practices, accidents can and do happen—and when they do, the consequences reach far beyond the individual worker. A serious logging accident can change a family's life in a matter of minutes, leaving them to face medical expenses, travel for treatment, lost income, household bills, or funeral costs, all while coping with profound physical and emotional loss. The Michigan Association of Timbermen believes that no logging family should have to face that moment alone. That is why MAT is launching the Michigan Association of Timbermen Logging Family Relief Fund, known as the Timbermen's Relief Fund: Supporting Logging Families in Crisis.

Born From Loss, Built by Community

The Timbermen's Relief Fund was sparked by profound loss and community solidarity. On May 14, 2025, a young man named Jonathan Matych, age 38, passed away unexpectedly and without pain in a workplace accident. Jon, who owned Green Man Tree Care, was working alongside a Timbermen's member, Sand Lake–based Lumberjack Logging when the tragedy occurred. Jon was at the base of a large hill in lower west Michigan. Without warning, a dead tree fell from atop the hill striking Jon on the back of his neck. He passed immediately and without pain.

Jon *(Pictured below)* was fiercely passionate about trees and arboriculture, but above all else, he lived for his family. He left behind his wife, Zoë, and their three young children—Dylan, Paloma, and Griffin.

In the wake of Jon's passing, the owner of Lumberjack Logging approached the Michigan Association of Timbermen to ask how the industry could help support families facing sudden, severe loss. Coordinating with Jason McLaren of Forest / Loggers / Mauck Insurance Agencies, key conversations were spearheaded to establish a formal, lasting safety net for Michigan logging and tree care families in crisis.



Remembering Jon Matych



Helping When Help Is Needed Immediately

Under the program, eligible families may receive monetary support, depending on the circumstances and available funds. Awards are evaluated by a Relief Fund Committee composed of MAT Board members or appointed representatives.

The fund is intentionally designed to address immediate needs following a severe workplace incident, including:

- Funeral, memorial, or celebration of life costs
- Mortgage, rent, utility payments, and groceries
- Medical bills not covered by insurance or workers' compensation
- Travel expenses associated with specialized medical care
- Emergency childcare during hospitalization

These grants are not intended to replace workers' compensation or long-term insurance; rather, the Timbermen's Relief Fund acts as a bridge, delivering critical assistance into a family's hands quickly while longer-term support is arranged.

Eligibility & How the Program Works

The program is open to Michigan workers actively employed in the logging, tree care, or timber-related industry who experience a workplace accident resulting in death or severe injury requiring hospitalization or causing disability.

- **Timeline:** The incident must generally have occurred within the previous 60 days.
- **Applicants:** Applications may be submitted by the injured worker (if physically able)or by a spouse, parent, legal guardian, or dependent family member.
- **Review Process:** Applicants provide basic personal details, employer confirmation, a description of the incident and a summary of financial need. The committee will work to make decisions within 10 business days, with funds disbursed directly by check.
- **Resource Connections:** Beyond direct financial aid, MAT works to connect affected families with additional support, including grief counseling, workers' compensation navigation, and community resources

Building the Fund for the Future

The launch of the Timbermen's Relief Fund is only the beginning. Building a lasting resource depends on the entire forest products community—including equipment dealers, timber buyers, insurance partners, sawmills, and individual supporters.

Funding will be driven through seed support, corporate sponsorships, tax-deductible contributions, and fundraising activities such as silent auctions, raffles, and events tied to the annual MAT Convention. Annual reporting on fund usage will be provided to the MAT Board, maintaining full transparency while keeping individual family applications strictly confidential.

A Community Effort

The Timbermen's Relief Fund belongs to the entire Michigan timber and tree care community. MAT administers the program, but its true strength comes from the people and businesses who stand behind it. When a family faces an unimaginable loss, this fund ensures that the industry they gave so much to is ready to stand beside them.



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4TH OF JULY

MICHIGAN LOGGERS *Celebrate*

AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY

As the USA celebrates its 250th anniversary, we are reminded of the people, communities, and industries that have helped build this country—and continue to keep it strong.

For generations, Michigan's timbermen and forest products professionals have played an important role in that story. From providing the wood that builds our homes and businesses to supporting rural communities and good-paying jobs, our members are part of an industry deeply rooted in the history and future of America.

This year, we're proud to celebrate that heritage with our members who took part in local Independence Day and community parades across Michigan. These photos depict more than trucks, equipment, and businesses—they showcase the people who make up Michigan's forest products industry and the communities they proudly call home.

As we look back on 250 years of American independence, we also look ahead with pride and confidence in the future of Michigan forestry.



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Happy 250th, America—and thank you to the men and women of Michigan's forest products industry who continue to be part of the American story.



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2026 MICHIGAN FOREST PRODUCTS SHOW
GAYLORD, MICHIGAN



Forest Loggers Mauck Insurance Agencies



MATSIF

Michigan Forest Products Show Returns to Gaylord for a Successful Second Event

The Michigan Association of Timbermen (MAT) was proud to bring the Michigan Forest Products Show back to Gaylord, Michigan, August 7-8, 2026, for the second edition of what has quickly become an important gathering for Michigan's forest products industry.

Following the success of the inaugural show in 2024, the 2026 Michigan Forest Products Show continued to demonstrate the strength, diversity and resilience of Michigan's forest products sector. The two-day event brought together equipment manufacturers, dealers, suppliers, logging contractors, sawmills, forestry professionals and industry supporters from across Michigan and beyond.

Nearly 1,000 people attended the 2026 event, milling through The Ellison Place and the surrounding outdoor display areas throughout the two days. Attendees had the opportunity to see a wide variety of logging, trucking, sawmill, forestry and wood-processing equipment, along



Ponsse



AIS Forestry Division

with the latest products, services and technologies serving Michigan's forest products industry. While overall attendance was lower than what organizers had hoped, the people that did attend were "the right people" – decision makers, business owners, and industry experts.

The Show once again offered something for the entire family, with equipment demonstrations, exhibitors, food, merchandise and entertainment helping make the event more than simply a trade show. Special events included a "Little Logger's Camp" and kid's zone, hosted by Jen Philipp and her husband with local logging company PINECO of Vanderbilt; the Lumberjacks & Jills Competition, hosted by Jill Brehdal and her family at Woodstar Forestry of Manton; and then a new forwarder competition, hosted by AIS Forestry Division.

"Coming back to Gaylord for the second Michigan Forest Products Show was rewarding for the Michigan Association of Timbermen" said Executive Director Justin Knepper. "The turnout demonstrated that there is a real need for an event that brings together the many different parts of Michigan's forest products industry. More importantly, it demonstrated the pride, commitment and resilience of the people who make up this industry."



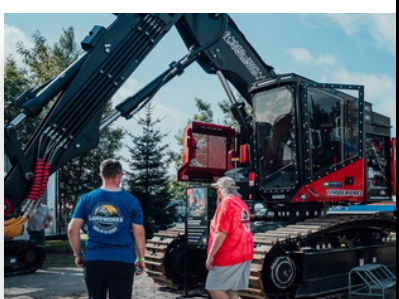
Northern Energy

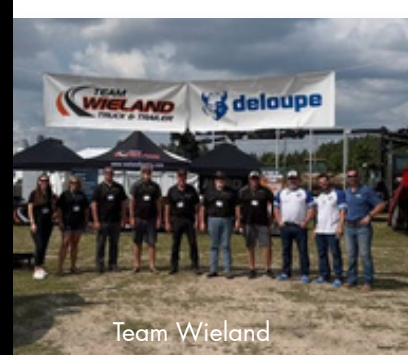




Bark River Machine







Team Wieland





CrossTrac Equipment



Knepper also expressed his appreciation to the many sponsors, exhibitors, board members, staff, volunteers, MAT members and community supporters who helped make the 2026 Show possible."

An event of this size simply does not happen without a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes," Knepper said. "Our MAT board members, staff, volunteers, exhibitors and sponsors all played an important role, from the months of preparation leading up to the Show through setup, the event itself and cleanup. We are extremely grateful to everyone who gave their time, equipment, resources and support."









Spencer Park - first place winner

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT: AIS FORESTRY DIVISION HOSTS FIRST JOHN DEERE FORWARDER CONTEST

AIS Forestry Division brought a new test of skill and speed to the 2026 Michigan Forest Products Show in Gaylord, hosting its first-ever John Deere Forwarder Contest during the August 7–8 event.

More than **20 experienced forwarder operators** stepped up to the challenge, putting their skills behind the controls and giving it their best shot at completing the loading and unloading course in the fastest time possible. The contest drew plenty of attention from show attendees, who had the opportunity to watch experienced operators demonstrate the precision, speed and coordination required to efficiently move timber in a modern logging operation.

AIS Forestry Sales Rep, Vaughn West said the contest was a great way to showcase the skills of Michigan's logging professionals, while demonstrating the boom follow and the IBC features of the forwarder.

"We wanted to give forwarder operators a chance to come out, have some fun and show what they can do. These guys operate this equipment every day, and the skill it takes to move wood quickly and efficiently is pretty impressive."

The competition continued throughout the show, with operators working to shave seconds off their times and claim the top spot. In addition to bragging rights, the winner received a STIHL MSA 220 C-B battery-powered chainsaw.

AIS Forestry congratulates **Spencer Park** (with Park Forest Products in Manton) on taking first place and thanks all of the operators who participated. The strong turnout demonstrated the enthusiasm and talent within Michigan's logging community—and gave attendees another exciting, hands-on look at the equipment and people that keep the forest products industry moving."

TIMBER TALK LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



MAT Lobbyist Jason Wadaga

As fall approaches in an election year, we begin to see more time dedicated to campaigning and less days where the Michigan Legislature meets to consider policy items. Following the passage of the state budget in July, the legislature has not met over the summer. For the most part the House and Senate are scheduled to meet regularly in the fall and into the winter although it remains to be seen if that holds true.

State Legislature Finalizes Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget

Following a marathon 20-hour session, the Michigan Legislature passed the Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget on the morning of July 3rd. The final tally if you asked lawmakers was $75.2 billion, well under the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget, however some analysts say the actual budget is closer to $86 billion.

Some of the highlights of the budget include:

- $200 million to continue free school meals for all public-school students.
- $502 million for student literacy and achievement.
- $96.1 million to make free pre-K for all Michigan children.
- Rolling back the retirement tax
- Continuing the Working Families Tax Credit
- An additional $250 per student, for a total of $10,300 per pupil.
- $52.7M additional for roads and bridges
- $1.6 billion to sustain revenue sharing to help counties, cities, villages, and townships.
- $68.5 million in funding for Michigan small business, community growth, and entrepreneurship to support small business.
- $15.9 million to support Michigan science, technology, engineering, and mathematics(MiSTEM) programs which will increase the number of students who are college and career-ready upon high school graduation and promote degree attainment in STEM fields.
- Eliminated 4,300 unfilled state employee positions.

Governor Whitmer signed the budget into law on July 21st

August Primary Election Results

Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson defeated Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson by a wide margin in the Democratic primary for Governor. The Associated Press called the race shortly after polls closed, and with most votes counted Benson held roughly an 83% to 17% advantage. Benson entered the primary with substantial advantages in fundraising, name recognition and polling. On the Republican side, Congressman John James defeated businessman Perry Johnson to win the gubernatorial nomination. James defeated Johnson by roughly 15 percentage points and benefited from an endorsement from President Donald Trump late in the campaign.

TIMBER TALK LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Democratic Senate primary was the headline race of the night. In the race to replace U.S. Senator Gary Peters, Abdul El-Sayed, a former public health official who ran as a progressive, defeated Haley Stevens after a campaign that exposed significant ideological divisions within Michigan's Democratic Party. El-Sayed defeated Stevens by roughly 15,000 votes, or just under one percentage point, out of more than 1.5 million ballots.

El-Sayed will now face former Republican Congressman Mike Rogers in the general election in November. Rogers, a former special agent in the FBI and seven term congressman was unopposed in his primary race.

In Michigan's most competitive congressional seat, Community Activist Will Lawrence won the Democratic primary for Michigan's 7th Congressional District, defeating former U.S. Ambassador Bridget Brink and former Navy SEAL Matt Maasdam. Lawrence's top issue

was data center regulation and "ending corporate" money in politics. He took a strong Bernie Sanders approach to policy.

Lawrence will now face off in the general election against first term Congressman Tom Barrett. An Army Veteran, Barrett also served in the Michigan Senate and Michigan House of Representatives.

Michigan will be "ground-zero" across the country in the 2026 election. It's the first time in the direct election era that our state has had an open U.S. Senate seat and open Gubernatorial seat in the same election.

That, coupled with Michigan being a "swing state" and the fact that the outcome of our Senate race could determine majority in the U.S. Senate, expect to see a lot of money poured into Michigan in 2026.







MAT Welcomes Danielle Murdock as new full-time Operations Administrator

Hi everyone,

My name is Dani Murdock. I am the new Operations Administrator for the Michigan Association of Timbermen. I was born and raised in the UP and never left. I have 4 dogs, 2 cats, 2 daughters and a husband, so to say that I am busy is an understatement. My daughters are 14 and 11 and they definitely keep me on my toes. I am also a full-time student going towards my Associates Degree in Business Administration. In my very rare free time I love to read and listen to music. I look forward to learning more about the industry and getting to know the members. My favorite part of the job so far has been planning the events like the Links for Loggers and helping with the Michigan Forest Products Show. To see all the big machinery close up was mind blowing as you don't realize just how massive they are when they are way out in the woods. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out! I look forward to helping the Timbermen Association grow!

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STATE OF THE STATE

*Each year the **Michigan Association of Timbermen** submits a "State of the States" report to the **American Loggers Council,** summarizing the current situation in Michigan's forest products industry, as well as a recap of the year's efforts by the Michigan Association of Timbermen.*

The Michigan Association of Timbermen continues to focus on the issues that have the greatest direct impact on Michigan's logging contractors and forest products industry: **access to roads, access to markets, and the rising cost of doing business.**

Regional Road Access and Frost Law

One of MAT's most important areas of work this year has been building stronger relationships with Michigan's regional county road associations and county road commissions. This is especially essential due to Michigan's seasonal weight restrictions continuing to create significant challenges for loggers, particularly when restrictions are implemented quickly and without sufficient time for contractors to adjust their operations.

MAT has begun taking a more direct, regional approach to these issues. One example was our work in Gladwin County, where MAT met with county officials to seek relief from over width permitting restrictions during frost law conditions. The effort reflects a broader strategy: rather than addressing every road issue only at the state level, MAT is working directly with the local agencies that control many of the roads our members depend upon.



MAT members attend Gladwin County Road Commission in spring 2026



The auction of E.H. Tulgestka & Sons sawmill in Rogers City, Michigan. (Credit: Austin Rowlader / Points North)

Mill Closures and Disrupted Markets

Michigan's logging industry is also feeling the effects of continued changes in wood markets. Several hardwood mill closures have disrupted logging operations in Northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula, leaving contractors searching for alternative markets and, in some cases, forcing timber to travel significantly farther to reach a viable outlet. The aftermath of northern Michigan's 2025 ice storm flooded regional markets with cheap wood, and that has continued to cause ripple effects throughout 2026.

Fuel and the Cost of Doing Business

Fuel prices have also remained a major concern for Michigan loggers. Logging is an equipment- and transportation-intensive industry, and fuel costs affect virtually every part of the operation—from harvesting equipment to trucking. International conflicts and instability in global energy markets have contributed to significant uncertainty in fuel prices, making it increasingly difficult for contractors to predict operating costs.

For an industry operating on narrow margins, these increases can quickly affect whether a logging job remains economically viable. MAT continues to recognize that the cost of fuel, equipment, insurance, repairs, labor and transportation all compound the challenges facing today's logging contractor.



Log trucker fueling up in Quinnesec at the Great Northern Co-op Fueling Station



Looking Ahead

Michigan's forest products industry remains an important part of the state's rural economy, but the challenges facing loggers are increasingly interconnected. MAT's role is to work on all fronts. In the coming year, MAT will continue strengthening relationships with county road agencies, advocating for practical solutions to seasonal weight and permitting issues, working to protect and expand Michigan's wood markets, and bringing the concerns of Michigan's professional loggers to state and federal policymakers.

Michigan has a tremendous forest resource. Our job is to make sure Michigan's loggers have the roads, markets and economic conditions necessary to keep that resource working for Michigan's communities.



History Across Michigan's Regions: Region 3 - Mackinaw City's Mill Creek

The Story of Michigan's First Water-Powered Sawmill: Mill Creek and 250 Years of American History

One of Michigan's earliest industrial enterprises connects today's forest products industry with the era of the American Revolution.

As America celebrates its 250th anniversary in 2026, Michigan's forest products industry has its own connection to the nation's founding era. Along a small creek south of the Straits of Mackinac, the remains of a sawmill established around 1790 tell a story that begins with the American Revolution and continues through more than two centuries of Michigan forestry.

The story begins before Michigan was a state—or even American territory. During the American Revolution, British officials became concerned about the vulnerability of Fort Michilimackinac, located at present-day Mackinaw City.

Beginning in 1779, British troops moved the post across the Straits to the more defensible heights of Mackinac Island, constructing what became Fort Mackinac. Some buildings were dismantled and moved across the water, while new construction required a continuing supply of timber and lumber.

At first, producing that lumber was an intensely manual process. Trees were felled with axes, logs were squared by hand, and timbers were placed over sawpits where two men worked a long saw back and forth to produce boards. Records from the British armed sloop, Welcome (an 18th-century commercial vessel), describe crews hauling timber and logs to sawpits and sawing planks during the winter of 1780–81. It was the beginning of a demand that would lead to one of northern Michigan's earliest industrial enterprises.

"Flattening with a broad axe" (1804 image courtesy of Mackinac State Historic Parks)



Harnessing Mill Creek

About 1790, a man named Robert Campbell established a water-powered sawmill at Mill Creek, several miles southeast of the Straits. Mackinac State Historic Parks identifies Campbell's operation as the first water-powered sawmill of its kind in northern Michigan and elsewhere describes the site as Michigan's first water-powered sawmill.

Campbell's location was no accident. Mill Creek provided something particularly valuable on the frontier: enough flowing water to operate machinery. Campbell received a 640-acre land claim, known as Private Claim 334, where water from the creek could be harnessed to drive a saw

Instead of relying entirely on human muscle to turn logs into boards, water power drove the mill's saw mechanism. It was simple technology compared with today's computerized headrigs and high-production mills, but in 1790 it represented an enormous step forward.

The operation also became more than a sawmill. Campbell developed a farm, orchard and other buildings, and a gristmill was eventually added. Historical markers describe the larger complex as including a blacksmith shop, warehouse and homes. Most importantly, the mill produced a material desperately needed at the Straits: lumber.

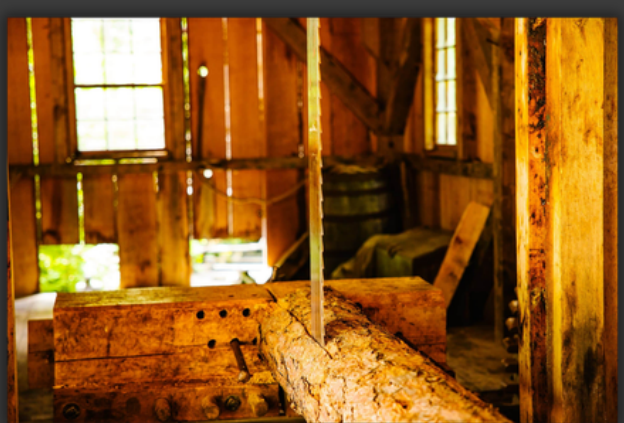
From British Outpost to the United States

Mill Creek's connection to America's 250th anniversary becomes even more interesting because the mill operated across the transition from British to American control. Although the United States had won its independence, British forces remained at Mackinac for years afterward. The United States finally took possession of Fort Mackinac in 1796, placing Campbell's young sawmill within an expanding American frontier economy.

The mill supplied lumber for Mackinac Island for decades. In 1796, the first American commander at Fort Mackinac, Major Henry Burbeck, calculated enormous lumber requirements for repairs and improvements to the fort—including boards, planks, shingles, pickets and more than a thousand large logs.

Campbell died in 1808, and in 1819 Mackinac Island merchant Michael Dousman purchased the property. Under Dousman, the enterprise continued supplying the island and the military garrison. Lumber from Mill Creek was used in construction on Mackinac Island, including the historic Mission House and Mission Church. Sawmilling continued at Mill Creek until about 1839, meaning the site produced lumber for roughly half a century.



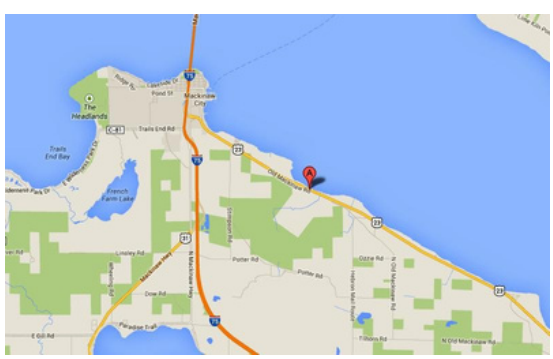


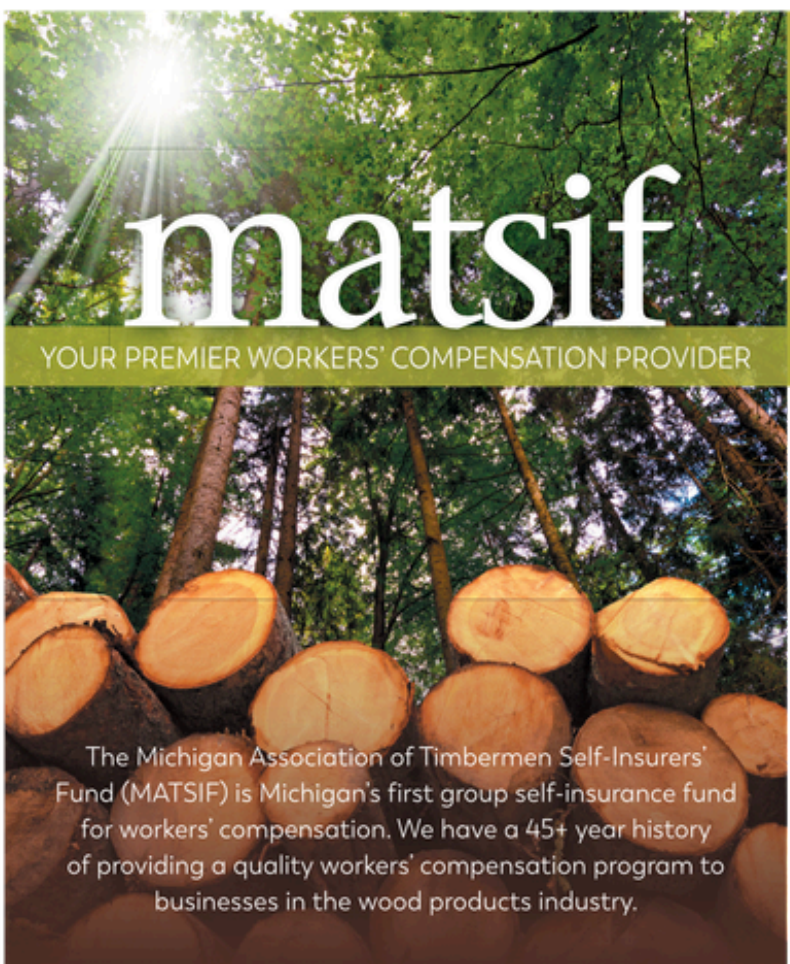


Rediscovering Michigan's Early Forest Industry

Eventually, the buildings disappeared and the forest reclaimed the site. For generations, little remained above ground to show that an early industrial operation had once stood along the creek. That changed in 1972, when the site was rediscovered. Archaeological investigations beginning the following year uncovered evidence of Campbell and Dousman's frontier operation. Mackinac State Historic Parks acquired the property in 1975, and a reconstructed working water-powered sawmill opened to the public in 1984.

Today the historic site is known as Dousman's Mill, where the reconstructed sawmill helps demonstrate how flowing water and Michigan timber were combined to produce lumber more than two centuries ago. For Michigan's forest products community, Mill Creek provides a remarkable link between the industry of today and the America of 1776. As America marks 250 years since the Declaration of Independence, Mill Creek reminds us that the forests of the Great Lakes were already helping shape the communities, forts and economy that would become part of the United States.





MATSIF has established itself as one of the premier workers' compensation funds in the nation providing a comprehensive package of services focused on reducing injuries and increasing member profitability. Our knowledge of the wood products industry's characteristics, needs and market influences enables us to meet the needs of our members. We continue to develop and offer value-added services designed to help control the overall cost of your workers' compensation program.

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