2021: A Return to Normal - Almost!

By: Max Braswell, AFA Executive Vice President

2021 was an incredibly busy year for AFA and the AFA Education Foundation as we continued to move forward on the landscape of COVID-19. We almost got there! The frequency of in-person meetings and activities picked up and we focused much of our effort on telling the forestry story.

January – AFA’s primary reason for existence is to advocate for its members in the public policy arena. No place is this more evident than in the Arkansas General Assembly. AFA completed a successful Arkansas Legislative Session by working to support bills that created new opportunities for loggers, wood products facilities looking to locate in Arkansas, and landowners battling feral hogs. We also worked to ensure the forestry sector was well-represented on the Arkansas State Plant Board and defeated a measure that would have weakened our long-standing, successful Arkansas Volunteer Best Management Practices for Water Quality.

February – The return to in-person outreach enabled several important AFA programs to return to full capacity in early 2021. The AFA Emerging Leaders Program, Project Learning Tree, Log-A-Load for Kids fundraising, Teacher Conservation Tour Sessions and all AFA committees began holding activities or meetings in person, while always taking the appropriate safety precautions after the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

March – The Women Owning Woodlands program received a jolt of energy through the work of AFA’s Jennifer Johnson and AFAEF’s Rob Beadell. The Arkansas Tree Farm Program and AFA Education Foundation stepped into the gap and revitalized WOW through consistent, monthly education and outreach sessions for women woodland owners covering topics such as Prescribed Fire, Timber Tax Tips for Forest Landowners, Forest Boundary Lines and Pruning Trees. In addition, planning began for a WOW two-day conference in late October at the lodge at Lake DeGray State Park.

April – The AFA podcast, “Voices of Forestry,” continued to gain listeners in 2021 and has now been a regular part of AFA’s public education and outreach for almost two years. The podcasts have surpassed 5,000 listeners, including downloads from Canada, Chile, Brazil and the United Kingdom. A new episode of the podcast premiers on the first Friday of each month and has a “five-star” rating on iTunes. Seth Stephenson, AFA communications coordinator, and his guests have touched on subjects ranging from invasive species, the benefits of recreational uses of forestland to the economic impact of the forestry sector in Arkansas.

June – Once every four years, the Arkansas Tree Farm Program undergoes a third-party audit conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers. Spring 2021 was our time at AFA as 32 properties were audited under the microscope over the course of two weeks. Jennifer Johnson, tree farm coordinator, and a group of excellent volunteer inspectors coordinated with the auditors and representatives of the American Forest Foundation, the parent organization for the program, which serves small family forest owners. The results from the 32 properties are being finalized but preliminary indicators show only a few minor non-conformances compared to more than 25 Good Management Practices.

July – AFA continued to find new ways to tell the forestry story in 2021. Max Braswell and Seth Stephenson “zoomed” into thousands of Arkansas homes via KATV Channel 7’s Good Morning Arkansas show in September and October to provide an overview of the association’s work on behalf of its members and to educate viewers on the impact of the state’s forestry sector. The two highlighted National Forest Products Week and touted some of the more than 5,000 products we use every day that come...
Forestry Community, AFA Saddened by the Passing of Two Industry Icons

The forestry community and Arkansas Forestry Association lost two giants in the industry in January with the passing of Allen Bedell and Jim Neely.

According to his obituary from Caruth-Hale Funeral Service, in 1991, Mr. Bedell joined nine other loggers to establish the Arkansas Timbers Producers Association. During his time as president of that organization, he helped establish the Arkansas Professional Logger Education and Training Program.

Mr. Bedell passed away Monday, January 3. Our community was also saddened to hear of the passing of another industry icon, Jim Neely. The founder of Neely Forestry Service, Inc., he served the forestry industry in the state for 70 years. Mr. Neely served on the AFA board and was a member of the Association of Consulting Foresters.

In March of 2017, he was inducted into the Arkansas Agriculture Hall of Fame. He was the fourth forestry representative in history to be recognized.

"Allen combined fearless and determined leadership with a genuine love and passion for the forestry sector, his family, and community — with service to all," said AFA Executive Vice President Max Braszwell. "Later in his time on the AFA Executive Committee, he would humbly "threaten" to "retire" from the group only to have his fellow leaders beg him to stay so that we could all share in his vast institutional knowledge of all things forestry and AFA. He always said he would stay as long as he could bring value to the group. He always did."

Mr. Bedell started two family tree chopping businesses, Circle B Logging and Quality Stand Density Control, Inc. Both businesses he owned and operated until his retirement in 2006.

During his time as AFA President, he was instrumental in adopting the National Log Load for Kids Program, which has raised over $10,000,000 for Arkansas Children. Mr. Bedell also served on the Arkansas Forestry Commission for nine years, three of which he served as Chairman.

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**CALANDER OF EVENTS**

**February 1**
10:00 a.m. - AFA Government Affairs Committee Meeting AFA Office/Zoom Little Rock
12:00 p.m. - Timber Management Expenses & Deductions Workshop Zoom

**February 8**
12:00 p.m. - Keeping More of Your Income Following a Timber Sale Zoom

**February 10**
9:30 a.m. - AFA Logging Committee Meeting AFA Office/Zoom Little Rock
11:30 a.m. - WOW Lunch & Learn: Timber Financing Zoom

**February 15**
9:00 a.m. - Program Committee Meeting Zoom
12:00 p.m. - Coping with Losses from Nature and Chance Zoom

**February 25**
11:30 a.m. - Landowner Zoom: Pine to Lumber - Factors that Impact Payments to Forest Landowners Zoom

Please Note:
Visit our calendar at arkforests.org for more information on any of the above Zoom meetings.

For meetings held at the AFA Office, please park on the street or in one of the area lots — do not park in the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce parking lot.

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**2021: A Return to Normal, con’t.**

From our forests. In November, Max and Ryan Diner with Qual Forever educated viewers on the value of active forest management.

August - AFA was pleased to serve as a communications partner to promote the Pandemic Assistance for Timber Hawkers and Harvesters Program. The PATHH program provided financial relief to timber harvesting and hauling businesses that experienced a 10 percent or greater loss of gross revenue in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Eligible businesses received an initial payment of $2,000 after application approval. A final payment was made after the program ended. The sum of both payments could not exceed $125,000.

September - After a year hiatus, the annual Tree Farm Conference returned to an in-person event hosted by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture Forestry Division Baucom Nursery. An excellent crowd of approximately 50 family forest owners engaged in discussions on the new Arkansas Landscape Management Plan and Tree Farm Standards, forestry practices to enhance wildlife habitat, innovative income sources for timberland owners and tree improvement. Baucom Nursery Manager James Shellen then treated the attendees to a tour of the nursery.

AFA returns to an in-person Annual Meeting in Rogers, Arkansas to discuss the changing landscape of the state’s forestry industry.

November - Continuing a theme from the annual meeting, AFA was pleased to help the National Alliance of Forest Owners facilitate a meeting in Hot Springs with representatives of the Environmental Defense Fund to discuss the impact of forestry on rural communities in Arkansas. Also amongst the attendees were a number of AFA members representing all facets of the timber and forest products community.

The focus of the information-sharing event was an overview of forestry as a natural climate solution with emphasis on public policy that promotes the benefits of working forests.

December - Before 2021 even came to a close, the AFA Program Committee began preparations for a very special event in October 2022 – the Arkansas Forestry Association 75th Anniversary. Organized in 1947, AFA is the only private non-profit trade association in Arkansas that represents the entire timber and forest products sector. We will celebrate our rich history and those who have and continue to contribute to our growing success, on October 11-13, 2022 at the Doubletree Hotel in Little Rock.

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**Choosing a Tax Preparer for Your Tree Farm Tax Return**

By Dr. Tamala L. Cushing, Extension Forest Business Specialist, University of Florida

At this time of year, many people are gathering together the information to prepare their federal income tax returns. If you’ve had a timber sale or planted trees in the past year, you may be thinking about hiring someone to complete the tax return for you. Choosing the right accountant or tax preparer can be a crucial decision for forest landowners. I often get asked for the name of a "good accountant or tax preparer" who has experience with forestry returns. As a public employee, I am not allowed to recommend someone and honestly, I don’t know tax preparers around the country. What I can provide is some guidance on how to select this person. Part of this decision is based on personality, but there are some key questions that should be asked of potential (and maybe even current) providers of these important services regarding their ability to handle specific issues related to forests.

The questions below are certainly not the only questions that could be asked and should not replace "gut feelings." They are meant to help think through what to ask and what the accountant’s or tax preparer’s responses mean.

**What are your qualifications?**

Before you hire anyone to keep your financial records and/or complete your tax return, make sure they are qualified to do so. There can be several different qualifications. Here are some to look for:

- A degree in accounting and possibly in taxation.
- Certification by a licensing body or the IRS. This may include CPA or Enrolled Agent (EA). Some states require paid preparers to have specific qualifications to complete tax returns while others do not. Information on that can often be found at the web page for your state license and registration boards.

To read the rest of this story, visit arkforests.org/page/Media or visit arkforests.org/page/treefarm to view a fact sheet on this subject and more.