Record Crowd, Special Guests Appear At 73rd AFA Annual Meeting

The Arkansas Forestry Association saw a record crowd this year at the 73rd Annual Meeting in Hot Springs. Over 280 people attended during the three-day meeting in early October.

The fun began Tuesday, October 2 with recreational activities that included golf and trap shooting. From there, members of the forestry community from all over Arkansas, and even some from outside the state, received the opportunity to hear from various speakers at the Forest Management Workshop. Those speakers included Carroll Guffey and Rebecca Montgomery who both shared information on forestry ethics.

This year’s meeting had an unexpected but appreciated guest as U.S. Congressman Bruce Westerman made an appearance at the general session on Wednesday. Westerman started the meeting with information about some of the issues being discussed in Washington D.C. Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward had to reschedule his discussion on Arkansas Agriculture Department Programs but was able to discuss breaking news regarding the Agriculture Department Wednesday afternoon.

As always, the general session ended with the annual fish fry, sponsored this year by PotlatchDeltic. Some of the people who attended this year's meeting said coming to the AFA Annual Meeting is a great opportunity to socialize with others in the forestry community. They said getting a big group together like this doesn’t happen often, but when it does, they are excited to catch up with each other.

Some of the members of the community even went home with awards for their hard work and dedication to forestry in Arkansas. Chris Reed Logging from the Rison area was named Logger of the Year. Tamara Walkingstick was named Communicator of the Year. Carrol Guffey was named Outstanding Forestry Educator of the Year. The Tree Farmer of the Year award was given to the McCollum Land Company.

Weyerhaeuser officially opened their new lumber mill October 17 in Dierks, Arkansas with the help of several special guests.

Outside of the mill’s office building, employees, news outlets and guests gathered for the ribbon cutting ceremony. Governor Asa Hutchinson, U.S. Senator John Boozman, Congressman Bruce Westerman, District 10 State Senator Larry Teague, District 4 State Representative DeAnn Vaught, State Forester Joe Fox and Don Dierks, the great-grandson of the Dierks family who built the original mill, were all there to see the project’s final product.

Many of these elected officials spoke about the importance of this new mill. Boozman praised the hard, safe work of both the employees and contractors over the past three years of construction. Westerman contribute to the tree’s death but are not the predisposing or inciting cause. The most common reason for Ips attacks are drought stress. Drought stress may occur across the landscape (which is common during late-summer in Arkansas) or on individual trees that have a compromised root system. It takes extreme circumstances for Ips to move from tree to tree. With that in mind, it is important to understand that a few Ips infested trees are generally not a threat to nearby healthy trees.

Where Have They Occurred?
Though more common in southern Arkansas, when Ips abundance increases,
Annual Meeting, con’t.

and the Non-Profit of the Year award was given to the Westark Area Council Boy Scouts of America. Nicky Goff of the South Central Arkansas Log A Load for Kids chapter was named the LAL Volunteer of the Year. AFA awarded two President’s Awards, one to Allen Morgan and the other to Pete Prutzman. Visit the Arkansas Forestry Association YouTube page at youtube.com/user/ArkansasForestry to see some of the award videos from this year’s Awards Breakfast.

The Arkansas Forestry Association would like to thank everyone who attended this year’s meeting and provided feedback on the events. Those comments will be discussed as planning begins for the 74th AFA Annual Meeting, which is scheduled for October 8-10, 2019 at the Embassy Suites in Little Rock.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November 3
5 p.m. - Central Arkansas Log A Load for Kids Dinner/Auction
Sheridan Recreation Center
Sheridan

September 9
9 a.m. - Walk in the Woods
Jolly Tree Farm
Danville

November 15
10 a.m. - AFA Government Affairs Committee Meeting
AFA Offices
Little Rock

November 16
10 a.m. - Landowner Legacy Communication Workshop
UA Cooperative Extension Office
Meeting Room 1 & 2
Little Rock

November 22-23
AFA Offices Closed for Thanksgiving Holiday

December 4
10 a.m. - AFAEF Board Meeting &
12:30 p.m. - AFA Executive Committee Meeting
AFA Offices
Little Rock

December 14
9 a.m. - PLT-WILD Environmental Education Workshop
Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center
Jonesboro

Please Note:
For meetings that are 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.

Pine Engraver Beetles, con’t.

it occurs in an observable region. In 2012, an intense drought caused Ips damages in both loblolly and shortleaf pine forests of Arkansas. In 2015, extensive damage was observed in loblolly forests in western Arkansas near Oklahoma. Late 2017, activity was recorded in loblolly and shortleaf of south and central Arkansas near Arkadelphia. Now in late-summer of 2018, Ips activity is again occurring, clearly observable near Hot Springs. Without a predisposing drought, such as the one in 2012, it is expected that the current infestations will be short-lived.

Prevention and Control

Homeowners want to save a tree when it begins showing signs of Ips attacks, but the difficult to accept truth is that a tree will die when Ips are observed. When a red tree is observed near a structure, the only recommendation should be removal. In the forested setting, removal of infested trees may not be necessary because most infestations remain small and the problem could cease soon after detection. Additionally, infested trees feature a huge assortment of beneficial insects that help to stop Ips infestations. A forester or specialist should be consulted to determine if a harvest is warranted. Though generally not recommended, preventative chemical treatments are available for high value trees. These treatments are applied to the bark and kill attacking beetles during periods of high risk. They should be recommended and applied by a professional, such as a certified arborist.

The best way to prevent Ips damage is to provide pine trees with optimal growing conditions. For urban trees, this means maintaining a health root system. In forests, the density of pine should not be overstocked; thinning a pine forest will encourage vigorous tree growth.

While difficult for homeowners to save an Ips infested tree, removal of infested trees may not be necessary in a forested setting.

Dierks Mill, con’t.

actually worked as an engineer at the mill in 1992. His father worked on the rebuild in that same year and his brother worked on the current rebuild. He said, “Dierks is ground zero for being able to run a good sawmill.”

employees of the Dierks Lumber Mill cut the ribbon to celebrate the reopening of the facility.

Hutchinson also spoke to the crowd and focused on the economic impact the mill will have on the state and Dierks community. This mill is a $190 million investment that will employ around 230 people. He said the mill is a real success story for Arkansas.

Weyerhaeuser first announced the new mill in 2015. It will replace the former facility. Since 1918, when the Dierks family first built the original mill, wood products have been produced in Dierks. Weyerhaeuser purchased the mill in 1969. The company said the new mill is able to produce around 380 million board feet of lumber per year.

Employees of the Dierks Lumber Mill cut the ribbon to celebrate the reopening of the facility.

Gov. Asa Hutchinson speaks to a crowd of reporters, Weyerhaeuser employees and other special guests.
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