The future is never set in stone, but after the 74th Arkansas Forestry Association Annual Meeting, many members of the forestry industry now have a better idea of what they could expect.

The event started the afternoon of Tuesday, October 8, at the Embassy Suites in Little Rock with the Forest Management Workshop. Kevin Tucker, with Red River Specialties, Inc., discussed the use of herbicides as a management tool for private forest landowners, which included availability, application, and treatment options.

Rex Woodson, a retired Weyerhaeuser employee, and Billy Black, the chief of law enforcement with the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, then addressed timberland security. Their presentation included various cases they have both worked and the best ways for landowners to make sure they do not fall victim to those with ill intent for their land.

To wrap up the workshop, Dr. Matt Pelkki, with the University of Arkansas Monticello College of Forestry, Agriculture, and Natural Resources, as well as Rebecca Montgomery with the Arkansas State Board of Registration for Foresters expanded on forestry ethics.

The AFA Board of Directors then gathered where the staff updated members on their priority projects and initiatives since the last board meeting in the spring. State Forester Joe Fox and Dr. Phil Tappe, Dean of the UAM College of Forestry, Agriculture and Natural Resources, also provided the group with an inside look at current and future activities within the Forestry Division and College.

With the formalities of the day done, everyone gathered for the IBERIABANK Opening Reception. The first card drawing of the meeting was held for a Winchester shotgun, the proceeds of which went towards helping the AFA Education Foundation. Attendees ate, drank, and mingled before heading out for dinner in town. That night, previous and current members of AFA’s Emerging Leaders Program got together for a night of ax throwing and socializing in downtown Little Rock.

The following morning brought the beginning of the general session where Governor Asa Hutchinson gave the Keynote Address. The governor discussed the timber industry and its importance in the state and took questions from the crowd. Following him was Rocky Goodnow with North American Timber Service and Forest Economic Advisors LLC. Goodnow presented an extensive update on the timber market.

After a quick lunch break, Dr. Lauren Ward,

Looking Forward
By: Max Braswell, AFA Executive Vice President

Forward-looking conversations and public policy conversations have dominated my agenda over the past couple of months. In some instances, both of those topics were part of the same discussion. Forward-looking discussions are a good thing, in my opinion, because, in many cases, they compel people to take action sooner rather than later.

Back in mid-September, I joined a contingent of Arkansas timber and forest products professionals in Washington, D.C., as part of the Forest Resources Association (FRA) Fly-In. Our group of seven were part of a larger contingent of over 70 forestry representatives from across the country who made more than 90 visits to members of Congress during the fly-in. Our job – to ask members of Congress to be forward-looking and to take action on issues like the Safe Routes Act, carbon neutrality, and the H-2B Guestworker Visa Program.

For the most part, we earned positive, common sense support on the carbon neutrality and H-2B issues, which have been on forestry’s agenda for some time. We also garnered generally positive support for the Safe Routes Act legislation, which would allow log trucks to access the federal interstate system at the legal state gross vehicle weight for no more than 150 air miles. Collectively, the hill visits played a role in the addition of several co-sponsors for the bill, including two Democrats. Bi-partisan support for the bill, which currently includes Arkansas 4th District Congressman Bruce Westerman, is critical.

As soon as I returned from Washington, D.C., all thoughts returned to completing plans for the 74th AFA Annual Meeting here in Little Rock. The meeting incorporated an entire day of forward-looking general session topics, highlighted by remarks from Governor Asa Hutchinson and a “Forests for the Future” panel discussion that I was pleased to continue.
Annual Meeting, con’t.

with the Forest Landowners Association, took the stage to expand on the National Forest Landowner Survey. She explained how the survey data is collected and distributed, as well as the debate on what the data shows.

The final presentation of the meeting featured a panel of speakers who discussed the future of the forestry industry, which included getting younger people interested in a forestry career, what’s next for the Forestry Division and finding solutions to problems we face like the rising cost log truck insurance. The panel of speakers included Larry Boccarossa with the Arkansas Timber Producers Association, Dr. Mark Cochran with the U of A System Division of Agriculture, Louisa Daniels with Green Bay Packaging, and State Forester Joe Fox.

As the General Session ended, the annual fish fry began at Riggs CAT that featured a visit from the Arkansas Razorback mascot, Tusk. There was plenty of fried catfish, games, and heavy equipment on display for the near-record crowd. The second and final card drawing was held for a Savage Apex 110 rifle, which also benefited AFAEF.

The final event of the meeting was the Awards Breakfast, where AFA acknowledges some of the best in the forestry industry. Our Logger of the Year was awarded to K.W. Jester Logging, Inc., of Arkadelphia. District 18 Senator Missy Irvin of Mountain View was recognized as the Legislator of the Year. The Educator of the Year was Scott Meek with Green Bay Packaging, and our AFA Forestry Scholar was Zachary Abbott. The Tree Farmer of the Year was awarded to the G. William Smith Family Tree Farm. The U of A Division of Agriculture Research & Extension-Livestock and Forestry Station received the Non-Profit Tree Farmer of the Year award. The final two awards were our Communicator of the Year, which was presented to Tabitha Holloway with the Forestry Division and the Log a Load for Kids Volunteer of the Year, presented to Emily Clontz with International Paper and the Texarkana LAL Chapter.

The AFA staff would like to thank everyone who attended for their patience and participation. Plans are already underway for the 2020 meeting that will be at the Doubletree in downtown Little Rock, September 29-October 1. More photos of the 74th AFA Annual Meeting can be seen on the Arkansas Forestry Association Facebook page.
Looking Forward, con’t.

facilitate. Governor Hutchinson shared his appreciation of and vision for the value that the state's timber and forest products industry brings to Arkansas. And, my question to the Governor centered on the Safe Routes Act and whether a state leader can influence national issues. His answer was yes. I hope that he and other Governors will have the opportunity to advocate for safer roads and highways in the future.

The general session panel included State Forester Joe Fox, Larry Boccarossa, executive director of the Arkansas Timber Producers Association; Louisa Daniels, manager of quality, training and governmental affairs for Green Bay Packaging; and Dr. Mark Cochran, vice president for Agriculture, U of A Division of Agriculture. Their remarks focused on plans to fill the gaps that exist in delivering public education and outreach, recruiting new employees, the next generation of forestry leaders, meeting the challenges of the logging sector – all to meet the future needs of the forestry community.

And right on the heels of the annual meeting panel, I was honored to join a group of AFA leaders and industry partners in a discussion on the “Future of Forestry,” facilitated by the University of Arkansas Walton College of Business. The group identified current forestry trends, where they may be in 10 years, and possible approaches to shape them to our advantage. The College of Business plans to develop a Whitepaper from the discussion. I’ll share with you that public perception of the timber and forest products sector, societal changes in the way we live and purchase products, and the challenges of finding willing, qualified employees were among the most discussed topics.

2020 is just around the corner, which means AFA is busy preparing next year’s budget and already planning for our 75th Annual Meeting, September 29 – October 1 at the Doubletree Hotel in downtown Little Rock. It’s also campaign season, which means our current and perhaps future elected members of the State Legislature are jockeying for position in the minds of voters. AFA, with help from its members, Government Affairs Committee, and Executive Committee, evaluates candidates running for office and makes strategic contributions to candidates through its Forest Express PAC. More than 20 candidates have received PAC support thus far. During the last election cycle, the Forest Express PAC provided support to candidates in 35 races, with 31 of those winning their election. The 2020 Primary Election is March 3, with a Primary Runoff on March 31. The 2020 General Election on November 3 and General Election Runoff on December 1.

We’re told in life to take things one day at a time, and at AFA, we appreciate every day we have to work on behalf of our members. But, if you want to stay ahead of the game, we better all be looking forward!

It is time for another Poll Yard Question! This month, we want to know what you are doing in your community to help promote forestry.

October’s Poll Yard is:

What do you do in your community to help promote forestry? A few examples could be visiting local schools to discuss forestry careers with students, working with local clubs/groups to discuss the industry, hosting tours or field days, etc. Let us know what and where you help promote our industry.

To answer this month’s question go to tinyurl.com/OctPollYard19.
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