The Arkansas Forestry Association (AFA) has joined more than 60 business organizations in a letter to Governor Asa Hutchinson, urging him to provide assurances of immunity to all industry sectors providing critical services, goods, and facilities from a possible onslaught of lawsuits because of COVID-19.

"I’ve heard it said best that what the business community needs is timely, targeted, and temporary relief," said Max Braswell, AFA Executive Vice President. "For businesses that are following the rules, going above and beyond to protect their employees, customers, vendors, etc., they shouldn’t be punished."

Here are seven recommendations for operating or re-opening business provided by the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and the Friday, Eldredge & Clark law firm:

1. Follow applicable public health guidance. To the fullest extent possible, comply with government guidelines and directives articulated in documents published by public health officials.

2. Keep up with your peers in the industry. Adopt best practices you see being successfully implemented by others in your industry.

3. Use third-party professionals where appropriate. Businesses should consider involving health and safety consultants and lawyers in the development of their plans and hiring professional sanitation services to disinfect premises.

4. Document what you are doing to keep employees and customers safe. Maintain copies of training materials, sanitation logs, invoices for PPE/cleaning supplies, and employee training acknowledgments along with photos of posted notices.

5. Document efforts to do even more. If you provide PPE (e.g., masks, hand gel, etc.) to employees but run into supply shortages, document all purchase attempts.


7. Update employee leave policies. Formulate employee leave policies specific to COVID-19 and be sure your leave policies comply with the requirements of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Arkansas state law gives the Arkansas Department of Agriculture (ADA) the authority to appoint state law enforcement officers to investigate these crimes. Each ADA – Forestry Division district office has rangers and foresters who handle misdemeanor dumping and fire cases. They also have three full-time criminal investigators who investigate misdemeanors and felony cases across the state.

If you have information about these activities, you can call the ADA – Forestry Division 24-hour reporting line at (501) 225-1598.

You can also fill out an online complaint form, which is available at arkforests.org/page/witnessreward.
How’s Your Habitat? - Creating a Plan for Your Land

You just closed on the property you’ve been dreaming about for the last five years. The property you have always wanted is finally yours! Congratulations, you have begun the process of owning and managing a piece of recreational property. The purchase of the property is only the beginning of the process in all aspects. Many more hours of planning and implementing plans are ahead, as are many more dollars of investment in the project. Many buyers fail to realize that the purchase price is only a part of the financial investment that will eventually and inevitably be made in the property. It is strongly suggested that a buyer have at least a rough plan for the property before closing on the purchase. This might dictate what kind of property you purchase. Your financial investment that will eventually and inevitably be made in the property.

Plan

3. Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) - This is a very complex program that will allow you to do multiple practices for wildlife, timber, and wetland production. It usually suggests people to sign up to do fire lanes under EQIP first. These are usually dozed around just inside the boundary of your property. They will serve many different purposes. It provides you access to ride an ATV or walk all around your property. Fire lanes are for protection from wildfires and for implementation of Prescribed Fire to improve habitat conditions. They can also be used as food plots in wooded tracts, and once you have that access to new parts of your property, you tend to do more practices there. Contact your local USDA office about this program. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ar/programs/financial/equip/

The key is to get as much advice on the front end as possible to set up your property. Then once you switch to maintenance mode of the plan, you will know what practices will keep the habitat conditions the way you like it.

Issue With Tissue, con’t.

Estimates within the industry are that domestic tissue demand has increased by as much as 40%. Commercial tissue because Americans spend a lot of time at work. At least they did until March of this year. Commercial tissue is largely made from recovered fiber in a paper mill, rather than the home-use tissue made from virgin fiber from harvested pulpwood trees.

• The problem is made more difficult by the structure of the paper industry. Paper mills are highly specialized multi-billion-dollar investments and typically run as close to maximum capacity 24 hours a day in normal times.

• Not all paper is made in the same way; you cannot shift from making cardboard to tissue paper, and the specialized tissue making equipment is not present at every mill, even if the fiber-making capacity exists. Adding additional capacity may cost $100 million per machine and takes 6-12 months to complete. While mills can shift some production of 1-ply to 2-ply tissue, the difference in fiber sources (recycled vs. virgin) limits this shift.

How’s Your Habitat?, con’t.

By: Rob Beadel, AFAEF Director of Forestry Education

“AFA Office
Little Rock
June 10
10 a.m. - Program Committee Meeting

TCT Workshop Series Session 3: Pine to Paper scheduled for June 23-24, 2020, has been canceled due to unforeseeable circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Other workshop opportunities for 2020 are being considered for this fall.

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“Fire and its use as a forest management tool often have a bad reputation,” said Rob Beadel, Director of Forestry Education for the AFA Education Foundation. “Prescribed fire many times is the best, quickest, and cheapest treatment process to remove unwanted vegetation and invasive species to restore ecosystems.”

“This Teacher Conservation Tour was great!” stated Duane Hecelkberg of Hot Springs

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By: Ted Zawislak, AGFC Statewide Private Landscapers

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