High School Forestry Class: Will It Take Root?
Steve Kariainen | Lake States Region Coordinator

Workforce development is a top priority for the forest products industry as well as for many other industries. Primary education focuses on preparing students for higher education but often fails to address the needs of those who might transition directly into the workforce after their high school graduation. Logging is an especially challenging industry in that modern logging equipment—though very productive—requires a higher skill-set than in previous generations.

Max Ericson is a fourth-generation logger from Minong, Wisconsin. He has worked hard to make Ericson Logging a successful, family-owned business. Max is also president of the Northwood School Board in Minong. The concept of a class on logging and forestry for high school students spawned from conversations between Max and his son-in-law, Jeff Daleiden, early in 2016 as they brainstormed ideas on how to get students to seriously consider employment in the forest products industry.

Max and Jeff invited Brad Kildow, retired WDNR forester and associate professor of silviculture at UW-Stevens Point, into the discussion later that summer, and the three of them developed a draft forestry technician syllabus for consideration by the Northwood School Board.

After the “School to Work” program was approved by the board in fall 2016, Max, Jeff, and Brad were invited to give a presentation to 11th- and 12th-grade students about the course and the various job opportunities in logging and forestry. Subsequently, five students enrolled to begin the initial phase of coursework at the beginning of the second semester, which started in January 2017. Class schedules were blocked into two consecutive periods to facilitate field instruction.

The curriculum consists of a good mix of classroom and hands-on field instruction with Brad leading the forestry content and Jeff overseeing the logging portions. Topics covered during the first semester (January through May 2017) included:

- Introduction and general topics
- Dendrology
- Silvics and silvicultural methods
- Forest soils and ecosystems
- Basic land management
- Road layout and construction
- BMPs for water quality
The second semester of the program has just begun with the start of a new school year. One of the students who completed the first semester has decided to seek a college degree in wildlife management and will not continue in the program. Two students who completed the first-semester coursework are now operating logging equipment each afternoon on a private Ericson Logging timber sale adjacent to the Northwood School campus. The other two are working in the shop, Ericson Trucking, LLC, and getting paid while they learn more about the “ins and outs” of logging and trucking. Students rotate between operating equipment and working in the shop throughout the semester.
Logging equipment for the class (JD 1270-D Harvester and JD 1010-E Forwarder) is provided by Nortrax Midwest from its Ashland, Wisconsin, store. Store Manager Sam Lulich views this as one of the potential means of helping to get more young people to consider work in the forest products industry as a career option. Time will tell if this Northwood High School program is successful or not. Until then, we'll just have to keep an eye on it to see if it takes root.

Steve Kariainen
FRA Lake States Coordinator

Steve Kariainen serves as FRA’s Coordinator in the Lake States Region

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>FRA 2017 Fall Board Meeting and Fly In (Washington, DC)</td>
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<td>Oct 25-26</td>
<td>SE Region Policy Committee Meeting (Jekyll Island, GA)</td>
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<td>Oct 25-26</td>
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<td>Apr 16-18</td>
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