Enthusiasm is building for the ambitious plan of TEAM Safe Trucking (TST), a broad-based non-profit group seeking to elevate the standard and performance of the American forest industry’s deeply troubled transportation sector, which organizers contend is the most serious problem confronting the wood fiber supply chain.

TEAM Safe Trucking is developing a module program that will embrace awareness/education and intensely focus on driver training. It can be tweaked for use in different regions and sub-regions and will be available to those who have log/chip transportation operations or are exposed to such operations. Drawing on a $5,000 commitment from Forest/Loggers/Mauck Insurance Agencies, based in Newberry, Mich., along with other resources, the group expects to launch a web site by spring and have the program in gear by August.

Now regional in scope, TST expects to expand its program nationwide as it secures additional funding through donations from stakeholders and from grants. Virginia Tech University has committed funds and a graduate student to conduct log/chip truck accident research, beginning later this year. The two-year study will help guide the project’s work going forward.

Consisting of logging companies, paper/wood products manufacturers, truck and trailer manufacturers, insurance companies and logging and forestry association representatives, the organization aims to emulate the success of TEAM Fire, another cooperative effort created 20 years ago that eventually drove down logging equipment fire incidents and claims, lowered insurance premiums and helped make automatic fire suppression systems more affordable.

TSI guided by Rick Quagliaroli, owner of Swamp Fox Agency, Inc., an established South Carolina-based business that interfaces with forest industry interests in three states. According to him, many loggers and log truckers now do a commendable job but the industry’s trucking segment overall is performing poorly, resulting in increasing mishaps and multiple forms of costly, disruptive, traumatic fallout. This is forcing some truckers to the side of the road and causing some insurance providers to abandon the market.

“TEAM Safe Trucking’s goal is to set a high standard for driver training and continuing education, and we’ll focus the training program specifically on hauling logs and chips. The program will be designed to help make the industry’s log and chip trucking segment safer and more efficient, and every party that has an interest in trucking will need to ‘buy in’ for it to be truly successful. It will take some time. For the good of the industry as a whole, we’re asking for support up and down the line.”

For more information, email or call Quagliaroli: rick@swampfoxagencyinc.net, 843-761-3999; or Jimmie Locklear: jlocklear@forestrymutual.com, 910-733-3300.