

Indiana Hardwood Lumberman's Association

In the survey used to prepare this strategy, the respondents spoke pretty clearly about what they value in our forests. Clean air, clean water, abundant habitat, and year-round recreation.

I'm here to give the timber industry perspective, and today I'm representing the primary and secondary manufacturers, and the loggers.

Nothing that follows here has been vetted, endorsed, or even reviewed by our leadership, so these will remain personal viewpoints. That probably gives me a little more freedom to talk about what I think is important, and it may not be what you expect to hear from me. These comments come from almost two decades of re-living the same Groundhog-Day processes over and over about a singular state forest issue.

Industry tends to get pretty myopic when it comes to our state's forestlands, and in particular, our state-owned and state-managed public lands. I represent the point of view that our state's forest are a vital part of our state's economy, and that forest health, both public and private, is important to our state, and an asset that must not be squandered.

But, now in my 18th year with IHLA, I can tell you that I think we lack the collaboration we need to get the most out of our forests, and I want to spend the next few minutes giving examples of that point, and suggesting some new ideas for this long-term strategy process.

I also want to talk about my thoughts that, when faced with publicly answering attacks on state forest management, we tend to over-"scientificate" problems that can be explained and understood much more simply.

I want to offer a couple of simple solutions to help end long-term stalemates, and finally I want to share our current strategy for bringing more economic prosperity from our state's forests without cutting more trees.

Since I want to focus most on collaboration on our state forests, it is necessary to first take a look at present obstacles to collaboration. Let's start with the most current argument on our state forests, which involves a perception that timber harvesting and recreation cannot co-exist.

Collaboration between outdoor groups and the timber industry seems like the likeliest of partnerships, doesn't it? By growing up near a big city, from day one with IHLA it has seemed to me like most sawmill workers and loggers love to hunt, fish, and camp.

In fairness, almost every major outdoor group sent us letters supporting the DNR's forest management before the last legislative session, but we still are forced to defend this issue every year. The timber industry, in my opinion, has to do a better job of taking moral high ground to the anti-forestry groups who say that harvesting chases away tourists. When I look at forest policies and their effects out west, I contend that what really chases away tourist is massive wildfires and scorched forests! Harvesting leaves small scars. Fire leaves big scars.

But collaboration doesn't come from sticking hard to our arguments while they stick hard to theirs. We have to bridge the gap between forest management and opponents on the issue of recreation. City folks want to protect nature, but often have no idea how to do it. Small town people know how, but lack the political and media savvy to defend their cause. The timber industry is important to many rural communities, but the population centers have been bombarded with the idea that greedy lumbermen want to cut down every last tree.

Everyone in this room has heard me lament that 8 of Indiana's nine poorest counties abut the Hoosier National Forest. Yet, in the past, I have only offered ideas that a thriving timber management program on the Hoosier could stimulate local economies, and generate revenue for them instead of costing the government in the form of Payments in Lieu of Taxes. But I have never suggested exploring an economic boost from more recreation, on federal OR state lands.

I'm aware that this is Indiana and not Colorado, where a new forest area ski resort could bring enormous economic growth in hotels, restaurants, apparel, equipment and tourism. Here, we are limited mostly to hunting, fishing, biking, camping, and hiking. Those aren't big opportunities, but with the right collaboration of partners, we could be creative, and look at things like music festivals, fishing tournaments, and the like.

Nature alone is not going to fix the western forests, and I will leave that topic, but not before just suggesting that the lessons learned out west can be used here to keep our state forests from meeting the same fate.

I'm going to use the Colorado example to lead into my next suggestion. Colorado has a 2 to 1 mortality to growth rate – completely catastrophic.

I defend the Division of Forestry all the time by saying leave forestry to the foresters. We have some of the best around, but I want to suggest that they try to be **less** scientific when defending what they do. I've told Jack this directly before, but I think it bears repeating.

Advocates for no timber management go on TV and to the newspapers to say we are cutting way too many trees. They can say 400% more, 1000% more, whatever, and the media will go to Jack for a reply.

Jack told WTIU's Sarah Wittmeyer "We're only harvesting about 60% of what we're growing." A true fact when stated, and perfectly understood by everyoneeveryone with a forestry degree or years of experience in the woods. I think the general public hears that much differently.

Since we've invested so much in SFI and FSC certification, can't we just start saying that our forests are among the best in the world, and produce some of the best hardwoods, and are VERIFIED AS SUSTAINABLE BY THE TWO LEADING WORLDWIDE AUTHORITIES ON FOREST CERTIFICATION?!

This past February, legislators sat bored to death while scientists on both sides droned on for three hours with their science, which rang as jibberish to those who tried to keep listening. I give the DNR an A+ for their preparation, facts, presentation and defense of their practices, but for the average person, we have to keep it simpler in our messaging. It's those average people who are signing petitions and making decisions based on 10-second sound bites. What we lost that day was the chance for 30 or so people who showed up to defend their businesses, towns and families with emotional-grabbing testimony from the legislators' home towns.

Along the same lines, I want to suggest that we NEVER again miss an opportunity to give the anti-management folks what they ask for – when they already have it! Their argument has shifted from no harvest on public lands, to none on backcountry areas, to wilderness designations, and most recently asking for 10% of the state forests to be kept in old growth, which in Indiana is over 100 years old.

The FIA data on our state forests is public, and shows that in every year since they started in 2002 that there is over 10% in old growth, and that number will only continue to grow, as will the larger concentrations of

it. The most recent count was 16%, so we can say, OK, we will make sure you have your 10%, but to do so, we'll need to cut another 6% (joking).

Every legislator who has talked to me about the issue, asks me why it's a big deal if they only want 10%. If they go back and ask for more, they risk the loss of integrity and vindicate our assessment that history shows they will always seek more.

It's also a good opportunity to note that only 1% of all timber on our state forests is scheduled for harvest each year, to maintain the health and the goals of the forest, but more adamantly, I implore the Division to create in its own strategy a mandate to always maintain 10% in old growth and ALSO 10% in early successional habitat – a level that is vital to their bigger goals and a level that they have not been able to maintain. In doing so, they can force the opposition to be good to their word that all they want is 10% in old growth, while justifying the need to create the openings necessary for the early successional areas.

These factors contribute to a bigger concern of mine, which is the loss of logging know-how and markets for big trees. I worry about the lack of potential investments in high-tech sawmills that can provide yield improvements, better conserving our resource. We need outside investment. We are proud of our 4th and 5th generation businesses, whose families and employees are rooted in their communities – people who are problem solvers and willing to risk great sums, but it is costly to operate and training opportunities are also limited.

We should collaborate on funding issues, not just private investment in forestry, but in sound use of public resources. The Federal Government continues the insane policy of confiscating funds from the forest service to fight these fires out west, which takes away money that was meant for forest management and reforestation. And sending their people out

there results in many months of lost productivity. It's time to place this burden where it belongs – with FEMA! That is a critical first step to major policy changes that will value our forest assets! And at the state level, we should all be able to easily rally around lobbying for restoring funding to the Division of Forestry that was confiscated over a decade ago.

Time is not going to permit me to go into detail about the Hardwood Strategy, which we have begun, and involves a cooperative effort to bring more markets for Indiana hardwoods to the state. It is not about cutting more timber – it is about creating more economic benefit and jobs here in the state, with the same timber. In 2016, Indiana exported 32 million dollars of logs, 57 million dollars of lumber and 56 million dollars of veneer overseas. That's a whole bunch of lumber, furniture, flooring cabinets, and other products that could have been made right here in Indiana. We are partnering with Purdue University Economic Researchers, DJ Case and Associates, the State Department of Agriculture, IDNR, and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation on this. A similar strategy for the dairy industry resulted in huge dairy processing investment in the state, including Wal Mart's first-ever dairy processing facility near Fort Wayne. It worked because they were handed the data and blueprint to show them it would work, and that's what we are doing for hardwoods. Stay tuned for more details.

There is common ground these sides share, and that common ground addresses those 4 key issues that your stakeholders say are important. Clean water, biodiversity, habitat and recreation. But, when the state forest issues come up, we revert to our tribal instincts and emotions don't allow either side to give up ground, based on histories of mistrust.

Almost everyone has some level of concern about the divisiveness we see in this current era. Is it possible to use this time in our history to rally around ending the divisiveness?