







ESFPA "The People Behind New York's Healthy Forests and Quality Wood Products"

The Official Publication of the Empire State Forest Products Association

NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By John K. Bartow, Jr.

he first half of the 2025-2026 Legislative Session has adjourned and the forest products industry is somewhat better for it. We have avoided any major impacts, and we did have successes in the waning days of the Legislative Session (see article on page 3).

This Legislative Session was odd in that the Budget was 5 weeks late leaving only 6 more weeks to complete the session. While the Senate did pass bills while members waited for the leadership to negotiate a budget, the Assembly just seemed to sleep through those 5 weeks. So things post-budget moved fast and it got very chaotic at the end. Which probably kept some bad legislation at bay.

The first six months of this year also presented us with a lot of state and federal rulemakings and guidance documents for ESFPA to comment on. In all, over a dozen proposed rules. See a few of these in our Federal and State Corners.

Climate change took on some new directions. Governor Hochul earlier in the year put off work on the New York Cap & Invest rule, citing concerns about affordability and emerging concerns on the reliability of New York's electric generation and grid system. Affordability became the Governor's mantra for climate change and what had been working certainly is not affordable. We also saw the collapse of electric vehicle mandates in New York and elsewhere. More recently we have seen articles on how California and some other states are retreating on climate policy in the name of affordability. The question is will New York follow suit or double down?

At the federal level, President Trump's first hundred days in office were a whirlwind with things changing daily and setting off a lot of near panic on what he would do next. Tariffs and other retaliatory efforts sent markets diving in a lot of sectors, particularly log exports. DOGE

(the temporary Department of Government Efficiency) conducted a slash and burn effort in federal agencies and programs in efforts to significantly cut federal programs and personnel. The process of Budget reconciliation set forth the "Big Beautiful Bill" made permanent many of President Trump's first term tax cuts, took a frontal assault of spending in rescinding billions in unobligated funds under the Biden Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and clawing back funding associated to green energy and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs. These cuts together with changes in entitlement programs for Medicaid and SNAP have state budgets scrambling. In New York we will most certainly have the Legislature return to deal with what some are projecting to be between \$9 - \$11 billion in federal cuts for the SFY 2025-26 budget passed in April. Now the federal government is turning to the appropriation process for fiscal year 2026 which starts October 1st. The President proposes to cut discretionary spending by nearly 23% while increasing spending on defense and border security. This has Congress scrambling to react to constituent concerns on program cuts while still trying to support the President's efforts.

With some things behind us for 2025 we will be turning to fall and meeting with you, our members. See our preliminary line up for Regional Meetings on page 6. We are looking for your thoughts on our programming, particularly logger training and input as we look forward to 2026. We will also be hosting our Fall Forestry Roundtable on October 22nd at SUNY Adirondack in Queensbury.

It has been a busy year and it will be a busy fall. For now, enjoy these weeks of summer and be safe out there!

John Bartow

The Empire Envoy

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Founded in 1906, ESFPA is dedicated to improving the economic climate for the forest products industry and to promote management of New York's Forests to meet the resource needs of today and for future generations. ESFPA counts among its 400 members furniture companies, lumber manufacturers, forest landowners, timber harvesters, pulp and paper companies, and other wood products manufacturers from across New York State. Members own and manage 1.5 million acres of New York's forests and employ over one-third of the 60,000 individuals who work in the forests and wood-using mills around the state. The Empire Envoy is the newsletter of the Empire State Forest Products Association, Copyright® by ESFPA. Articles may be reproduced with permission of the publisher. The Empire Envoy is produced monthly for ESFPA members and interested parties. For information on subscriptions or membership, please contact ESFPA.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Jennifer DeFrancesco, ESFPA Chairperson of the Board



Levery time I sit down to write my quarterly message, I first re-read messages that I wrote earlier in my tenure as Chair. I feel it is important to reflect on where we have been, but not to get stuck there.

2025 has been a whirlwind of instability, many of the things that we are dealing with are unprecedented but some we have lived through before. If I have learned one thing

from all of it, it is that we must remain a strong and cohesive voice to make sure that we are not left behind. It doesn't matter if we are log brokers, sawmill owners, loggers or landowners – we are all the forest products industry and we need to band together. Farmers do it with great success – we can do it too.

Lately, I have spent more waking hours than I care to think about, contacting lawmakers and state and federal agencies to advocate for our businesses in the wake of tariffs and tariff countermeasures as well as regulations that threaten to cripple our already strapped businesses. The people I talk to are generally compassionate and when I ask for suggestions of what we should do next they say – "you need to make more noise".

ESFPA has helped with that tremendously. If you are not the type of person that likes to make the phone calls, maintaining your membership

(See "Message" continued on page 3)

ESFPA Sustaining Members







































A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON (continued from page 2)

and helping us to grow our outreach is the key to keeping our voice strong.

Over the next few weeks you will begin to receive information about our Regional Meetings. We want to see you at these meetings! They will be conducted in a roundtable style, with our staff and some Board members there to hear what you have to say. Non-members are

welcome, so please invite someone that you think could benefit from our services. We would love the chance to chat with them and tell them about why they should consider a membership.

The truth of the matter is that we have lost some good businesses already in 2025 and it is only half-way over. The time to act is yesterday!



STATE CORNER



LEGISLATIVE WRAP UP

On Wednesday, June 18th, at 12:36 a.m. the NYS Assembly adjourned, and we managed to avoid a lot of potentially bad legislation. All is not perfect, but we live to fight another day.

Here are some highlights:

- Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (EPR) passed the Senate but did not get through the Assembly. We will regroup this summer/fall and look to strategy in 2026.
- Tropical Rainforest Economic & Environmental Stability Act (TREES Act) passed the Senate but did not get through the Assembly.
- PFAS Discharge Disclosure Act (water) passed the Senate but did not get through the Assembly. Would have required stormwater testing and reporting for PFAS.

- Short-term Disability Benefit Increases passed the Senate but did not get through the Assembly. Would increase STDB rewards 600% over-4 years.
- Pesticides in Wetlands passed both houses and we will seek a veto. Governor Hochul has vetoed this legislation twice.
- NY Home Energy Affordable Transition Act (HEAT Act)
 "Light" The 100' Rule passed both houses but watered
 down to only eliminating the 100' rule for new connections
 to natural gas.
- Petroleum Bulk Storage Paint passed both houses. Amends a 2021 law that required facilities to paint all bulk storage tanks white or cream. The only legislation we supported that passed.

You can read our full legislative summary at www.esfpa.org.

ESFPA COMMENTS ON ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES FOR RESTORING & EXPANDING FORESTS

SFPA submitted our comments on *Eligibility Guidelines for Restoring and Expanding Forests through Reforestation and Afforestation Practices* proposed by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in the Environmental Notice Bulletin published May 21, 2025. The central theme of the guidance posed by DEC is how to best invest Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act of 2022 (Bond Act) funding in support of tree planting and forest establishment projects.

Our comments are intended to address that theme by sharing the adaptable and scientifically rigorous standards, systems, and practices used by private forest landowners that consistently lead to improved health and resilience of forests. In addition, we hope to compel a change in the Department's position of excluding "the planting of trees for future timber harvests." You can see our full comments on our web page at www.esfpa.org.

ESFPA COMMENTS ON MANDATORY GHG RULEMAKING

SFPA submitted comments on DEC's latest proposed rulemaking on Mandatory Greenhouse Gas Reporting. We made compelling arguments on how biogenic sources of emissions should be accounted for and how some of our

manufacturing processes should be exempt from the rule. Thanks to a lot of members for your thoughtful input! You can see our full comments at our website at www.esfpa.org.

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ESFPA PRESENTS AT WPDC

SFPA Executive Director John Bartow recently attended a Wood Products Development Council (WPDC) Meeting at the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets in Albany. During the meeting he gave a presentation on the State of the Forest & Wood Product Industry in New York, in which he highlighted where our sector is today and the challenges we are facing,

along with providing very high-level thoughts on what we can look forward to in the future.

John also urged WPDC to take action and begin to think seriously about what they can do financially to help benefit the wood products sector. You can see John's full PowerPoint at www.esfpa.org.

RETREAT ON CLIMATE?

Two recent interesting articles published by POLITICO focus on California's apparent retreat on climate policy over the past several months. This article was also contributed to by New York's Marie French, Politico reporter who must be eying how California may portray a possible policy reversal in New York. Then again, New York is doubling down on climate policy in light of President Trump's efforts to roll back everything green and climate in his "Big Beautiful Bill" and the administration's proposed 2026 budget proposals (see page 5). We will see in due time how "affordability" and "make business (a.k.a. polluters) pay" policies in New York and elsewhere try to balance out impacts on consumers and a sincere desire to lead on sensible climate and environmental policy.

Back in 2019, ESFPA testified on the CLCPA and cautioned the following: "The legislation mandates GHG emission reductions to 0% of 1990 emissions by 2050 in with little consideration of the technological challenges in meeting them or the economic consequences they pose on New York's businesses and industry. If adopted, these thresholds could create unachievable expectations which just cannot be attained given current

energy demands, technologies and infrastructure in New York. If adopted as written, it would create conditions unfavorable to New York's existing businesses and industries, let alone the attraction of new businesses or industries. The impact on jobs and employment could be devastating to all New Yorkers."

Today, as a nation and a State we are re-examining our climate policy and the impacts it is having on our communities and economy. How we respond will be very telling. A full retreat would not be responsible, but adjustments reflecting reality and reason could shift climate policy in a direction that could benefit us all.

Again, as we stated in 2019: "ESFPA supports efforts to address carbon emissions that in turn cause climate change in a way that maximizes the mitigation provided by forests and wood products they produce. As an Association comprised of forest landowners, practitioners and wood product manufacturers we are committed to addressing the impacts of global warming in a manner that is economically beneficial while offering viable forest related solutions to climate change."



FEDERAL CORNER -



"BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL" NOW LAW

It certainly is big and how beautiful will be settled over time, but as he promised, President Trump on July 4th signed the Big Beautiful Bill. Having passed the Senate on July 1st in a tie breaking vote cast by Vice President Vance and cleared the House after nearly failing by a vote of 218- 214 pretty much along party lines.

A synopsis from the Hardwood Federation - the legislation revives and makes permanent key business tax incentives, including the research and development tax credit which expired in 2022. The 100 percent bonus depreciation benefit which has been phasing out is also made permanent. In addition, the 20 percent deduction for S-Corporations and other pass-through entities was also made permanent. That benefit was slated to expire at the end of 2025.

Other items of interest include:

 Section 179 Expensing: Increases the maximum amount a taxpayer may expense under Sec. 179 to \$2.5 million, reduced by the amount by which the cost of qualifying property exceeds \$4 million.

- EBITA: Restores the more favorable EBITDA standard for calculating interest deductibility. The current standard is FBIT.
- **Estate Tax:** Permanently increases the estate tax exemption to \$15 million beginning in tax year 2026. This amount is indexed for inflation thereafter.
- State and Local Tax (Salt) Deduction: Provides a temporary new SALT deduction cap of \$40,000, beginning in 2025. This cap phases out at a rate of 30 percent of adjusted gross income over \$500,000, to a minimum cap of \$10,000. Starting in 2026, the applicable cap and phase out thresholds grow by 1 percent each year through 2029. In 2030, the cap reverts permanently to a maximum of \$10,000.

From the American Forest & Paper Association:

"Today's action represents a resounding victory and long-term business certainty for American manufacturers. The tax reform

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"BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL" NOW LAW

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legislation signed into law today extends key tax provisions that will likely spur long-term growth and job creation throughout the pulp, paper, packaging and tissue products manufacturing industry. Without this certainty, new projects, new facilities and more would be hanging in the balance."

"Our leaders in Congress and the administration delivered a strong tax package that should boost American manufacturing. We look forward to continuing to work toward shared priorities that reshore manufacturing jobs here in the U.S."

In the meantime, the President has issued an additional recission

package of \$9.4 billion for FY 2025 including \$8.3 billion in AID funding and over \$1 billion in funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The U.S. Supreme Court has also issued an emergency ruling allowing the President to continue slashing positions and restructuring federal agencies. While the Justices' order is temporary while another case on the matter may come to the Court, it does allow the president to proceed in is plans.

To offset costs associated with H.R. 1, the legislation eliminates a number of clean energy credits including those for biomass stoves and boilers.

THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSED 2026 SPENDING PLAN

Now that we have concluded budget reconciliation through the "Big Beautiful Bill" Congress will turn full throttle onto the Federal Fiscal Year 2026 appropriation process. President Trump's proposed 2026 budget plan released earlier this year includes significant cuts to non-defense domestic spending and increases in national security, including defense and border security. The plan proposes a \$163 billion reduction in non-defense spending while increasing defense spending by 13% to \$1.01 trillion and investing \$175 billion in Homeland Security to secure the border. While much of the 2026 budget was originally cast by the Biden Administration, President

Trump does get to propose his changes, and he certainly has done that. The President is taking 90% of the pain out of 30% of the budget by focusing on discretionary domestic spending.

The House has already started working on appropriation bills and restoring funding in areas where the President had proposed cuts. This is in part from the pain that everyone took in passing the Big Beautiful Bill and concerns about the 2026 mid-terms. The Senate will pick up on the appropriations process following summer recess and both houses will look to reconcile differences in September.

HOUSE AND SENATE APPROVE OVERTURNING CALIFORNIA WAIVERS ON ELECTRIC VEHICLES

The Senate has approved three House-backed Congressional Review Act (CRA) resolutions that overturned Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) waivers, which had effectively imposed a de facto ban on gas-powered cars in California. These waivers have been allowed under provisions of the Clean Air Act for decades. The ultimate fate of these measures will be decided

in court as the California District Attorney has threatened to bring suit. These actions by Congress also promoted New York Governor Hochul to suspend New York's rules adopting the California Clean Car Rule and Advanced Clean Truck rule for two years (see article in State Corner).

EUDR ISSUES LOW RISK STATUS FOR U.S. FORESTS

The European Union has classified the United States as low risk under the European Union Deforestation Rule (EUDR). We expect this announcement to open a robust discussion in the EU on streamlining and simplification of the law. ESFPA has worked with several of our national affiliates over the past two years on the EUDR and as noted late last year the imposition of the rule has been delayed until December 2025. This is the first series of revised guidance that we expect to see over the coming months.

Some key aspects of this action:

- 1.) Country benchmarking highlights:
- As expected, the United States is listed as low risk, as are all EU countries, China, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Uruguay. The Commission methodology to classify countries as low risk is based on the rate of deforestation and forest degradation, rate of expansion of agriculture land for EUDR commodities, and productive trends of

relevant commodities and of relevant products.

- Only four countries Belarus, North Korea, Myanmar, and Russia - are listed as high risk. Only countries subject to UN or EU sanctions are classified as high risk.
- All other countries are standard risk, including most Latin American countries (including Brazil), Indonesia, and Malaysia.
- 2.) While this is welcome news, it's important to note that the low-risk designation does not eliminate the administrative reporting requirements our sector faces under the law. Low-risk designation only reduces required audits by EU competent authorities to a minimum of 1%.
- This designation does not eliminate the major concern our sector has with the geolocation requirements under the EUDR for timber harvesting.

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FUDR

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Our focus turns now to advocating for streamlined requirements for forest products from low-risk countries, namely the removal of geolocation requirements. We will continue our work with our national affiliates toward a focus on simplification.

More recently, the Wall Street Journal reported that a deal on nontariff trade issues imposed by the European Union, including the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), appears to be on the horizon. While it is unknown exactly what will be in a final deal when and if it emerges, the Hardwood Federation has confirmed that the U.S. government is pushing hard to ensure a delay of EUDR implementation until the end of 2026 and eliminate the geolocation requirements in the rule.



ESFPA NEWS



ESFPA REGIONAL MEETING SCHEDULE

SFPA Staff and Board are currently putting together our annual fall Regional Meeting schedule. We are planning several meetings across the state in a slightly different format than usual. We are looking at more informal settings like fire halls and community centers and focusing on more listening and input from members. We are also doing specific targeting to loggers around the state to see how we and New York Logger Training can better serve our logging professionals.

As we have done in recent years, ESFPA will continue to merge the Annual and Regional meeting agendas together. This procedure has been adopted so all members have the opportunity to vote on the ESFPA Board of Directors. Members will receive a Regional Meeting notice including a list of the slate of candidates for our 2025 Directors as well as the call for new nominations.

As we go to print, ESFPA is planning Regional Meetings to begin in September, and culminate in the first week of October. Locations include:

- Saranac Lake
- Cortland
- Western Adirondacks
- Southern Tier Central
- Delaware County
- Western New York
- Lake George

More information will be sent out by the end of August.

We look forward to seeing you all in your backyard!

LOG-A-LOAD FOR KIDS: HELP FOR THIS YEAR'S WOODSMEN'S FIELD DAYS

The Woodsmen's Field Days are coming up fast, and so is your chance to make a big impact through Log-A-Load For Kids. This effort supports Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, where your donations help save lives and bring hope to families in crisis.

We are not asking for much. Just what you can give. Loose change. A check. A quick Venmo. It all makes a difference. The need is real, and the time is now.

This year, we also need help at the Log-A-Load booth. Whether you can stay for an hour or spend the weekend, your presence matters. The work is simple and fun, and the reward is meaningful.

Be part of something good. Join us August 15 to 17 at Woodsmen's Field Days in Boonville. Come lend a hand, catch up with friends in the industry, and help make miracles happen for kids who need us.

To donate an item: Email Gabriella at gabriella@esfpa.org or Mark at mark.mowrey75@gmail.com

To make a donation: Call Dorian Johnson at (518) 463-1297 Or use Venmo: @ESFF-LogALoad

Thank you for being part of this effort. We cannot do it without you!

ROOTED IN FORESTRY: THE JOURNEY OF SUE KEISTER

Sue Keister grew up on Long Island during the rise of environmental movement. Her childhood offered a frontrow seat to the consequences of development and the conversion of natural spaces. Although some may find it hard to believe, she remembers that their local volunteer fire department as being equipped with brush trucks to put out the fires that would occur in the stands of natural pitch pine that at one time surrounded her home.

The 1970's was a time when more and more girls who had an interest in science and decent grades had options other than the traditional medical world to explore (especially, as Sue reports, nursing for girls). She applied to and got accepted at the College of Environmental Science and Forestry, majoring in what was then called Resource Management (a.k.a the forestry track). She was captivated by the decision-based nature of the education that often involved tough, real-world choices. As she

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SUE KEISTER

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puts it: "Toilet paper versus never cut a tree down—that is the question!" Though Sue was a good student and actually had better grades then a male classmate who also got into the same freshman class at ESF (who never did complete his degree), her placement was questioned by some as a privileged admission because of her sex.

Sue moved to western NY right after college, settling there, right after a whirlwind honeymoon to the northwest where they visited a redwood sawmill, a high lead log job and flew, in a chartered plane, as close as one could (five mile limit at the time) over the newly erupted Mt St Helen's volcano, because her husband, 4 years her senior, had landed a job working as a forester for the NYS-DEC. Limited by geography and in an area with a robust but fragmented forest product's industry, Sue pieced together work experience which included: working for a forestry consulting firm, timber buying, three positions with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and as the Environmental Resource Manager at a small, family-owned gravel company. In 1998, Sue started her own Environmental Resource and Forestry Consulting Company, Susan J. Keister, LLC which morphed into her current firm, Keister Consulting, Inc. Starting her own business allowed her to continue working in her profession while at the same time having the flexibility need for her newly created family. In hindsight, she often jokes, "Everyone ought to start a business at the same time they become a first-time mom!".

Her first office was a converted bedroom next to her son's room, where he often fell asleep to the sound of client calls and forest management discussions. Although her son grew up and took on a completely different profession (graphic art and design) given his early and seemingly endless (from his perspective) non-stop immersion in all things resource-related he can still hold his own in discussions with both his parents and others regarding resource management, forestry and general environmental topics. Sue reports that her son once remarked after she gave him a quick lecture regarding a seed tree cut on forest service land as they whizzed by on the highway heading from Wisoncon's lake district back to his Milwaukee apartment, "Gee, thanks, mom, for that. Not everyone's mom can give a forestry lesson while driving 60 mph down the highway."

Over time, the business expanded. KCI now occupies a dedicated office space within their home and employs GIS mapping staff, field crews, and an administrative assistant. While Sue has worked on everything from wetlands mitigation to mine permitting and 480a forest management plans, today the firm focuses on forest-based projects, including timber harvests, tree planting, carbon inventories, and NRCS plan writing and practice implementation.

When Sue started her career, it wasn't uncommon to be one of only three women in a room of 100. Although roughly half of her 1980 college class were women, the poor economy and the frequent need to relocate discouraged many from pursuing forest management. In those early days, women's safety gear was nonexistent. Sue recalls that women's steel toed boots didn't exist making her and her female cohort make due with men's sizes. She even knows one woman who was refused the sale of steel toe boots because she was a woman, despite needing this safety gear for her job with the forest service. Sue remarked that she just smiles when she saw women's steel toe boots in pink! Nothing, she reports she would have ever imagined when first starting her career.

Despite the challenges, some of which all young and upcoming professionals face despite gender, , Sue earned respect. She recalls one particular instance when a logger claimed his crew wouldn't listen to her because she was a woman. She simply retorted that if they didn't want to comply and work, she wouldn't release their performance bond. Problem solved.

Over the years, Sue has observed that the most significant changes in the forestry industry have been driven by advances in science and a growing understanding of sustainable forest management. The industry has made great strides in moving from tradition-bound practices to evidence-based decision-making and the science of silviculture. Sue proudly stands by the work she and her colleagues in the forest products sector have accomplished. Sue emphasizes that forestry is deeply interconnected with the forest products industry, and one cannot succeed without the other.

One of Sue's proudest accomplishments involved regenerating oak on a challenging 100-acre site. Oak regeneration is notoriously difficult, but despite the obstacles of client skepticism, drought, deer and the need to implement a 100 acre clear cut (which is notable visible from many vantage points through an otherwise forested and scenic finger lakes valley) the oak returned. It was a success born of both hope, client education and ultimate support, the collaborative efforts and input of many in the area's forestry community. Sue's personal philosophy is: Every forest is unique, and management decisions should reflect the desired outcome. The target isn't the harvested timber, that is the byproduct. The target ss the residual forest. It matters what we leave behind.

To Sue, a career in forestry is like a hike. There are uphill climbs, detours, and stormy days, but the view at the top makes it all worthwhile. Sue approached her work with humility, curiosity and collaboration. Listening became one of her strongest skills, and by trusting the experience of others, Sue earned trust in return. Sue believes that success in forestry comes from a willingness to learn from experience and to trust the people you work with. Bringing diverse skillsets to the table and working together toward a shared goal is key. For women entering non-traditional fields, she emphasizes the importance of respecting those who came before, learning from seasoned professionals, and valuing the expertise of others. It's all about building mutual respect and working side by side to achieve something greater.

Throughout her career, Sue has also been deeply involved in advocacy and leadership roles. Her work with the Empire State Forest Products Association (ESFPA) and the New York Society of American Foresters (SAF) allowed her to help shape policy and industry standards. When she first joined the ESFPA Board in 2012, she saw that opportunity was available to all and that it was how individuals used it that mattered. Sue brought a broader worldview to the Board, shaped by experiences outside of traditional forestry. She believes these perspectives enriched discussions and helped move the industry forward. As she transitions to a more office-based role, Sue remains proud of what she's built. Her focus on technology, protocols, and science-based decision-making has helped KCI deliver high-quality, efficient work. And she's not done yet.

"I plan to stay active in the forest products and consulting industry. I love what I do—and I'm good at it. We're making a difference, one 40-acre woodlot at a time."

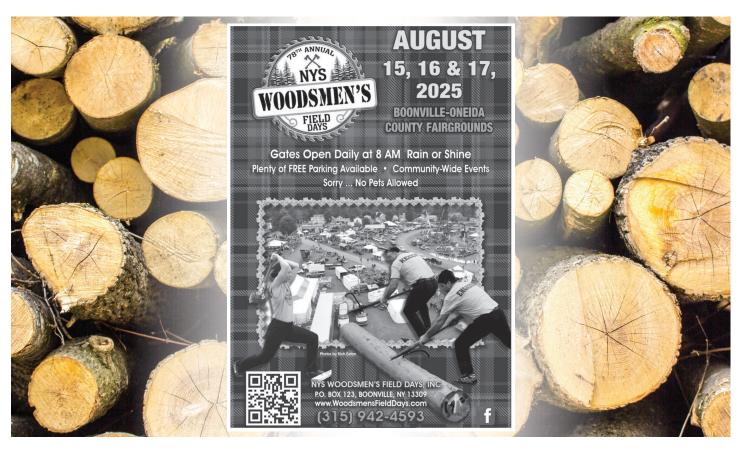
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