



Good Riddance 2020!



Danny Dructor – Executive Vice President

As we look back on the year 2020, the majority of us can probably say it can't happen fast enough! With the COVID-19 pandemic, catastrophic wildfires, hurricanes, mill explosions, the downturn in hardwood markets resulting from tariffs, extremely wet operating conditions and shuttered paper and sawmills in many parts of the country, 2020 has been without a doubt, one of the roughest and toughest years for professional loggers and log truckers to keep their businesses afloat, no pun intended.

It started with the tariffs and ended with the extended wildfire and hurricane season, and somewhere in between the issues that surrounded the COVID-19 pandemic. While loggers remained an essential service provider, many of the mills that we produced to could not maintain enough personnel to run their facilities due to the illness.

At a time when paper products in the US such as toilet paper were flying off of store shelves, loggers supplying the raw fiber need to produce those products were seeing their delivered prices drop. As do it yourself projects picked up because of the stay at home mandates, lumber prices soared due to the shortage of lumber caused, in part, by lack of mill capacity due to employee shortages.

We asked both Congress and the Administration for some type of relief package to help those businesses that are struggling stay afloat long enough to reorganize their business plans in order to do just that, stay in business. While we had some help from both sides of the aisle in both the House and the Senate, the ability of Congress to pass legislation of any form was curtailed by the partisan politics that seem to be the new norm in Washington, DC.

Meanwhile, we found that the United States Department of Agriculture failed to see the similarities between agricultural producers and loggers and our attempts at getting assistance by way of the CFAP program were rejected, perhaps because the advisors to the Secretary do not understand our industry or perhaps the Secretary himself was not interested enough in the issue. We provided them with the data generated by Forest2Market showing the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic on the logging and log trucking industry, but to no avail. Meanwhile, commercial Christmas Tree growers are eligible for the program even as they are set to have a banner year as social distancing and stay at home policies are still in effect in many states across the US. Go figure?

Loggers are survivors as well as adaptors. Once again the majority of you have risen to the occasion and figured out a way to make a go of it, but there have been casualties, many that could have been avoided with an assistance program from the federal government.

Besides legislation that we have worked on for many years such as the Safe Routes Act and the Future Logging Careers Act, it has become evident that one important recognition needs to be made and that is to create parity between logging and the rest of the agricultural commodity producers. We aren't going to cry for assistance every time the ground gets too wet to work or another mill goes down due to market fluctuations, but logging and log trucking businesses should have the opportunity, the same as the other agricultural producers, to at least qualify for low interest loans or even small forgivable loans when pandemics that are totally out of our control shut down the businesses and markets that we rely on to deliver our product to.

2020 can't get out of here fast enough, but we will have our work cut out for us in 2021.

Wishing each and every one of you a safe, happy and blessed Christmas season and a prosperous 2021!

The American Loggers Council is an 501(c)(6) not for profit trade association representing professional timber harvesters throughout the United States. For more information please contact the American Loggers Council at 409-625-0206, or americanlogger@aol.com, or visit our website at www.amloggers.com