

Trade, Efficiency Top Annual Presentations

A great crowd of members and guests participated in the 2026 Annual Meeting and received useful information on hardwood issues.

There was also time for networking and sports and it marked the official change in leadership. Details follow in this report that begins with the business presentations:

SUSTA Connects Foreign Buyers

Danielle Coco of the Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA) explained ways the organization helps exporters reach new markets. The agency works with agriculture companies in 14 southern states and the territory of Puerto Rico to develop marketing plans, attend international shows and trade missions, and provide market information to members.

SUSTA works closely with the American Hardwood Export Council and other groups. SUSTA can also provide 50% cost share / reimbursement for export marketing expenses.

Companies are required to submit a marketing plan and complete financial forms for payment. Coco said the agency has inbound trade missions



Roy Zangari, Meadow River Lumber, (right) hands the Chairman's gavel to Scott Cummings, Cummings Lumber, for 2026-27
See Trustee list on page 2

and sellers meet with potential customers. AHMI will participate in late March with a group from Vietnam who will be in North Carolina.

Automation Progress In 2026

Four companies provided details on ways manufacturers can improve efficiency in 2026:

Peter McCarty of TS Manufacturing explained that a new processing equipment can improve the volume of lumber in packs. TS has perfected a system that sorts boards based on pack widths and has increased volume as much as 10%. McCarty said this increases footage in kilns and shipments.

Bob Arnold of USNR discussed automated grading systems and improvements in recent months. The company continues to add units at Appalachian sawmills while fine tuning image samples.

Arnold reported that installation and startup time has been reduced substantially. Many customers are sharing data and operation details.

Scott Stringer of DMSi explained key changes in software development. The company has launched artificial intelligence in its software to help sales teams gain time and accuracy in orders.

The AI Sales Agent helps both outside and inside sales teams improve efficiency. Stringer added other developments in timber and lumber inventory programs. These save valuable time for multiple levels in any company.

(See Annual Meeting on page 3)



Roy Zangari, Meadow River Lumber, was presented an engraved leather travel bag, gift certificates and plaque as thank you for serving as chairman. He is pictured with his wife, Lynn.

The way I see it...

By Tom Inman, AHMI President

....the 2026 Annual Meeting of Appalachian Hardwood Manufacturers Inc. was a great success by all measures.

We had good attendance with many new faces this time. There were excellent business presentations on key topics, fun sporting events and receptions and an outstanding closing banquet sponsoring by PLM Insurance.

The presentations are highlighted on page 1 of this newsletter. The sporting event winners are on page 3.

The sentiment of attendees as to the future of the hardwood lumber industry is still waiting to see what sparks a production and sales return. The wait has been on since 2024!

The dialogue centered on when will markets return. The hardwood industry has lost a growing portion of cabinet, furniture, flooring and millwork to substitute materials. These are lead by plastics but also include wood byproducts glued together.

AHMI continues it push to educate manufacturers about the benefits of solid Appalachian hardwood for their products. Some buyers are responding with inquiries about available supply.

That will be the emphasis of work for the new AHMI Officers and Trustees. It will be a daunting task in 2026 but these owners and managers are up for the challenge!

I would like to thank Roy Zangari of Meadow River Lumber Co. for his service as Chairman the past two years. He has been a pleasure to work with and we have achieved several key successes - expansion of Certified Appalachian; substantial increase in the number of export lumber buyers reached; and initial development of social media videos.

Roy and his wife, Lynn, have been excellent ambassadors for the Appalachian industry at events across the region. Both have represented us well and will continue advising in the role of past chairman.

AHMI presented him with a leather gentleman's travel bag, gift certificates and a plaque. AND Roy pulled his own name for the Early Bird drawing!



Chairman Roy Zangari (center) thanks retiring board members David Pierson (left) and Jamie Coleman. Not pictured Sebastian Church.

AHMI Approves 2026-27 Officers & Trustees

The 2026-27 AHMI Board officers and trustees were approved at the Annual Meeting:

Chairman: Scott Cummings, Cummings Lumber Co., Inc., Troy, PA

Vice Chairman: Jamie Coleman, Robert S. Coleman Lumber, Culpeper, VA

Past Chair: Roy Zangari, Meadow River Hardwood Lumber, Rainelle, WV

Vice Chair Finance: Tony Honeycutt, Mullican Flooring LP, Johnson City, TN

Trustees

Nick Boyles, AFP Lumber, Buckhannon, WV *first term*

Monty Burnett, Smith Mtn. Lumber, Huddleston, VA *first term*

Jeff Gowder, Southern Forest Products, Appalachia, VA

Wayne Law, New River Hardwoods, Mountain City, TN *first term*

Andy Nuffer, RAM Forest Products, Shinglehouse, PA

Patrick Parton, Parton Lumber Co., Rutherfordton, NC

Joe Pryor, Oaks Unlimited, Inc., Waynesville, NC

John Pysh, Pennsylvania Hardwoods, Pleasantville, PA

Ray White, Jr., Harold White Lumber, Inc., Morehead, KY

Distributor

Geoff Hillenmeyer, Middle Tennessee Lumber, Burns, TN *first term*

Mark Vollinger, W.M. Cramer Lumber Co., Hickory, NC

Jia Zheng, ATI International, Roanoke, VA *first term*

Consumer

Bob Dudek, Conestoga Wood Specialties, East Earl, PA *first term*

Forestry

Chris Osborne, Kentucky River Properties, Hazard, KY

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Stiles Inc.'s Chuck Carter said wage inflation in manufacturing has accelerated while productivity remains constant for many companies. He noted plants now pay 30-40% more than pre-pandemic wages for machine operators.

"Automation allows production with fewer operators, improved yield and throughput, and reduced injury risk," Carter said. Stiles provides a host of solutions for feeding, stacking and ripping operations with payback in as little as two years.

AHMI Group Health, Retirement Programs

Delta Wealth explained its IRS Section 125 wellness benefit options for AHMI member companies. The program provides screening, and educational classes to improve health.

It is funded through tax savings for both the employee and employer which can amount to thousands of dollars annually.

UBS Wealth Management explained the AHMI 401k Multiple Employee Program that offers retirement planning and investment accounts. AHMI companies have more than \$40 million invested.

Annual Business & Board Elections

The AHMI Annual Meeting offered reports on promotions, membership and finances. The association will emphasize Certified Appalachian and expand outreach to secondary manufacturers.

The AHMI Nominating Committee reported its slate of 2026-27 officers and trustees. The slate was approved as presented and is listed on page 2 of this newsletter.

Producers Meeting

AHMI is one of the few groups that has a Producers Meeting where sawmill members gather to discuss common issues. The group talked of log availability from the US Forest Service completing salvage harvests after Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina.

The logs remain in good shape 18 months after the storm because many were blown over with the root ball intact. The USFS is selling the material by the ton so the cost is low and potential for quality saw logs is high.

Thank You Sponsors

AHMI thanks the following companies for their sponsorships to support the association and improve the Annual Meeting:

PLM Insurance
UBS Wealth Management
Stringer Industries
USNR
Delta Wealth
AFP Logs & Lumber
Stiles Machinery
SII Dry Kilns
Corley Manufacturing
TMX
TS Manufacturing
Penn-Sylvan International
DMSi
Farm Credit of VAs
TimberSync
AgSouth Farm Credit
New River Hardwoods
Southern Forest Products
Unaka Forest Products

Sporting Event Winners

AHMI 2026 Annual Meeting sporting events were fun for participants. The winners were:

Friday Golf: Low Gross - 1st Sawyer McCarty;
2nd Peter McCarty;

Low Net - 1st Jeff Gowder; 2nd Paul Zheng

Closest to the Pin #4 - Matthew Burnette

Closest to the Pin #17 - John Pysh

Long Drive - Justin Tanner

Saturday golf team play: 1st place - Jeff Gowder & Matthew Burnette; 2nd place - Peter & Sawyer McCarty

Fishing Tournament: Most Fish - Robert Wagner; Largest Fish - Will Parton

Croquet: 1st place - Matt Guterrez and Jia Zheng

Early Bird Prize: Roy Zangari

The AHMI 2026 Summer Conference is planned for August 1-4 at Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg, VA. More details will be announced soon.

Farm Bill Cleanup Advances In US House

By Dana Lee Cole, Hardwood Federation

In early March, the House Agriculture Committee marked up and reported the Farm, Food and National Security Act of 2026. The Committee vote was 34-17, with seven Democrats joining all Republicans on the committee to pass the legislation.

The Farm Bill is home to several programs that are critically important to the entire forest products value chain, including the hardwood sector. This Farm Bill reauthorization cycle has been extraordinary in that the two main drivers of a Farm Bill rewrite—Title 1 which addresses row crop and dairy subsidies and Title 4 which houses the nutrition programs—were cleaved off and passed as part of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) signed by the President July 4, 2025. One positive of this action is that last year's statute also includes language reauthorizing and doubling funding for the Hardwood Federation-supported export promotion programs, namely the Foreign Market Development and Market Access Programs. This was a huge win for our sector. The OBBBA established a new Agriculture Trade Promotion and Facilitation Program that houses both MAP and FMD and makes these two programs permanent.

The bad news is that there are number of other Hardwood Federation-supported programs authorized by the Farm Bill that were left in limbo. Among those programs left out of the OBBBA are the Wood Innovation Grant and Community Wood Grant programs, and all of the biomass energy incentive programs in the Farm Bill's Energy Title.

The House Agriculture Committee-approved bill would do the following:

- Renews and updates both the Wood Innovation and Community Wood Grant programs. Both of these initiatives have pumped meaningful dollars into the rural economy to stand up innovative wood manufacturing facilities, upgrades at existing sawmills and deployment of biomass combined heat and power projects, among other things.

- Alters the Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE), a workforce development grant program, to include the forestry and forest products manufacturing sectors. This approach effectively bolts the

Jobs in the Woods Act language onto an existing, nearly identical worker pathway program.

- Codifies the concept of biomass carbon neutrality and binds the U.S. Department of Agriculture to assign a greenhouse gas emissions factor of no more than zero to emissions from forest-based biomass energy. While the language does not cover the most critical agency—EPA—the Hardwood Federation will be working with our allies to expand this language to cover all of the federal government footprint as the bill proceeds.

- Reauthorizes and improves the Forest Inventory and Analysis program. FIA monitors the health of our country's forest resource and its credible data is the centerpiece of our sustainability claims.

- Renews Energy title programs incentivizing biomass heat and power projects. Among those programs are the Rural Energy for America Program and the Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels which is a direct payment program for producers of advanced biofuels, including wood pellet producers. This title also reauthorizes the Biomass Crop Assistance Program.

While the legislation received bipartisan support in committee, its future is uncertain as it moves forward in the legislative process. Ranking Member Angie Craig (D-MN) was critical of the measure leading up to and throughout the committee markup. Democrat Members of Congress have opposed cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in H.R. 1 last year.

In the Senate, Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee Chairman John Boozman (R-AR) has signaled that he intends to markup a Farm Bill reauthorization measure in the coming months, but as Yogi Berra famously quipped "it's getting late early."

Legislating in the 119th Congress will slow to a halt the closer we get to the November mid term elections. Passage may come down to the mad legislative dash that now seems to be an annual event in D.C.

The Hardwood Federation team will continue to work the process aggressively to secure our priorities in whatever Farm Bill product emerge.

Member Benefits

401k Multiple Employer Plan

AHMI members can enroll in the **AHMI 401(k) Multiple Employer Plan** for existing retirement accounts or start new programs for employees. Participants have access to low-cost investments like large corporate plans. There is also no individual company audit requirement, saving staff time and creating efficiencies.

Adopting employers have plan design flexibility and can retain their individual plan features such as a matching formula, vesting, and eligibility. AHMI's retirement consultants, Tampa Wealth Management Group | UBS Financial Services, have over 50 years of retirement plan experience. Contact: John Faircloth 813-227-2892 and Michael Carey 813-227-2837 or AHMI at 336-885-8315.

Group Health, Wellness

AHMI member companies have access to group health insurance and group wellness programs.

The **Benefit Health Plan Inc.** offers four health insurance options and the largest independent, nationwide primary preferred provider organization. There are 920,000 practitioners, 4,800 acute care hospitals and 87,000 ancillary facilities in system.

Employer's Choice offers wellness options that are partially funded by tax savings under ACA. These preventative care programs lower long-term health risks and pair with existing health insurance or the new AHMI/BHPI group medical plan

Call **Delta Wealth Services** today at (828) 382-7755 or email info@DeltaWealthServices.com to schedule a time with a dedicated agent.

Lumber Payroll software

Dough HCM LLC offers unique, proprietary technology to its customers through **Lumber Payroll**. It is specific to the hardwood industry payroll needs and offers electronic access to wages.

AHMI members will be guaranteed a minimum cost reduction from their existing providers. As more AHMI members adopt, Lumber Payroll increases the rebate. For more information, contact Nick Koen at Lumber Payroll at (315) 750-9031 or email: nick@lumberpayroll.com.

AHMI Event Calendar

AHMI plans to attend the following events to promote AHMI member companies and products. Members are welcome to participate in the AHMI exhibit and we can assist with registration if required. Please check with the AHMI office:

2026

March 25: **SUSTA Trade Mission**, Greensboro, NC

March 26-28: **NWPCA**, Fort Lauderdale, FL

April 16-18: **Expo Richmond**, Doswell, VA

April 21-22: **NWFA Flooring Expo**, Orlando, FL

April 25-29: **High Point Furniture Market**, High Point, NC

April 30-May 3: **ALC Meeting**, North Myrtle Beach, SC

May 13: **DHA Annual Meeting**, Asheville, NC

June 3-4: **Furniture Manufacturing Expo**, Charlotte, NC

June 9-10: **Hardwood Federation Fly In**, Washington, DC

Aug. 1-4: **AHMI Summer Conference**, Williamsburg, VA

Aug. 24-28: **International Woodworking Fair**, Atlanta, GA

Sep. 8: **ALC**, Tryon, NC

Sep. 16-18: **NHLA Convention**, Cleveland, OH

Oct. 17-21: **High Point Furniture Market**, High Point, NC

Oct. 19: **ISFD Pinnacle Awards**, High Point, NC

Nov. 10: **ALC**, Johnson City, TN

For more information, please contact the AHMI office at (336) 885-8315 or info@appalachianhardwood.org.

Appalachian For Your Exhibits

AHMI has brochures, books, wood sample kits and other materials member companies can use in exhibitions to explain the benefits of Appalachian Hardwoods and forest management.

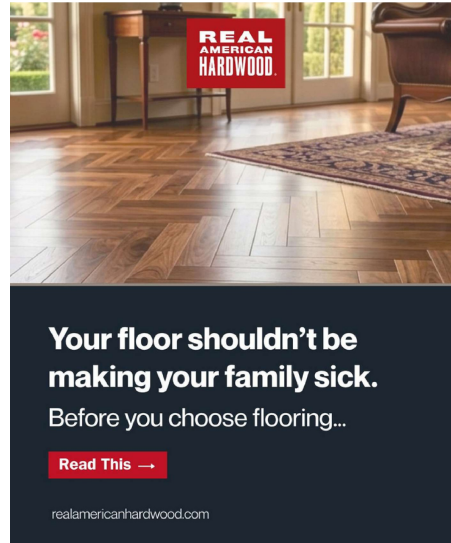
We also have videos and slide presentations for interactive messaging. Please contact info@appalachianhardwood.org.

RAH Boosts Reach With Videos, Posts

Real American Hardwood continues to push out new social media posts and videos that are hard-hitting the substitutes!

Posts in March have told consumers that their floors should not be making them sick, that Real American Hardwood is authentic and provides character to any home and some materials are made to be replaced - solid hardwood evolves!

Please visit Real American Hardwood on Instagram and Facebook and share these posts.



RAH is stepping up its marketing with hard-hitting facts about the dangers in wood substitutes.

Follow us and continue to learn more about the resource.

Reach out today to learn more at realamericanhardwood.com/industry.

Watch a variety of videos at:

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/26608719435379349>

April 17-18 In Doswell



Join thousands of forestry professionals at EXPO Richmond 2026 - the 40th East Coast Sawmill, Logging & Pallet Equipment Exposition on April 17-18.

Experience two full days of exhibits, live machinery demonstrations, hands-on product exploration, and industry-leading educational sessions. Experience the best networking events for forestry professionals in the Mid-Atlantic region.

There are more than 300 indoor and outdoor exhibitors showcasing sawmilling, kiln drying, pallet manufacturing and wood processing technologies. There will also be harvesting and biomass machinery, material handling, trucking, and optimization solutions.

For more information, visit www.exporichmond.com.

NHLA Offers Sawmills Benchmarking Study

NHLA and The Beck Group is currently offering a **Hardwood Lumber Benchmarking Study and Competitive Assessment**. The program provides a confidential assessment to help participating mills understand their operational and financial performance relative to peers.

The study collects data from participants to evaluate costs, staffing, yields, and sales realizations. Each participating mill will receive customized, confidential reports.

Recruitment is now open with data collection in March and reporting scheduled for April through June.

There was a seminar recently that detailed the project. It is available for review at:

<https://www.nhla.com/national-hardwood-academy/webinars>

For more information or to register, visit www.nhla.com.