



July 28, 2004

Dear Editor:

I am writing to address misconceptions about the forest products industry that have been published in recent articles across the entire state of Missouri.

These articles have painted the forest products industry, and timber harvesters (loggers) in particular, as a renegade profession designed to simultaneously cheat individuals out of their product and profit. As we all know, blanket statements about any profession are rarely true, and this case is no different. These articles, authored by industry professionals, carry extreme levels of bias and self-promotion that double as scare tactics to receive more business from landowners.

These individuals turned amateur authors have failed to include within their articles that the resources have always been in place for verification of timber harvesters through programs offered by the Missouri Forest Products Association and the Missouri Department of Conservation. The MFPA trained logger is educated in ethical business practices, general forest management, water quality protection, minimizing residual damage as well as safe and efficient harvesting.

In rural Missouri a logger usually has a reputation, whether it is good or bad. This reputation is what keeps them in business or not in business. Many independent loggers have family roots in the business and a long-term reputation for honesty. This adversity to risk has kept many loggers from anything other than a fair living. I know few, if any, loggers becoming rich. If you talk to a landowner who is having his timber cut, he either knows the logger or has been recommended by another landowner.

In conclusion I would like to emphasize that logging is not a glorious living. It is dangerous and risky, requiring the skills of a salesman, surveyor and mechanic. Without them we as an industry would not exist. Every year this state and the country loses loggers to higher paying, lower risk jobs. Trained loggers, trained timber consultants and educated landowners are all equally responsible and important in the equation for a successful forest products industry.

As in any business practice, it is always important to use common sense along with good business practices when soliciting bids. The association is now offering an on-line timber sale program as a viable solution to many of these problems. These best behavior practices will go a long way to protect the landowner. Anyone in the industry should feel free to access the MFPA website (www.moforest.org), to find local foresters and loggers.

To anyone who thinks loggers are getting rich by cheating landowners, buy a skidder, a saw and a truck, hire one or two people and see just how easy it is.

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