

RTA Members Gather In Orlando To Make Connections, Exchange Ideas & Network With Peers



Members of the Railway Tie Association convened Oct. 2-5 at the Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek in Orlando, Fla., for the Annual RTA Symposium and Technical Conference.

The conference offered attendees the opportunity to engage with vendors and network with colleagues in the exhibit area positioned just outside the meeting space

during breaks and before and after business sessions.

Representatives from several railroad, forestry and wood-based trade and member associations were among the presenters this year, providing insight into the wood tie industry from the perspective of their own organizations.

Spreading the Conference sessions over three days allowed members to enjoy business sessions in the morning before meeting with colleagues, checking in with the office, or participating in optional activities such as the annual golf tournament, a chocolate-making experience or a brewery tour.

Other notable sessions provided information on economic and legislative issues facing the industry now and in the coming year; hardwood supply; research and innovation; wood preservative updates; and

railroad engineering and tie procurement plans.

In addition to business sessions and exhibits from wood tie industry vendors, industry veterans were honored for their contributions to the industry during an evening banquet. Comedian Mark Cordes entertained and enlightened attendees during interviews with Branding Hammer recipient Ed Sparks of CSX and Silver Saw recipient Ricky Fly of Fly Timber. Broad Axe recipient John Heller of Koppers (retired) was unable to attend.

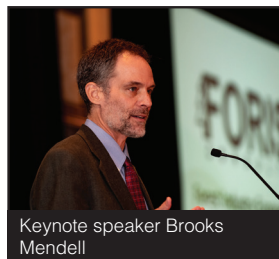
Please enjoy the following recap of the conference in photos provided by Gary Coleman and make plans now to attend the 105th Annual RTA Symposium & Technical Conference Oct. 16-19 at the Westin Buckhead in Atlanta. More details about the 2023 event will be posted at RTA.org as they become available. ■

Monday Sessions & Activities

Dr. Brooks Mendell, CEO of FORISK, provided the keynote address on Monday, Oct. 2, during which he discussed forest ownership, forest carbon and the economics of the forest industry. Mendell's presentation was followed by an update from landowners and foresters. After a brief networking break, representatives from allied associations provided an update on legislation that could impact the wood tie industry. Business sessions wrapped up at noon, and attendees were dismissed for lunch, the Chocolate Kingdom Tour, private meetings or networking on their own. Later in the evening, the group reconvened for the annual President's Reception before heading out to dinner on their own.



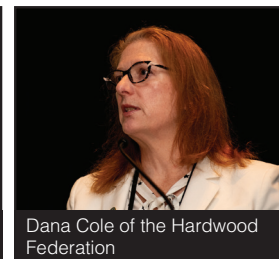
Michael Skeen giving the safety briefing



Keynote speaker Brooks Mendell



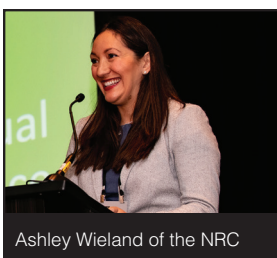
Group listening to the keynote



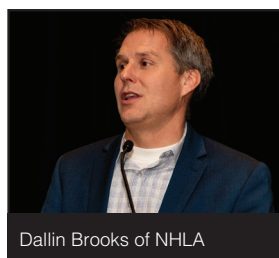
Dana Cole of the Hardwood Federation



David Caldwell of *Hardwood Market Report*



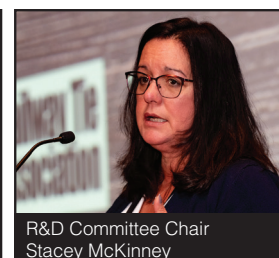
Ashley Wieland of the NRC



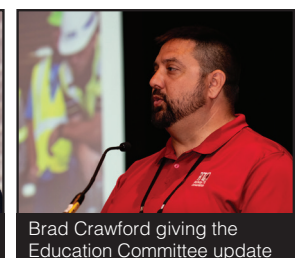
Dallin Brooks of NHLA



Jim and James Renfro of Wood Care Systems giving their VendorMercial



R&D Committee Chair Stacey McKinney



Brad Crawford giving the Education Committee update

RTA TIE GRADING SEMINAR

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Be prepared for a rigorous three days including:

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- And more!

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RTA
Railway Tie
Association

Monday Sessions & Activities



John McGinley (left) and Tom Mitchell catching up



Nick Mood talks to visitors at National Salvage's exhibit



Jim Jordie (left) and Eddie Horton smiling for the camera



Doug Mellott with (from left) James Edwards, Jordan Estes and Rob Pearce



Rob Pearce (left) with Paul Cabrol and Amanda Battisti



From left, David Brazeale, Mike Diraimondo, Ronald Holland and Bill Behan



Kristine Storm with Amanda Battisti



Zach Hansen is with Bruce Emberly at the Lewis Bolt & Nut exhibit table.



From left, Howard Tomlinson, Shane Rice and Doug Mellott



Curtis Schopp (left) with Nick Mood, Jorge Velez, Steven Barr and Will Long



Mark Manning talking with folks at the Nisus exhibit table



It is always great to see Tim Ries at an event!



Jason Thompson speaking with Ashley Wieland at the Taylor Machine Works table



Silver Saw Award winner Ricky Fly with his wife Dotty, daughter Jessica, and grandkids Storm and Steel

Chocolate Kingdom Tour



The group listens intently to the chocolate tour guide



Heather and Will Cumberland launching their marshmallow while Dotty Fry sends hers into the air



Dean and Desiree Dalquist getting some of the good stuff



Who doesn't love champagne out of a chocolate glass?



Someone's pretty excited about freshly made chocolate



Jim Jordie enjoying his treat while Misty Crawford looks on



That looks like a happy group!



And another one!

President's Reception



Gene and Rhonda Dodson at the President's Reception



Salinda and Kenny Peden



Ben Leidy with Ted Woerle catching up as Kimberly and Daryl Mesch look on



From left, Jorge Velez, Bob Baeppler, Jonathan Whitehead and Will Long



Brian Cruzen with fiancée, Paige



Victoria and Curtis Schopp



RTA ladies, from left, Rhema Behan, Michaela Andreykovich and Lynn Diraimondo



New Nisus President Lee Barrett with Ken Laughlin



North American Tie and Timber team members, from left, Brett Moler, Glenn Floresca, Bud Bartley and Julie Moler



John McDonald doing his best Usain Bolt imitation



Chuck and Tracy Swann are with Rita and Jeff Jordan



Amy and Jim Raines



Dawn Campbell with Paul Cabrol



Joshua Marschke with Ed Sparks



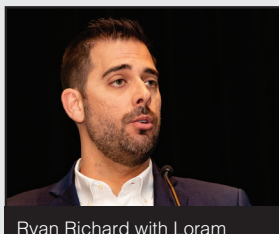
Travis and Courtney Gross

Tuesday Sessions & Activities

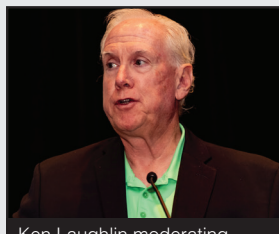
Tuesday morning's sessions kicked off with a panel discussion on research and innovation, where attendees heard from professionals from LORAM Technologies, Omaha Track, Mississippi State University, and the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. This session was followed by reports from railroad engineering professionals on capital improvements projects and expected tie needs. When business sessions wrapped up, attendees had the option to participate in the golf tournament, a brewery tour or spend time working, meeting or spend time on their own. The business of the day concluded with the banquet, where RTA award recipients were honored by RTA Executive Director Dr. Nate Irby with commemorative plaques.



Jim Hansen giving an update on NAMRC



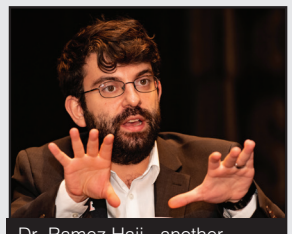
Ryan Richard with Loram presenting at the Research and Innovation Session



Ken Laughlin moderating the Research and Innovation Session



Brent Starr answering questions from group



Dr. Ramez Hajj - another speaker at Research and Innovation Session



Lisa Roberts listening intently



Jeff Peterson of Omaha Track speaking during the Research & Innovation Session



Dr. Beth Stokes rounds out the session's presentations.



Ed Sparks of CSX is the first presenter of the Railroad Engineering Session.



Adam Bankston of BNSF



Daniel Torres of Union Pacific



Scott Sandoval of Genesee & Wyoming



Trent Hudak, of BNSF, and AREMA President giving the AREMA update



Dr. Jeff Lloyd of Nisus presents his VendorMercial.



Claus Staalner of American Wood Technology at his exhibit table

RTA Golf Tournament



George Apostolu



Tracy Romig



Better watch out behind you, Kristine Storm!



Looks like Dave Koch liked his shot



Guess Jeff Parrett didn't!



Golf Chairman Andy Andreykovich makes a shot as teammate Rick Gibson looks on.



Who said golf was a serious game?



Just how far is that putt?

Hop On Brewery Tour



Tony and Eva Helms aboard the brewery tour bus



Mike and Lynn Diraimondo



It's nice to see our friend, Bruce Emberly, with us this year!

Awards Recognition



It's a full room at the awards reception.



Director Irby presenting Ricky Fly with his Silver Saw Award plaque



Irby presenting the 2022 Branding Hammer Award to Ed Sparks of CSX



Golf award winners, second from left, Ray Turner, Kenny Dailey, Michael Skeen and Jordan Estes



Director Nate Irby with golf winner Brad Crawford



Another golf winner takes the stage with Nate – Tony Nichols



Team winners (from left) Randy Huffman, Rob Pearce, Cliff Schademan and Ed Sparks



David Knopsnider was another lucky golf tournament winner

Wednesday Sessions & Activities

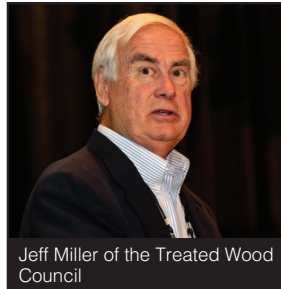
Wednesday morning business sessions kicked off with the reports from the Creosote Council, Southern Pressure Treaters Association, Treated Wood Council, Wood Preservation Canada and American Wood Protection Association. This session was followed by the railroad procurement session, where members heard directly from procurement professionals their tie installation plans for the coming year. RTA producer members took the stage during the last session of the conference to provide insight on challenges as well as opportunities.



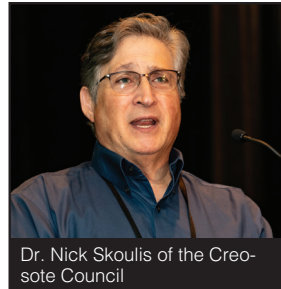
Colin McCown gives an AWPA update



Dr. Kevin Ragon representing Southern Pressure Treaters Association



Jeff Miller of the Treated Wood Council



Dr. Nick Skoulis of the Creosote Council



Sheila Gudenrath of Union Pacific



Matt Seinfeld of Genesee & Wyoming



David Knopnsider of CSX



Eric Gonzalez of Norfolk Southern



Robert Johnson of BNSF



Tom Holmes of WATCO



Anthony Guillen of OmniTRAX



Ted Woerle of Koppers at the Procurement Session



John McGinley speaking on behalf of AmeriTies



Rick Gibson with Appalachian Timber Services



David Whitted of Stella-Jones

RTA Past Presidents



Left to Right: George Caric, Ken Laughlin, Tim Ries, Bill Behan, Rick Gibson, John McGinley and Buddy Downey

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QNAP also reduces bleeding and drippage. QNAP-treated ties have quickly become the #1 choice of Class I railroads for their bridges because it virtually eliminates the dripping from bridge ties onto roads, vehicles and waterways. With cleaner handling characteristics, QNAP ties are clean and easier to handle in the field. You can also add the protection of Cellu-Treat borate to your bridge ties using our BTX system.

Additionally, ready-to-use QNAP 2 is available to field treat end-cuts, daps and drill holes, eliminating treatment gaps.

KEN LAUGHLIN

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JEFF THOMAS

Southern Regional Sales Manager
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Around the Hotel



Zach Hansen, left, visiting with Dave Koch and Jim Hansen



Dave Koch with Rhema Behan



RTA Attorney Terry Good, left, with David Whitted



Crossties Editor Kristen McIntosh with RTA's A/V expert, Jef Bass



The RTA Board (and spouses) are all smiles at their annual President's dinner.

Exhibitors & Sponsors

The 104th RTA Symposium & Technical Conference would not have been possible without the support of exhibiting sponsors and vendors.

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- Lewis Bolt & Nut
- National Salvage & Service Corp.
- NHLA
- Nisus
- Omaha Track
- Progress Rail
- Taylor Machine Works
- Wood Care Systems

A Note From Your RTA Team

As we reflect on the successes and learnings from the annual meeting (and the year), we at RTA feel continually blessed to serve the great membership of the association.

We each, in our own way, harbor sincere and genuine gratitude to be a part of such a wonderfully special group; words alone cannot describe that level of appreciation eloquently enough.

The many nice comments and expressions of compassion you all share with us throughout the year, and especially at the annual meeting, speak to the unity, magnitude and strength of our collective cause and mission.

Your contributions further substantiate the value you place in the RTA, the role it serves for our industry, and the power of presence and relationships. For that, and so very much more, we THANK YOU!

From Politics & Economics To Supply & Demand, RTA Conference Presenters Inform Membership

By Kristen McIntosh



Dr. Beth Stokes of Mississippi State University presents an update on the RTA/MSU tie preservative study.

that hardwood forest products must be considered part of the climate solution.



“Hardwood products are 50 percent carbon by weight. You see large tracts of land being bought by carbon storage companies that are taking the land offline. At this point, we haven’t seen too much disruption in the supply chain, but it’s coming.”

Cole also discussed the Federation’s plans for 2023. “We will be on offense next year,” she said, stating the organization would be working on the Farm Bill, federal forest management, carbon benefits, tax regulations and more. She advised members to visit HardwoodFederation.com for industry talking points and to register for the newsletter.

David Caldwell, partner at *Hardwood Market Report*, provided insight on the



future of the hardwood industry. “Hardwood production is declining because of weak grade lumber markets and falling lumber prices. If this is an extended downturn, we’ll see production damaged. For months, hardwood products were red hot. We’ve seen consumption fall this year, and I think we will see production fall further rather than demand pick up. We need supply and demand to get back into balance quickly.”

Legislative Update

National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association (NRC) President **Ashley Wieland** moderated the Legislative Update session and offered midterm election



insight stating that the House would likely flip Republican and that the Senate, leaning Democrat, could “go either way.”

If polling has taught us anything, though, it’s that it is not very accurate. It’s a toss-up at this point, but this could be more significant than a presidential

With a tap of a gavel, RTA President **Rick Gibson**, president of Appalachian Timber Services, called to order the 2022 Railway



Tie Association Technical Conference and Symposium at 8 a.m., Monday, Oct. 3, at the Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek. After a brief business session, presentations began and addressed key issues affecting wood tie industry professionals. Below are excerpted remarks from the presenters.

With a tap of a gavel, RTA President **Rick Gibson**, president of Appalachian Timber Services, called to order the 2022 Railway Tie Association Technical Conference and Symposium at 8 a.m., Monday, Oct. 3, at the Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek. After a brief business session, presentations began and addressed key issues affecting wood tie industry professionals. Below are excerpted remarks from the presenters.

Monday, Oct. 3 Keynote Address

RTA Executive Director **Dr. Nate Irby** welcomed to the stage **Dr. Brooks Mendell**, CEO of FORISK. The research company



focuses on forest industry operations, timberland investments and wood markets. Mendell provided a keynote address in which he discussed the viability of the hardwood sector, stating that hardwood forest owners needed to be incentivized

to be more active in the marketplace. He also said that the hardwood market is not currently as robust as the softwood market. “When they have a reason, they will invest in the hardwood market,” he said of forest landowners.

Mendell also discussed how landowners interested in the carbon market could impact the tie market. “Do we have forest carbon situations that would prevent wood from getting to the tie market? The evidence is so far that carbon contracts are not impeding or affecting users to get the wood they need. Until the carbon market is proven, landowners are not that excited about it. One way the conversation has changed is that it’s a little bit less about the trees and more about who the trees are going to. Forest owners would like to get some shine on this as well. If they know their wood will be used for products that are going to last a long time, they are very interested in it.”

Landowner/Forester Update

Dana Cole, executive director of the Hardwood Federation, moderated the Landowner/Forest Update session, noting

election depending on which way it goes.” She also urged attendees to register for the 44th annual NRC Conference and NRC-REMSA Exhibition scheduled for Jan. 4-7 at the Boca Raton Resort & Club in Boca Raton, Fla. Register at nrcma.org.

Next on the agenda was **Dallin Brooks**, executive director of the National



Hardwood Lumber Association (NHLA), who expressed appreciation for the cooperation and collaboration between NHLA and RTA and said the NHLA Inspection School curriculum would increase its instructional information on wood ties. He also urged those in the hardwood industry to apply for United States Forestry Service grants as most of the grants are currently being awarded to the softwood industry.



“The forestry service is awarding grants for stationary equipment, which is an opportunity for the rail industry to invest in dip tanks, retorts, biomass burners, automation, etc. You must match the grant by buying equipment. You could use the grant money for engineering, permitting, installation labor and other processes.”

- Dallin Brooks, National Hardwood Lumber Association

“The forestry service is awarding grants for stationary equipment, which is an opportunity for the rail industry to invest in dip tanks, retorts, biomass burners, automation, etc. You must match the grant by buying equipment. You could use the grant money for engineering, permitting, installation labor and other processes. This is a key thing for us as an industry to take advantage of. The forestry service is giving out \$100 million, and we can take advantage of it or let it pass us by. We should make use of it.”

Brooks also addressed the Real American Hardwood Coalition. “We are responsible for the table you eat on, the floor you walk on, the cabinet you store goods in, the chair you sit in and so much more, and we need to support the Real American Hardwood Coalition. We really need to talk about the whole story and promote the hardwood industry. We are working to raise \$2 million a year.” Visit RealAmericanHardwood.com for more information.

Before breaking to allow attendees to visit with exhibitors, RTA Executive Director **Nate Irby**, Ph.D., wrapped up the

morning sessions by urging collaboration. “With hardwood lumber the way it is and its inverse relationship with ties, the value proposition doesn’t look good for several of our operators. This is affecting how people put food on their tables at home. It’s our job as good industry stewards, friends and collaborators to ensure we keep the market sustainable. We need constituents on all sides working together. With the change in personnel and end-users, it’s our job to integrate and share communication and be transparent if we are all going to survive. What I mean by that is, please, tie buyers, sawmillers, treaters and



railroaders in this room, we need to be on the same page. David (Caldwell) shows an inverse relationship for 2A and 3A red oak prices versus tie prices. What was happening was that as sawmills went into a recession, lumber tanked. But the railroads needed ties. We are going through a critical time period where if lumber continues its downward slide, sawmills will have a real value proposition of whether they will operate. It’s imperative that our end users link up with sawmills in good ways. NHLA and NRC and others are forums for us to collaborate. Be good stewards, please link up and understand what challenges each of us has.”

**Tuesday, Oct. 4
Research & Innovation Session**

Moderated by the soon-to-retire industry veteran **Ken Laughlin**, divisional vice president of wood preservation for Nisus Corp., the Research and Innovation Session kicked off Tuesday sessions with presentations on a variety of research and development projects.



Dr. Ramez Hajj, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering of the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, discussed the prospect of using rubberized asphalt concrete (RAC) to assist in extending the in-track performance and life of timber crossties. “We need a weather seal for crossties and bridge timbers that is durable but not overly stiff, resistant to water and prevents UV/ozone from degrading wood, and is quick and easy to apply and does not affect end-of-life fuel usage.” Hajj said asphalt is widely used in the paving industry, could meet these requirements, and is relatively inexpensive.



He also stated that RAC could be engineered to meet bedding modulus requirements as an under tie pad replacement and that future work involves resonant column testing at the University of Kentucky to ensure

vibration mitigation. “Once proven in large-scale track bed and preliminary field studies, RAC and tie coating can be scaled up to improve the life of wood crossties and bridge timbers.”

Dr. Beth Stokes, associate professor for the Mississippi State University Forest and Wildlife Research Center, offered an update on the RTA/MSU Alternative Wood Preservatives Research Projects, Phases I and II. The study objectives are to evaluate relative performance of newer preservative systems next to creosote and borate/creosote systems, using refractory and non-refractory wood species, and conduct evaluations in a location with known pressure from Formosan termites. A potential new goal would be to add a Phase III of the study. Stokes said researchers are continuing to see degradation primarily in untreated ties at both sites due to decay and termites. “The top performing ties are treated with one or more of the following: copper naphthenate, creosote (P2, P3 and other blends), borate and oils. Many ties are



still sound, with limited checking and splitting. The ties that have failed were untreated or had limited treatments applied.” Stokes invited members to visit the sites in March to coincide with spring evaluations field day. “We would love to have you come see us evaluate the ties and look at the tie study you are sponsoring,” she added.

Jeff Peterson, president of Omaha Track, who has been with the 40-year-old recycling company for 23 years, said the company is focusing on a regional approach to how it manages second-hand materials. “Logistics is always the 500-pound gorilla in the room. The



Peterson

less you can touch and move the materials the less cost and fewer emissions there are. So, our model has shifted to this network-based approach on how we operate these facilities.” Peterson said Omaha Track is sending chipped ties to a cement manufacturing plant as a coal alternative and is also considering the economics of using pyrolysis, biochar and wood gas as a fuel source. “Innovation is the message. We must reframe how we describe and speak about this repurposing of ties. They are a good product, and we need to look at them as a product or commodity as a second-life building material, not as a waste. We want to be viewed as responsible stewards of this product and do everything we can to maximize the potential in the reuse of wood ties. We want to use every bit of the tie that we can.”

Jim Hansen, chief commercial officer – freight systems for Herzog, spoke about the North American Maintenance Railway Club, which was founded in 1953. He said membership is at a 25-year high, with meeting attendance growing in response to the value the club brings to railway industry professionals, particularly those in the central United States. “We’ve taken this organization from 25 to 30 people to 500 members today. The club represents both the railway and supply industries.”



Hansen

Next to the podium was **Ryan Richard**, director Aurora – GREX for Loram Technologies Inc., who discussed tie inspection and replacement using the Aurora



RTA members listen in on the popular Research & Innovation session.

system, which he said is 95 percent accurate in determining at what point a tie is in its useful life and when it will likely need replacement. “Railroads are risk averse, but they also don’t want to pull ties prematurely.” Richard discussed the Aurora Tie Marking system, which automates the process of marking ties that have been designated for replacement in advance of renewal projects. He also discussed the development of a tie marker app, which will give an inspector the ability to override the system and update coordinates of ties that are still viable.



Richard

Railroad Engineering Session

The Railroad Engineering Session followed a coffee break with exhibitors and included presentations from several different railroaders, including **Ed Sparks**, chief engineer - bridges, design and construction at CSX, who highlighted several capital improvements projects underway at the railroad. The Transforming Rail in Virginia (TRV) project is a partnership with CSX, Virginia Rail Passenger Authority, Amtrak and others to expand passenger rail service from Washington, D.C., to Richmond and beyond. He also discussed the Howard



Sparks

Street Tunnel project that will allow CSX to achieve double-stack clearances between Baltimore and Philadelphia. The Pan Am Railroad acquisition received Surface Transportation Board approval in June and so commenced CSX’s effort to invest \$100+ million in upgrades. Sparks said the Pan Am improvements present many opportunities for contractors to renew ties and rail as well as perform bridge and building work. “For our capacity projects, we are always modernizing our network and extending sidings to accommodate longer trains.”

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway’s **Adam Bankston**, assistant director of roadway planning, discussed the company’s tie life study, which is a partnership with MxV Rail and the Association of American Railroads’ Tie Fastener/Strategic Research Initiative. “The study aims to improve wood tie



Bankston

life prediction using surface and internal condition scoring. Our study locations span each of the decay zones, with diverse curvature and tonnages.” Bankston added that wood ties factor heavily into its capital improvements plan and that BNSF would like to transition from a hy-rail based inspection system to a high-speed system, potentially on a geometry car platform. BNSF currently scans approximately 10,000 miles annually. “We want to move from ▶



The Producer Member Forum allowed wood treating professionals to share their thoughts on everything from RTA membership to supply chain issues.

scanning a location once every two to three years to scanning it two or three times every year.”

Daniel Torres, senior vice president – northern region for Union Pacific,



updated attendees on the company’s automatic tie unloading system. “It reduces the footprint across the network, reducing engineering curfews and crew demand and improving cycle times,” he said. “Our leadership continues to ensure we have the capability to do things nobody has ever done or thought of. Our challenge is that not only are we pressuring internal departments but also our external partners to help us get the job done.” Torres added that UP expects to install 3.2 million wood ties in 2023 and only about 50,000 concrete ties.

Genesee & Wyoming’s **Scott Sandoval**, director, engineering testing and compliance,



discussed the railroad’s in-house app called TrackWorks Recorder. “It uses the Microsoft PowerApp platform allowing users to input tie installation counts. The data is then fed into a model updating LTI data. The benefits are that it maintains tie data between collections, improving forecasting and planning and allowing us to better utilize the ties we purchase.” He said the use of the app to better forecast and plan aligns

with the company’s goal to be the safest and most respected transportation provider in the world. “The means to do that is to make sure we have a safe track structure,” he added.

Trent Hudak, director engineering services for BNSF and president of the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of Way Association (AREMA), provided an update on the association, stating that membership is approximately 5,000, that the annual conference and expo in August brought nearly 3,200 attendees and 100 new exhibitors, and that the health of the association is strong.



He said AREMA initiatives for 2023 include leveraging and streamlining technology to improve communication and delivery of educational content. “We will continue to present our core educational offerings, and new content is also being developed.” He mentioned that AREMA 2023 Annual Conference with Railway Interchange would be held Oct. 1-4 in Indianapolis. To register, visit arema.org.

Dr. Jeff Lloyd, corporate senior vice president innovation and sustainability for Nisus Corporation, shared information about the company’s collaborative research into yellow poplar as a viable species for ties. The original research



was started by Stella-Jones and Nisus Corporation and done at the University of Tennessee. “Commercial work has been done with Mellott Wood Preserving, which has treated many yellow poplar ties. If any railroad would like to take some ties to put in track to test, they are available.”

Wednesday, Oct. 5 Wood Preservation Association Updates

On Wednesday, executives from wood preservation organizations provided updates on their work, including **Colin McCown**, executive vice president/CEO for the American Wood Protection Association.



The association, which has 517 individual members and sets standards

for treatment of railroad ties, will hold its 2023 meeting April 3-5 in Tucson and its Technical Meetings Sept. 17-21 in Denver. “Please visit us at awpa.com for more information,” he said, encouraging RTA members to participate in committees to help develop standards. “It’s a great opportunity to affect the minimum product quality for all treated wood products and engage with your customers and suppliers.”

Dr. Kevin Ragon, former executive director and now resource officer for the Southern Pressure Treaters Association, mentioned that pentachlorophenol is in its final registration review decision.



“The Office of Pesticide Programs proposed cancellation of the wood preservative uses of penta in its December 2021 decision. Penta registrations are canceled within two years of the finalized decision and three additional years for use of existing stock. We’re using it up fast, and we think we’ll meet those criteria.” He said copper naphthenate and DCOI are viable replacements for penta, and copper naphthenate has been a good treatment for utility poles.

Natalie Tarini of Wood Preservation Canada provided a video message and mentioned the organization’s partnership with the Canadian Wood Council on a webinar series as well as an upcoming webinar for design and construction

officials. “We are seeing an increased focus on sustainability. This is a good news message that should be promoted at every opportunity we get. Education is key, and it’s not something we will be successful at if we go it alone.” She urged RTA members to connect via woodpreservation.ca or natalie@woodpreservation.ca. Wood Preservation Canada promotes the use of preserved wood in a variety of residential and non-residential applications critical to overall infrastructure, transportation and commercial needs. Visit woodpreservation.ca to learn more.



Treated Wood Council President and Executive Director **Jeff Miller** shared that EPA is proposing to deny a rulemaking petition from a coalition of industry petitioners, including the Treated Wood Council, requesting revisions to the Non-Hazardous Secondary Materials (NHSM) regulations. The regulations establish standards and procedures for identifying whether NHSM are solid wastes when used as fuels or ingredients in combustion units. EPA states that such a determination is important for ensuring that NHSM fuels are only burned in units that are appropriately designed to burn in them. Among other things, the petition requests an amendment removing associated “designed to burn” and other limitations for creosote-treated railroad ties. “In 2018, we petitioned EPA to change the rule to add

logical sense. One of the components of the rule is if railroads want to process ties as boiler fuel, they can store them along the siding for up to a year, after which time they are considered waste and can no longer be processed for fuel. One of our elements in the petition is to get that changed. We have given them a long list of suggested changes. They don’t look at emissions from a boiler and what kind of burning capability that boiler has. They look at what’s in the fuel and what kind of material is used to treat those ties. We have a process we’re going through right now with EPA where we expect a decision to come out next May, and they tell us they are on schedule to hit that target date. Our big fear is that come April they will tell us it’s off for another six to eight months.”



Dr. Nick Skoulis, technical advisor for Creosote Council, discussed its role as a non-profit product stewardship and joint data development group composed of the five U.S. registrants of coal tar creosote, including Koppers Inc., Arbor Preservative Systems, Lone Star, Coopers Creek Chemical Corp., and Rain Carbon Inc. Skoulis reported that recent product stewardship activities include researching and publishing articles in *Crossties* magazine, with a focus on the value of treated wood for railroads, collaborating with Oregon State University


on environmental projects, and publishing informational videos and blogs. “I recommend you visit us at creosotecouncil.org to see the kind of work we are engaged in,” Skoulis said.

Railroad Procurement Forum



Sheila Gudenrath, director strategic sourcing for Union Pacific, kicked off the popular Railroad Purchasing Forum with news that the company had invested approximately \$35 billion between 2012 and 2021 to support the railroad’s infrastructure. For 2022, she said total monthly black-tie installations were around 340,000 ties. “This was a struggle because we were extremely tight on ties throughout the year. Engineering would like to see those numbers a little higher, but we were truly in a rough position, especially toward the end of the year.” For 2023, Gudenrath reported that wood tie installation volume would be approximately 3.8 million. “We are looking for an increase in 2023 and appreciate the support we’ve had to get where we are today. A big thank you to our suppliers that helped us get through this challenging year.” **Matt Seinfeld**, purchasing manager for Genesee & Wyoming Railroad Services, said 2023 tie demand would be 852,000 wood ➤





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RTA Executive Director Dr. Nate Irby thanked exhibitors and sponsors for their participation and support for the 2022 conference.

crossties, 850,000 board feet of switch timbers, 3.8 million board feet of bridge timbers, 135,000 board feet of crossing timbers and 500 steel ties. He said company policy requires that every tie replaced must be appropriately disposed of. “It’s a continued obstacle finding alternative disposal avenues to reduce costs while remaining in compliance with our standard policy. Our estimated legacy tie disposal is around 100,000 ties in high-profile locations.” Seinfeld also reported that the railroad company would benefit from CRISI and state grants in the coming years to support expansion projects.

CSX’s **David Knopsnider**, manager procurement – engineering services, said that even though 2022 had been a



Knopsnider

challenging year, tie suppliers and sawmills have come through. “In 2020, we installed 3.2 million, in 2021 2.6 million, in 2022 2.5

million, and in 2023 we expect to install 2.7 million. Our switch and bridge tie program next year calls for 130,000 switch ties and 30,000 bridge ties. That’s a strong goal for us as we come out of these challenges, so it’s really a wait and see. I think we will push forward strongly. We’ve always been a wood tie railroad. CSX will continue with a robust capital reinvestment program based on deterioration models, experience, necessity and capital.”

Anthony Guillen, director of strategic sourcing and asset management for OmniTRAX, which operates around 1,500

miles of track and has 4.75 million ties in track, said the company expects to install 15,000 maintenance ties as part of a routine replacement program.



Guillen

He also said the company would install 50,000 ties for various capital improvements projects.

Guillen told suppliers in the room that thanks to CRISI grants they should expect to see a tsunami of orders. “So, our ask is that you please be ready.”

Producer Forum

The Producer Forum provided insight from wood preservation industry veterans about industry challenges and opportunities.

Rick Gibson, president of Appalachian Timber Services; **Ted Woerle**, vice president operations for Koppers; **John McGinley**, president (retired) of AmeriTies; and **David Whitted**, vice president operations and scheduling for Stella-Jones, served on the panel discussion, which was moderated by RTA Executive Director **Dr. Nate Irby**.

One of several questions Irby asked the group was how their companies are able to provide sustainable products and services



Woerle

to their customers in spite of limited positive progress on supply chain and equipment issues in the last year. **Woerle** reported that Koppers is a vertically integrated company with a circular business model and a secure supply of critical raw

materials, global creosote production capabilities, and an extensive procurement network and sustainable solutions for end-of-life crosstie management through Koppers’ Recovery Resources group. “By controlling each step in the value chain, Koppers is able to better limit the variability that everyone is currently experiencing in the global markets.”

McGinley shared his thoughts on the value of RTA as a wood tie industry advocate and the idea of expanding membership to ancillary companies.



McGinley

“It’s a concentrated organization integral to the performance of the wood tie. We have very good representation of companies supporting the wood tie. I struggle to think that we should bring in other organizations such as insurance companies that might not be as strong a fit.”

When asked how RTA could be more beneficial in assisting producer members with quality assurance, **Whitted** said RTA’s



Whitted

addition of a treated tie inspection component to the tie grading seminar was a great step and that the association could also be helpful by adding field training for tie gangs. He also said it is important for RTA to continue to engage Class I railroads for greater understanding of RTA’s value.

Gibson offered details on an educational program funded by a grant and spearheaded by a university to introduce students to the hardwood industry and teach them how to grade ties. “There are always grant programs available, and we are proud of our sites, have lots to show and would appreciate any ideas about how we can help.”



Gibson

At the close of the conference, **Gibson** passed the gavel to Wheeler Lumber’s **Dave Koch**, who was elected RTA president for the next two years. For more information about Koch and RTA initiatives for the coming year, please see page 9. ■



Koch