

Logging Survey Opens Up Opportunities For Change

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — As millions of acres of Pennsylvania's oaks and hickories — last harvested at the turn of the century — near maturity, timber harvests are accelerating.

But to ensure a continued harvest, we need to use sustainable methods, said an expert in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"From 1976 until the most recent inventory in 1989, timber removal jumped from 800 million to nearly 1.2 billion board feet per year," said James Finley, associate professor of forest resources. "Now, a decade later, removal probably is even higher. But to sustain the resource base, it's urgent that we take care of the residual forest and plan for forest regeneration with every harvest."

Pennsylvania produces more hardwood lumber than any other state in the nation. The state also produces the highest volume of select species, including cherry, red oak, white oak, sugar maple, and yellow poplar.

"With increased harvesting, we're seeing shifts in species composition," Finley said. "Red oak has been replaced by red maple — a less valuable tree — and white-tailed deer often make it difficult to establish a new forest with desired species. At the turn of the century, when today's forest started to grow, less than 500 deer roamed the state. Now we have 1.2 to 1.4 million deer, and each of those

deer is eating a lot of little trees."

Deer browsing often removed desired forest plants, allowing ferns, grasses and other woodland plants to cover the forest floor, competing for light, moisture, and nutrients.

To determine how current timber harvesting practices are affecting the state's timber supply, Finley and a team of natural resource professionals examined data from 97 recently harvested tracts. Looking at such factors as number of tree seedlings, deer browsing, damage to residual trees and amount of fern or grass cover, they found that practices used at about half of the sites were not sustainable.

"The project presented opportunities to improve harvesting practices," said Finley. "For the first time, we had a diverse group of professionals — from industry personnel to environmentalists — working to attain consensus about what factors constitute a sustainable harvest."

The team identified six sets of variables associated with sustainable forest harvesting, including species composition, tree diameter distribution, crown closure (related to shading), regeneration, site disturbance and tree damage. "We now have the tools to go out to a site and say, 'If you treat a stand a certain way, you will get a certain outcome,'" said Finley.

The team also learned that

using the Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Pennsylvania forests, published by Penn State, will promote regeneration and the retention of quality forests for future Pennsylvanians. The BMPs were developed in 1996 by a group of professional natural resource managers, forest landowners, scientists, environ-

mental organizations, and other citizens concerned about the state's forests.

"The American Forest and Paper Association's Sustainable Forestry Initiative of Pennsylvania now uses the BMPs in their logger education program," said Finley.

For more information on BMPs, see the Penn State

College of Agricultural Sciences publication, "Forest Stewardship Best Management Practices for Pennsylvania Forests." Single copies are available free of charge from your county Penn State Cooperative Extension office, or by calling to College of Agricultural Sciences Publications Distribution Center at (814) 865-6713.

Workers' Compensation Safety Group Returns Dividend

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — For the second consecutive year, Agri-Services Agency (ASA) has declared a substantial dividend for farmers enrolled in its workers' compensation safety group in Pennsylvania.

Participants in the ASA Safety Group have seen workers' compensation costs drop by more than 50 percent since the beginning of the program only five years ago, announced ASA President Craig Buckhout.

"Farming remains a dangerous occupation, and the Agri-Services Agency Safety Group has taken important steps to monitor and help reduce the incidence of occupational injuries and illnesses," said Buckhout. "Many of the safety group's participants are receiving as much as 25 percent dividends on their discounted premiums, which is a direct result of the diligent safety awareness and cost control efforts of the pro-

gram."

At the recent Pennsylvania Farm Show in Harrisburg, ASA presented Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Samuel E. Hayes, Jr. with a symbolic check for \$265,195, representing the dividends returned to agricultural employers in Pennsylvania.

"Efforts by Agri-Services Agency were helpful in creating safety groups under the State Workers' Insurance Fund. These efforts have been successful in educating Pennsylvania farmers about the need for safety, and in turn, are saving them money through discounted rates on their workers' compensation coverage. This is an excellent effort on the part of Agri-Services Agency, and has resulted in a big cost savings

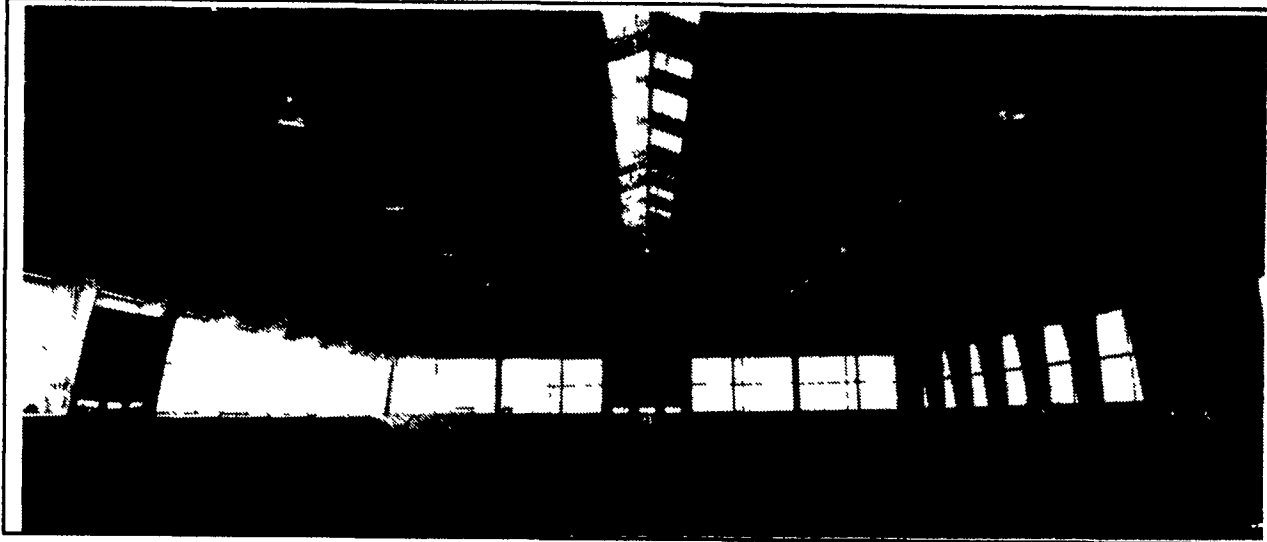
for Pennsylvania farmers," said Hayes.

Buckhout reported that the Agri-Services Agency Safety Group continues to grow rapidly as a result of the value that it is bringing to agricultural employees.

Workers' compensation coverage is among the many competitively priced insurance programs offered through ASA, which has been providing insurance programs to the agricultural communities of the Northeast for more than 30 years. As an agricultural insurance specialist, ASA also provides health, dental, life, disability and long-term care insurance. For more information on the wide array of coverages available from ASA, call (800) 654-8840.

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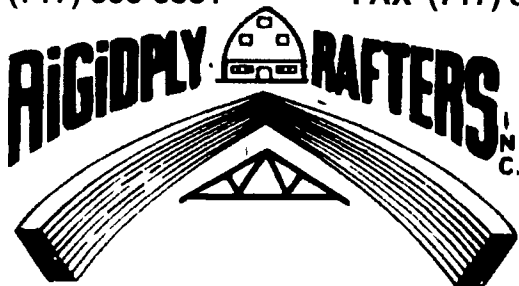


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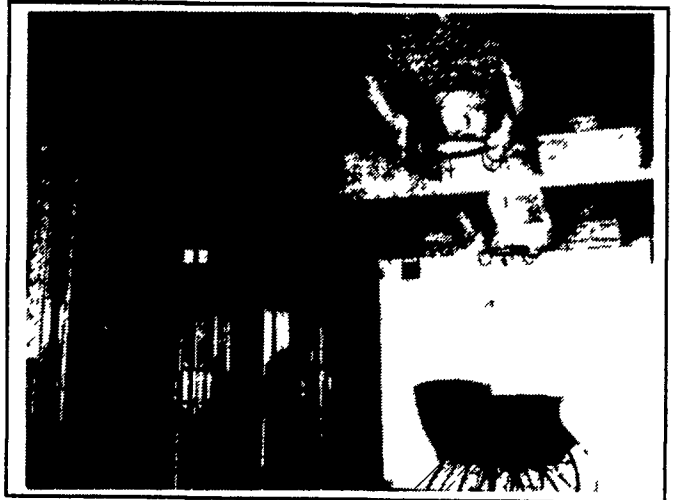
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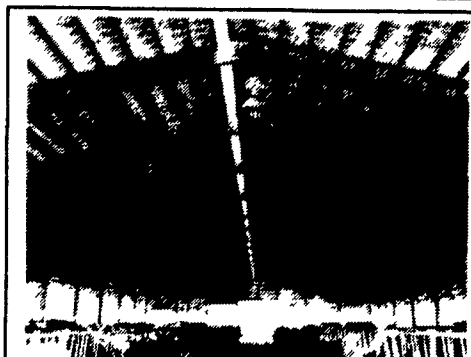
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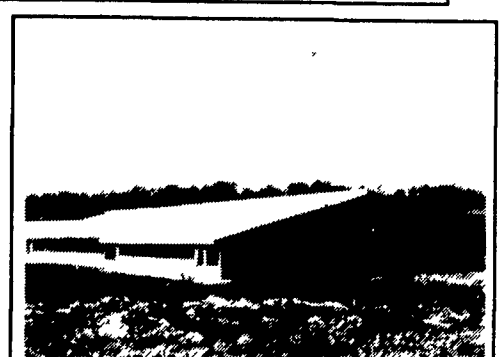
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