AS I SEE IT

ALC President – Mike Wiedeman

As 2009 draws to a close it is time for each of us to do these three things:

1. Look in the rearview mirror and draw strength and knowledge from the past.
2. Focus on the present and be thankful for our blessings of family and friends.
3. Look forward to the coming year with renewed enthusiasm.

It has been a tough year in the logging business. The decisions that were made on the highest levels have had real and lasting consequences on our businesses, our families and our future. Many of our friends and competitors have suffered dire results. Many of us have struggled financially. We have had to make tough decisions in order to survive. Valued long time employees were either furloughed or let go. Tough times take tough decisions and there is little value in second guessing. Move forward, just remember the lessons of the past.

2010 is going to be an interesting year. Traditional markets have yet to recover; emerging markets are not yet established, and the issues of credit and liquidity are still up for debate.

Congress is being Congress.

The President is being the President.

Cap & trade, climate change, healthcare, energy independence, and the global war on terror continue to make headlines.

Unfortunately, the number one concern of most politicians is "How do I get reelected?", instead of "How can I best serve my constituents?".

Given all of the rhetoric, there is little mention of the **real** number one issue facing this Nation.

"It's the economy stupid!" Bill Clinton 1994.

Congressmen, Senators, Mr. President : You all say that small business is the backbone of the U.S. economy. From where I sit it appears you are doing everything you can to quash small business. Instead of listening to the CEO's of Google and Goldman Sachs you need to hear from the loggers, ranchers, miners, fisherman and farmers that actually produce America's wealth.

The thousand pound gorilla nobody wants to focus on: unemployment in excess of 10%, (over 25% in the logging industry) real growth in the private sector a negative 2% (nearer -30% in wood products). No wonder the politicians babble about everything under the sun, they don't have a good answer for the **real crisis** facing this country.

I believe that one of the cornerstones to recovery, not only for the wood product sector but for the economy as a whole, is a real and concerted effort for the use of renewable biomass as the preferred alternative for carbon neutral thermal energy to help drive an alternative energy economy. As we strive to lower our "carbon footprint" there is no better alternative than renewable bio fuel.

Thousands of jobs could be created, new energy facilities would be sited, older plants would be converted and new technologies would emerge. Exports would flourish.

Instead of emitting millions of tons of pollutants from wildfires and spending billions suppressing those wildfires, let's invest those billions in the future. Instead of a growing reliance on imported energy let's grow our own. Instead of sending empty ships back to Asia and Europe let's fill them up with bio-energy from Americas' forests.

It is time to put personal political agendas aside and focus on the peoples business. We are the most productive society on the planet! Give us the tools we need. Lower the bureaucratic hurdles we have to contend with. Help us to penetrate foreign markets. In essence do the job the people elected you to do.

Finally the most important elements in our lives are those that are close to us. The old adage of "count your blessings" has never carried more weight than it does now. Whether it is the birth of a grandchild or as simple as a beautiful sunrise, focus on the positive.

Have a happy and prosperous New Year.

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