

North Carolina Loggers Create Organization For Professionals

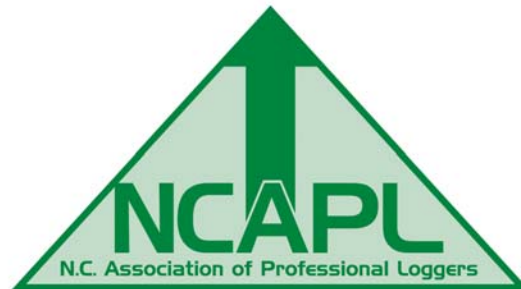
Doug Duncan, NC Assn. of Professional Loggers

North Carolina's forest products industry has a long history of timber resources, manufacturing and processing facilities and the people to make it happen. The industry is supported, as in all southern states, by the commitment of landowners to grow timber and the strength of the state's logging force to harvest and deliver that product. Economic downturns of late have tested the strength of the logging force. Ensuring logger business survival and profitability is now a "call to action." Always a national leader in logger education and business innovation, the state now has a rebound in logger interest and efforts to strengthen that position.

The newly formed North Carolina Association of Professional Loggers (NCAPL) is fast becoming the voice of like-minded loggers who want a business network and expanded opportunities to improve their day to day decisions. The group was loosely formed in the late 90's as the North Carolina Prologger Council under the umbrella of the Forestry Association and worked through issues closely aligned with the ProLogger program and educational training. That program is ongoing and the NCAPL supports that effort by requiring its members to be in good standing with the training or adjacent state programs that share the same level of qualification.

The twelve original charter members of the NCAPL decided not to waste any time in late 2007 and hired Doug Duncan as their Executive Director, a familiar face to loggers. Duncan designed and implemented the original Prologger in 1994 and in 2004 took some time as a manager in a logging equipment business to round out his knowledge base and growing circle of contacts.

The big undertaking for the new formed association is "business improvement." With over 90% of the current NCAPL being Internet capable, the development of a user friendly website was initiated. The site is a



reservoir of information with topics involving all aspects of logging from how to contact other members, find wood markets, research equipment specifications, index regional fuel prices, lookup escort vehicle services for wide load moving, comply with hazmat transportation and the list goes on. Chip Capps of Arcola Logging probably put it best with "the possibilities are virtually endless here to be able to find concise information tailored for loggers, thus giving the businessman (our emphasis) the tools to make good decisions much quicker and easier than in the past." Important topics and alerts are continually forwarded to members by email and fax through a communications server at the NCAPL office and Duncan's mobile setup in his 4x4 that sports a laptop with broadband wireless connections.

"It's not just the information but knowing the right people to make it happen," the Executive Director's favorite saying when working with issues is that "we think we are in the logging business, timber business, sawmill business, trucking business (or whatever business being discussed), but really we are in the people business." Knowing who to contact, how to approach them, and how to explaining the problem in a personal and relevant manner become important tools in the logger's toolbox of how to solve day to day problems. Those personal contacts and established relationships already in place with NCAPL members is what the new association is building on.

One concept that the new associa-

tion feels strongly in is providing a forum for members that is works for them. Frequent meetings with keynote speakers and timely business discussions have been requested. Mindful of their members busy schedules the NCAPL has organized "area meetings" that put loggers no more than 30-45 minutes away from a local restaurant or member's logging shop or office where they can have supper and hold their meeting. This area concept will also hand-up locally elected board members who would participate in statewide meetings during the year and officially elect state officers. The NCAPL started holding membership meetings in earnest in December 2007 and so far have covered North Carolina with twelve such events.

The NCAPL has recently submitted a request to join ranks with the American Loggers Council, which has been approved on a "provisional" basis until the ALC's next full Board of Director's meeting scheduled for early April in Washington, D.C. ALC President Ezell Castleberry stated, "We are pleased to see the loggers of North Carolina forming a state association and look forward to working with them as members of the American Loggers Council. They will be a tremendous asset to the ALC and I am certain that they will have a positive influence on the ALC Board."

The membership is growing steadily with a goal to have 300 members by the end of 2008. You can reach the NCAPL at contact@ncloggers.com, (919) 271-9050 or visit www.ncloggers.com.

