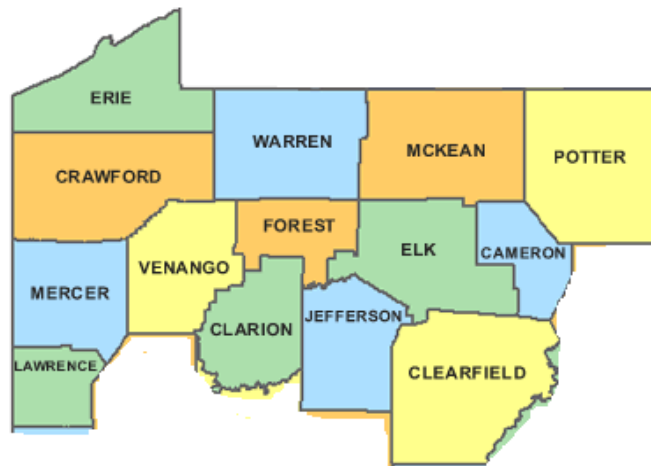




Grant ME#44209096
Year End Report 7/1/2020 – 6/30/2021

Mission Statement:

Within the 17 million acres of forested landscape in Pennsylvania lies the Upper Allegheny Plateau, a region recognized worldwide for its high-quality hardwoods. The Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group, Inc (AHUG) was organized in 1984 for the purpose of promoting this exceptional natural resource asset, and for sustaining and expanding the economic development and employment opportunities within the Pennsylvania forest products industry, with specific emphasis on 14 counties of the Northwest and North Central regions. These counties include Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Potter, Venango and Warren.



Summary:

Program year 2020-2021 was a busy one for the Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group. While Covid-19 continued to impact our programs, we did manage to increase our in-person interactions over the previous year during those windows of opportunity that opened in the fall of 2020 and again in late spring of 2021. We continued to rely heavily on technologies like Zoom and Teams to assist us in responding to the increased volume of requests for AHUG participation in addressing issues of importance to our regional and statewide forest products community.

AHUG remains committed to promoting an environment that is beneficial and attractive to industry, encouraging both the expansion of existing operations and the interest of additional primary, secondary and bi-products producers - creating jobs that support the continued health of the forests and the rural communities of the Allegheny region. In accomplishing this mission, AHUG focuses its efforts on:

- Marketing & Promotion
- Public Outreach & Education
- Industry Outreach, Support & Training
- Industry Representation
- Research & Development

All of AHUG's services are offered regardless of membership status. As a result, AHUG's activities impacted not only the nearly 100 hardwood companies, industry suppliers, academic and financial institutions, economic development organizations and government agencies who comprise our membership, but also a large number of regional and statewide non-member entities and individuals.

The AHUG staff would like to recognize the tremendous support that we have received over the past year from the Board and staff of the Hardwoods Development Council, from our sister agencies - Keystone Wood Products Association and Northern Tier Hardwoods Association - and from partner agencies like the PA Forest Products Association and the PA Sustainable Forestry Initiative, with whom we work on a daily basis in serving the needs of the Pennsylvania hardwood industry.

2020/2021 Narrative

Marketing & Promotion:

Promotion of Pennsylvania's hardwood industry and the sustainable management of its natural resources is a fundamental component of the AHUG mission.

- We continue to support the efforts of the Real American Hardwood Promotion Coalition - a collaborative effort of over 25 hardwood associations across the country dedicated to developing a coordinated domestic marketing/information campaign designed to effectively communicate the value, beauty and science-based benefits of real American hardwood products. AHUG's executive director currently serves as a member of the Board of Director's for the RAHC and was actively engaged during this program year in formalizing the organization as a 501c3, completing logo development and trademarking of the Real American Hardwood brand, developing an informational .org website and beginning the industry brand awareness and fundraising components of the campaign. Presented updates on RAHC progress to industry on numerous occasions, including the Indiana Hardwood Lumberman's Association trade show in Indianapolis, IN and Appalachian Hardwood Manufacturers Meeting in West Virginia.
- Participated in 2021 Virtual Pennsylvania Farm Show through production of an Instagram sawmill tour for the "Hardwood Takeover" and daily promotion of Farm Show activities.
- Took part in the 2021 PA Timber Show through hosting of AHUG booth, participation in Timber Strong Career Fair and coordination of guest speaker on the subject of workers comp.
- Increased the social media presence of AHUG by moving our newsletter, "Dimensions" to an online platform, expanding its circulation and impact in promoting awareness of the region's hardwood industry and natural resource assets.

Public Outreach & Education:

AHUG is a principle provider and source of hardwood education for the general public throughout the fourteen-county region. While this area of our program continued to be impacted by COVID-19 in 2021, we accomplished the following:

- Partnered with industry volunteers, the HDC (Woodmobile), the McKean County Conservation District and the Lumber Heritage Region in providing Project Learning Tree presentations during Earth Day and Conservation Day programs for nearly 500 elementary students throughout the AHUG region. This brings the total number of students educated through our elementary programming to more than 18,500.
- Participated in middle and high school career awareness programs, including "Logs To Lumber" (Clearfield County), three virtual "Career Days" (Jefferson, Clearfield and

Clarion Counties) and two hardwood manufacturing facility tours for high-school mentor programs (Potter, Elk & McKean Counties). Showcased paforestcareers.org in all presentations.

- Partnered with the Allegheny Forest Alliance and the Lumber Heritage Region in completing videos and educational kiosks for placement in several locations throughout the AHUG region (Elk, Forest and Potter counties). These touch screen kiosks each display two educational videos. One provides an overview of the history and importance of the Allegheny National Forest, and the other provides insight into the region's primary processing sector, demonstrating the role that active management and a robust hardwood industry play in maintaining PA's healthy working forests.
- AHUG is a member of the PA Project Learning Tree Steering Committee, who continued to work during this program year on the development of the PA specific module of the updated PLT resource guide.
- Co-sponsored the "Forever Forests" Exhibit at the Reading Public Museum (in conjunction with HDC, KWPA and NTHA).
- Worked with industry to secure hardwood products for interior finish of PA WILDS Media Lab in McKean County, PA in promotion of intended working forest messaging as a central theme.
- Coordinated realignment of Sandy Cochran Memorial Scholarship application process in effort to increase distribution and participation in the program.

Industry Outreach, Support & Training:

Promoting continuous improvement of the hardwood sector and its influencing factors through industry outreach, support and training is key to advancing AHUG's mission.

- Continued to engage with landowners (both public and private) in efforts to promote sustainable forest management and to ensure industry's continued access to the region's hardwood resources. Important engagements this project year included hosting virtual ANF Timber Purchaser Meetings, USFS/ANF Small Business Set Aside Program 5-year review, working with Center For Private Forests/Woodlands Innovation and HDC/partners on efforts geared towards private landowners, providing written comment on public land management projects and operating plans, and onboarding of new AHUG members in the large landowner category (Conservancy and TIMO).
- Provided numerous B2B (Business to Partner) connections and landowner referrals.
- Worked with Kane Area Logger Safety Committee, HDC and Penn State Extension to coordinated Spotted Lanternfly Permitting and SFI CE credit for more than 100 individuals as part of the 2021 KALSC event.
- Coordinated Pipeline Safety/Awareness and First Aid/CPR sessions for SFI Training Schedules.

- Provided ongoing administrative support for the Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative.
- Worked with PA SFI and Penn State on initial development of Business Management training for the logging community.
- Continued to serve as the Co-Lead for the Allegheny Forest Health Collaborative, joining more than 50 government and private landowners, agencies and citizens throughout the region to inform, share best practices and achieve economies of scale in addressing critical forest health issues on the Allegheny Plateau. Co-organized virtual spring planning meeting and an in-person 4-stop fall field tour for 25+ legislative, agency and industry reps. Served on the Communications Committee in production/distribution of AFHC 2020 Annual Report.
- Continued efforts to address workman's comp for the logging sector. Organized/hosted stakeholder meetings, arranged guest speaker to provide insight into efforts undertaken in addressing similar concerns in VT, participated in development of expanded safety framework aimed at reducing injury, increasing comp participation and lowering rates.
- Provided updates to industry and public on expanding Spotted Lanternfly quarantine zone. Provided direct assistance to industry in obtaining SLF compliance and educational materials.
- Hosted bi-monthly AHUG board meetings and produced/distributed quarterly newsletter, "Dimensions" to industry members, AHUG partners and regional local/state/federal legislators.
- Hosted 22nd annual Women In Timber Luncheon, with guest speaker presenting LHR's Diversity Study on the Role of Women and Minorities in the history of our region's hardwood industry. Facilitated numerous connections between industry and researcher on this project.
- Promoted and participated in webinars to further enhance the industry & AHUG knowledge base - including Family Forest Carbon Credit Program, PSU (Forest Pest & Disease Update, Ask The Forest Experts, Carbon/Climate), NHLA Virtual Convention, ARC Workforce Development, PFA's Annual Symposium, BTEC Biomass Summit, etc.

Industry Representation:

AHUG's Executive Director holds various positions and participates in many endeavors that provide representation for industry input and advancement of the goals and mission of the organization.

- Hardwoods Development Council
- SFI State Implementation Committee, providing coordination and support for the efforts of the PA Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

- Northern PA Regional College
- North Central Regional Planning/Development's PREP Network
- Lumber Heritage Region
- PSU Ag Advisory Board
- TEAM Pennsylvania's Ag Advisory Board
- Allegheny Forest Alliance
- Roach Bauer Forestry Forum / Sandy Cochran Memorial Scholarship Committee
- Attended various legislative interaction events on behalf of regional industry.

Research & Development:

- AHUG has partnered with the ANF Research Station and the University of Missouri on a Birch regeneration study, funded through the Pennsylvania Farm Bill's Commonwealth Specialty Crop Grant program, designed to better understand the prolific nature of Birch regen in PA and potential management applications on BI and other species. The data compilation portion of this work is complete, with analysis and conclusions/impacts to be completed by 6/'22.
- Provided input to PSU in preparation of Pennsylvania-specific Mesophytic Cove Site information for industry support in meeting FSC's Controlled Wood mitigation requirements.



AHUG participated in PA Timber Show & Timber Strong Career Fair.



NTHA Program Manager, Sarah Hall-Bagdonas & KWPA Executive Director, Stephanie Phillips-Taggart joined AHUG in co-sponsoring Forever Forests Exhibit at Reading Children's Museum.



Over 100 individuals received Spotted Lanternfly Permits and SFI Continuing Ed credits at 2021 Kane Area Logging Safety event.



AHUG member, Mike Hovatter (LandVest, Inc), joins Josh Hanson (USFS, ANF) in educating on glossy buckthorn during Allegheny Forest Health Collaborative Field Tour.



Curwensville Elementary Students learn about healthy forest management during Conservation Day Program.