

# GENE COLLINS LOGGER ACTIVIST AWARD

## ROBERT O. "BOB" LUSSIER, JR. & GREAT WOODS COMPANIES, LLC *Bennettsville, SC*

The 2017 Gene Collins Logger Activist Award is proudly presented to Bob Lussier and Great Woods Companies, LLC for their sincere commitment to professional timber harvesting, supporting the association, participating in community and industry activities, practicing sustainable timber harvesting, promoting education and positive promotion of professional business practices.

Great Woods Companies is a conscientious, professional business understanding the value of relationships with customers, employees and their industry, environmental stewardship and promotion of a positive image as a professional logger.

As a thirty-five year veteran in the timber harvesting business, Bob has witnessed the evolution of the professional timber harvesting industry from chain saw felling to total timber harvesting mechanization.

Originally from Connecticut, Bob moved to South Carolina 2009 when the Northeast wood receiving markets began to decline. He heard of an opening for a timber harvesting crew in the Darlington area and decided to give it try for six months. So he and the business moved south. And behold, Bob and Great Woods Companies found a home in the Palmetto State.

Great Woods Companies operates two mechanized crews focusing on thinnings, logging, total harvests, chipping, and forestry mulching on private landowner pine and hardwood tracts in Marlboro, Dillon, Florence, Darlington, Lee and Chesterfield counties. The operation has the capabilities of producing "clean" wood chips for the paper mills and "dirty" wood chips for energy production when wood receiving markets need these products. Log length pine and hardwood products are also pro-



duced for local and export markets.

Bob purchases timber from local forest landowners and will occasionally harvest tracts provided by other companies. Their operations specialize in operator select thinning and logging for pulpwood and higher valued log products.

Operating a lean, efficient business works very well for Great Woods Companies. The two crews' equipment spread consist of a CAT feller buncher, a Tigercat feller buncher, a CAT track feller buncher, a CAT grapple skidder, a Tigercat grapple skidder, a John Deere grapple skidder, two CAT knuckleboom loaders equipped with pull through delimbers, a CAT bulldozer, a Trelan chipper, a Woodsman chipper and a Peterson debarker.

The company's truck fleet is comprised of six truck tractors, eighteen double deck log and chip van trailers and two lowboys. The company does use a regular contract hauler and others as needed. Eleven employees including Bob and wife Cindy make up the company. Cindy is the business admin-



istrative manager and Bob serves as company President.

Great Woods Companies owns their own shop and office and performs ninety percent of their mechanic work on trucks and woods equipment and all maintenance. Bob says, "It's an important part of keeping a job running smoothly. If your equipment or trucks are down, then no one is making money."

Bob says, "Guys that work with me, I truly appreciate each one of them. Each one is a professional and conducts themselves as a professional because each one of them is proud of what they do for forest landowners, our company and our industry. They help make our company successful. It's all about team work. Most of all, it is the support of Cindy and her efforts for the company that makes Great Woods Companies possible. Behind every successful man is a better woman and that lady is Cindy."

Average weekly production delivered to wood receiving markets has been 3,500 – 4,000 tons per week with the capability of producing 5,500 – 6,000 tons per week. Weekly production has been down mainly due to contract trucking and driver availability issues.

As Bob stated, "Qualified, safe and dedicated drivers are hard to find. This is a major challenge for our business and the timber harvesting trucking industry as a whole due to the overall lack of available qualified, safe drivers and an aging driver population as well as drivers willing to be employed and

drive unmanufactured forest products trucks in our industry. It's a tough challenge for offering competitive driver wages and employee benefits to compete with other trucking segments. However, we as an industry have to continue to

look, change, adapt and improve our wage and driver benefits and do our best to promote our industry and attract qualified, safe drivers to want to work in our timber harvesting transportation segment."

Great Woods Companies delivers longwood and wood chip products to International Paper, Georgetown, WestRock, Florence, Domtar Paper Company, Bennettsville, Georgia Pacific, Alcolu, Sonoco Products Company, Hartsville, and longwood products to Canfor Southern Pine, Camden, Conway and Darlington, Edwards Woods Products, Marshville, NC, Cox Industries for poles and grade logs to Lampe & Malphus, Smithfield, NC.

Bob and Cindy are active forest landowners. They manage, harvest and reforest their 375 acres in Marlboro and Chesterfield Counties. They are sustainable forestry believers and practice sustainable forestry on their own timberlands. As Bob and Cindy say, "We are professionals in the timber harvesting industry and practice sustainable forest management on our

own timberlands, but we strive and want to educate our timberland owner customers we do business with to practice sustainable forestry and continue to grow, manage, harvest and reforest their timberlands." Bob states, "I think we should treat every tract of forestland like it was our own. Myself and our company, want to do it the right way and make every tract better than it was when we began. I won't ask my crew to do anything I wouldn't do or couldn't do myself on my own forestland."

Bob and Great Woods Companies was awarded the Forestry Association of South Carolina's 2016 Outstanding Logger of the Year Award. He was named runner-up for the Forest Resources Association Southeast Technical Division 2016 Logger of the Year Award. The company participates as a sponsor for the Log A Load For Kids golf tournament. Bob



has participated and won Log Loader competitions at equipment shows and donated the cash winnings to Log A Load For Kids. Bob and his company's involvement in local, state and community activities is a tribute to their commitment. Great Woods Companies is an active SCTPA timber harvester member and Forestry Association of South Carolina member.

Bob, Cindy and Great Woods Companies strive to educate forest landowners, the public about our sustainable forestry and professional timber harvesting industry. They recognize there is a greater need for the critical public to understand our industry is dedicated to environmental stewardship and maintaining our sustainable, renewable and healthy forest resources for the many products made of wood, for wildlife and wildlife habitat, for clean water, for recreation and for aesthetic values.

The company emphasizes and maintains a safety first goal, sustainable harvesting practices, complying with SC Timber Harvesting Best Management Practices and works conscientiously to meet landowner expectations through exceptional environmental, harvesting and business practice standards.

Bob and foreman Terry Hannan are SFI TOP Trained. Company trucks are equipped with GPS and on-board cameras. He and Cindy monitor drivers' performance each day and have a driver safety incentive program to maintain driver safety with driver evaluations performed every thirty days. Drivers perform pre-trip and post-trip truck and trailer inspections. Stringent pre-employment screening is done for drivers and other employees.

Bob and Cindy are Pee Dee Landowner Association members. Bob, being an avid hunter, belongs to the National Wild Turkey Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Ducks Unlimited. He was a board of director for the Connecticut Professional Timber Producers Association, served on the Town of Pomfret, Connecticut's Conservation Commission and Green Team. He served on Caterpillar Forestry's Advisory Committee for the development of the CAT 535 D-series skidder.

Bob has a history in the wood business. He began working with his father cutting firewood and working with his father's friend who owned a sawmill. He went out on his own in the firewood business and started logging in 1983 with the first rubber-tired Tigercat feller buncher in southern New England. He

harvested cut logs for Canadian markets and Columbia Forest Products.

Bob and Cindy made state case law in a lawsuit against the town of Pomfret, CT when the town tried to prohibit them from harvesting their own timber by bringing forward unnecessary environmental restrictions.

They won the case in court and was able to harvest their timber.

Bob has a passion for his business and profession. He says, "We all have different issues, many of which could be fixed, but the timber harvesting industry needs and must be more involved, pro-active and not re-active, in our state associations and our own profession." He says too, "I appreciate the work, representation and leadership the SC Timber Producers Association and the Forestry Association of

South Carolina provide for our industry and appreciate the relationship the two associations have with each other."

Understanding the responsibilities and importance associated with how professional loggers contribute to their local and state economies, how professional loggers must work with landowners, wood suppliers and wood receiving companies in cooperative, mutually beneficial partnerships, promoting and practicing sustainable forestry, educating the critical public regarding professional timber harvesting, demonstrating a stewardship attitude about our sustainable and renewable forest resources and our environment are all important issues to the company's business and operational standards.

As an industry leader with a sincere commitment to professional logging, sustainable forestry, community, family and the principles of outstanding business, SCTPA is proud *Bob Lussier and Great Woods Companies, LLC* is our 2017 *Gene Collins Logger Activist Award* recipient.



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The South Carolina Timber Producers Association's Logger Activist Award recognizes a logger member who has demonstrated an exceptional desire to promote and represent the profession by actively participating in association state and district activities, promoting and participating in educational efforts, community action projects and association projects to positively promote timber harvesting's image, conducting business activities in the best interests of the timber harvesting profession to engender the public's trust by meeting and exceeding the American Loggers Council Loggers Code of Practices and has displayed a professional commitment to sustainable forestry practices.

SCTPA's Logger Activist Award was named in honor of Gene Collins of Gene Collins Logging, Inc., Georgetown, because of Gene's dedication to his profession, his unselfish endeavors to promote the integrity of the logging industry within his community, his volunteer work educating children, his use of business practices that engendered the public's trust and his support for professional timber harvesting and sustainable forestry.

## **PREVIOUS GENE COLLINS LOGGER ACTIVIST WINNERS**

- 1999 - Dennis Wall, W. V. Wall & Sons, Inc. ■ Edgefield**
- 2000 - Larry Cromer, W. A. Cromer & Son, Inc. ■ Newberry**
- 2001 - Gene Collins, Gene Collins Logging, Inc. ■ Georgetown**
- 2002 - Tommy Barnes, Ideal Logging, Inc. ■ Edgemoor**
- 2003 - Jim Curry, Piedmont Pulp, Inc., & Pulpco Inc. ■ Laurens**
- 2004 - Joe Young, Low Country Forest Products, Inc. ■ Georgetown**
- 2005 - Crawford Wilks, Wilks Logging, Inc. ■ Chester**
- 2006 - Tim, Reg & Martha Williams, Log Creek Timber Company, Inc. ■ Edgefield**
- 2007 - BoBo Seckinger, Seckinger Forest Products, Inc. ■ Hampton**
- 2008 – Norman Arledge, Arledge Logging & Timber, Inc. ■ Landrum**
- 2009 – Billy McKinney, McKinney Brothers Logging, Inc. ■ Union**
- 2010 – Billy & Robert Walker, Walker & Walker Logging, LLC. ■ Laurens**
- 2011 - Donnie, Marty, Rodney & Gail Lambert, Leo Lambert Logging, Inc. ■ Georgetown**
- 2012 - Danny McKittrick, McKittrick Timber, LLC ■ Heath Springs**
- 2013 – Josh Key & Beech Island Timber & Construction, Inc. ■ Jackson**
- 2014 – Frampton Ferguson & Ferguson Forest Products, Inc. ■ Luray**
- 2015 - Joey & Danny Austin, Austin Logging, Inc. ■ Gaston**
- 2016 – William Wilkerson, Wilkerson Logging, Inc. ■ Hickory Grove**

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