

Alaska Timber Industry - 2/11/08



Overview of the industry

- 1867-1930s - Early hand logging for fish-trap logs, cannery and dock piling, saw logs for local lumber needs and mine timbers
- 1930s – 1950s - Tractor and A-frame logging for larger volumes as the regional population grew.



1950s – present - Road construction and truck logging with cable systems as hand-logging and A-frame operations phased out and volume increased with long-term timber sales.



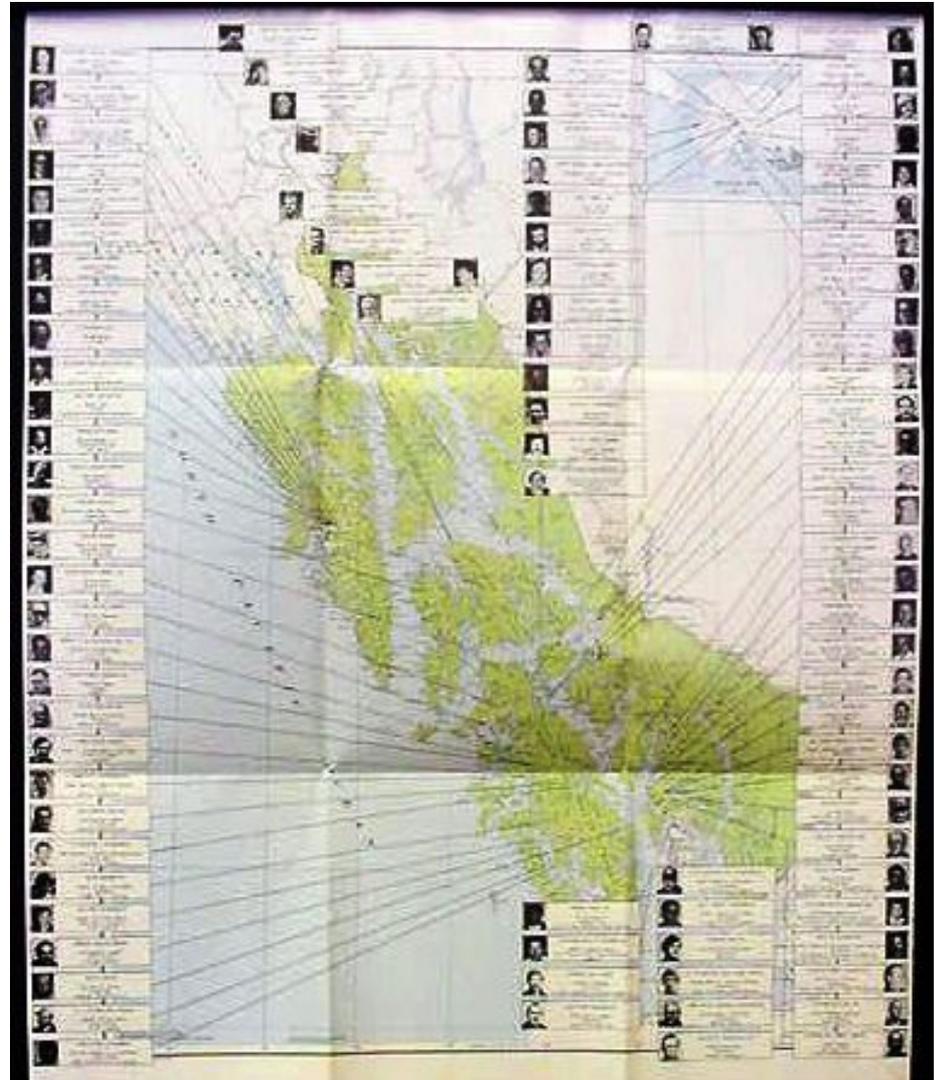
- The timber industry formed an association (the **Alaska Loggers Association**, which was later renamed the Alaska Forest Association).
- The AFA provided Workers Compensation Insurance, Health Insurance and Pension Benefits. These programs continue today.
- The AFA also sponsors a Scholarship program and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Program



- 1980s – present - Helicopter logging as operations were forced into higher elevation and more isolated sites.
- 1990s – present - More mechanical logging operations as mechanized equipment has become more efficient and versatile.



Beginning in the early 1990s, the Forest Service began reducing the volume of timber available to purchase. This resulted in a downsizing of the industry from over 3,000 jobs in 1990 to less than 1,000 jobs today.



A typical small sawmill employs about 15 people:

- Mill Manager
- Bookkeeper
- Log Yard – 988 operator
- Barker operator
- Head Sawyer
- Edger operator
- Trim saw operator
- Resaw operator
- Lumber Grader
- Lumber puller-stacker (3)
- Forklift operator
- Bander/Talleyman
- Lumber yard – barge loading



Viking Lumber



Metlakatla sawmill



Debarker at Annette Island

- A typical road construction operation employs about 15 people:
 - 2 R/W fallers
 - 2 Backhoe operators
 - 2-person drilling team
 - 3-5 dump truck drivers
 - Loader operator
 - Dozer operator
 - Mechanic
 - Bookkeeper
 - Foreman



Port Alice roadbuilding

- A typical single-side logging cable logging operation employs about 16 people:
 - Fallers (4)
 - Rigging crew (2)
 - Yarder operator
 - Loader operator and 2nd-loader
 - Truck drivers (3-5)
 - Mechanic
 - Foreman
 - Bookkeeper



Alcan logging near Ketchikan

- A typical small sorting/scaling yard employs about 6 people:
 - Loader operator
 - Log bucker
 - Log scaler
 - Boom boat operator (if rafting logs)
 - Stacker/Wheel Loader operator
 - Mechanic



Icy Bay sortyard

Most training in the timber industry is on-the-job training.

- An apprenticeship program partially funded by the State could help with this training.
- Potential new employees most often have to relocate from Washington or Oregon. The initial cost of housing for these employees often prevents them from coming to Alaska. A temporary housing allowance to help these workers until they earn sufficient money to pay their own housing would be a big help.
- Many of the new employees seem to lack a work ethic that insures they will get to work on time every day. The State could make presentations at the local high schools about work ethics.

Supervisory Training would be helpful

- This would include how to manage employee relations, employee disputes, safety programs, record keeping.
- This should also include advising the supervisors of the employee's rights (e.g. nondiscrimination, overtime rules, etc)

Equipment maintenance training would also be helpful

Safety Training

- The State voluntary safety program seems to be working well for most timber industry employers, but we need help with USFS timber sale designs. E.g.
 - The changes in roads related to vertical and horizontal alignment as allowed in the linear grading pose a safety problem as well as others that limit the equipment that we can use.
 - a long standing state statute requiring the removal of "danger trees" in and around roads and landings and the reluctance by the FS to let us clear a guy line circle.

Maintaining a safe work environment

- The Forest Service has a lot of employee turnover, but evidently no training program of their own.
- The State could provide an annual training for Forest Service employees to insure they incorporate safety in timber sale designs. Examples:
 - Inadequate guy-line stumps to anchor skylines or guylines
 - FS requirements to leave trees standing near operations
 - » Creates unnecessary hazards for employees and unnecessary liability for employers.
 - » State should help by more aggressively opposing and finding alternatives to this unsafe practice.
 - » In the past, the State OSHA representative would inspect questionable harvest units and assist in persuading the Forest Service to make changes to eliminate safety hazards.

This bear is smiling because he likes logging.

