First Annual WPA Auction Raises $51,000 for Nature's Packaging Campaign!
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New Members Welcomed
In a banner month for new members, the WPA welcomes 11.

Upcoming Events
Coming up on the radar is NWPCA's ALC, plus other events.

Softwood Lumber Prices
Our monthly softwood price graph, courtesy of NRCAN.
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WPA Announces New Officers

WPA announces its new slate of officers for 2016, as well as the result of a highly successful auction for Nature's Packaging - to the tune of $51K!

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Brazil ISPM Interpretation

Timber Products Inspection has alerted shippers that Brazil has changed its approach to inbound unmarked solid wood packaging, and offers advice.

Speaker Program Highlights

A wide range of perspectives was offered by WPA speakers, on topics ranging from the lumber supply chain to lean pallet manufacturing, emerging quality assurance requirements, and more.

New Member Pallets LLC Offers GreenBlock Hybrid

New WPA member Pallets LLC has introduced a new hybrid wood pallet, featuring plastic blocks, reducing timer requirements by 50 percent.

Vecoplan Announces New Test Facility

Size reduction specialist Vecoplan has announced the opening of its new test lab.
North American Softwood Prices

Weekly softwood lumber prices to January 12, 2016 are shown below, sourced at http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/forests/industry/13309.

WPA Membership Drive Competition

Congratulations to all involved in a highly successful membership drive, with Derek Turney and Norm Normile sharing the championship for sponsoring the most new members. Amazingly, 12 people shared the second place finish! That kind of broad participation really makes the difference in creating a vital association.

In addition to valuable cash prizes, the winner now also receives the membership trophy, presented at the Annual Meeting. With the highly successful 2016 Annual Meeting now in the books, it is time to work toward 2017. "When you recruit new members, the entire WPA membership is the winner!"

New members can join and pay on the website. Here is the link: www.westernpallet.org
WPA New Members

The WPA is pleased to introduce the following new members:

Lauro Gaona
GC Pallets, Inc.
13805 Slover Avenue
Fontana, CA 92237
Ph: (909)357-8515
Fax: (909)356-8566
Email: sales@gcpalletsusa.com
sponsor: Norm Normile, NW Norm

Bruce Bates
Morning Star Packing Company
12045 South Ingmar Grade
Los Banos, CA 93635
ph: (530)848-2242
Web: www.morningstarco.com
Email: bbates@morningstarco.com
Sponsor: Annie Montey, American Pallet

Francisco Ramirez
Atlas Wood Products, Inc.
6904 Cactus Court
San Diego, Ca 92154
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fax: (619)710-0311
email: atlaswp@sbcglobal.net
sponsor: Derek Turney, Palnet

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fax: (909)350-1361
email: ramzwoodproducts@gmail.com
sponsor: Cresencio Ramirez, Ramirez Pallets, Inc.

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email: lori@robertslumbersales.com
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ph: (541)255-6177  
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sponsor: Frank Shean, Valley Pallet
WPA Annual Meeting
Lively Auction Raises $51,000 for Nature's Packaging, Record Attendee Numbers Enjoy Sun, Networking, Speakers and Golf

This January, WPA members and guests soaked up some welcome sunshine along with new insights while getting together with old friends and meeting new contacts. All enjoyed another record-breaking annual meeting at the Rancho Las Palmas Resort in Rancho Mirage, California. With attendance reaching a new high of 220 people, participants enjoyed the familiar resort ambience, as well as a few new wrinkles. Chief among these was the inaugural charity auction, an annual event that will be held to support Nature’s Packaging, the joint (NWPCA, CWPCA, and WPA) campaign to promote the benefits of wood packaging.

Presiding as auctioneer at the fun event was Bill MacCauley, of John Rock, a certified auctioneer in Pennsylvania, and well known to NWPCA meeting attendees. Bidding on the items (donated by members) was intense. The event was sprinkled with funny moments. WPA legend Pat Sherry was connected via Internet to the auction hall when a curious 2007 photo of Pat and a pig head came up for bid. In another surprising move, MacCauley accepted a $1,400 bid from Steve Yelland of J.F. Rohrbaugh Co., for a lot of high value tequila, even though the former NWPCA chair was not in attendance. MacCauley quipped that he knew that Yelland would be happy with the transaction.

When the smoke settled, a total of $51,000 had been raised for Nature's Packaging!

New Executive and Board Changes

Outgoing President Carolyn Beach-Skinner of Westside Pallet stated that 2015 marked another successful year for the Association. Her three goals going into her term were to add greater value through providing an Annual Meeting brimming with information that members could take home and apply, as well as through completion of the western lumber trend report, and greater collaboration with NWPCA. While the success of the Annual Meeting speaks for itself, she noted that the lumber trend report has met challenges and it is still a work in progress. It will benefit from more widespread participation. Numbers reported are confidential. With respect to collaboration, most of the WPA board met the NWPCA board in Tucson last year at the Annual Leadership Conference, with an eye to collaboration. That opportunity emerged with the emergence of the Nature’s Packaging Project, which the WPA board voted unanimously to support.
White & Company Launches Best Load and Best Pallet Version 2.1, Will Exhibit at WPA Meeting

WPA’s 2016 Executive

From left to right, Lindsey Shean (Treasurer), Dave Uppal (Vice President), Kathleen Dietrich (President) and Carolyn Beach-Skinner (Immediate Past President).

Talk about an amazing team effort!

Membership Drive winners shown at left; Kathleen Dietrich, Lori Collins, Carolyn Beach-Skinner, Mark Berger, Annie Montey, Frank Shean, Trace Sutter, Ryan Stearns, and Norm Normile. At the podium is membership chairman, Tyrone Konecny.

Membership Drive Exemplifies WPA Team Spirit

It was another record year for the WPA membership drive. Tied for first place were Norm Normile (NW Norm) and Derek Turney (PALNET). Sharing second place were Jody Saylor (Pallet Central Enterprises), Ryan Stearns (Atlas Pallet), Trace Sutter (Spokane Forest Products), Lori Collins (Sierra Pacific Industries), Caroline Beach-Skinner (Westside Pallet), Kathleen Dietrich (Commercial Lumber & Pallet), Mark Berger (American Pallet), Annie Montey (American Pallet), Cresencio Ramirez (Ramirez Pallets), Al Gutierrez (Robitaille Risk Management), Michael Coffey (Tampa International Forest Products) and Frank Shean (Valley Pallet).
Beach-Skinner now becomes Past President, as Kathleen Dietrich of Commercial Lumber and Pallet becomes President for 2016. This is her second term as WPA President. Dave Uppal of Pioneer Pallet is the new Vice President, while Lindsey Shean of Valley Pallet becomes Treasurer. Re-elected to the board were Eric Conklin, Jeff Carr, and Tyrone Konecny. New board members are Sukhi Brar and Rod Lucas.

Technology Changing Landscape of Employee Benefits

Leanne Seeger returned again as a speaker, once again offering insight into the evolving requirements of the Affordable Healthcare Act. This time, she also explored how new technologies are reshaping employee engagement and appreciation of benefits, with a goal of achieving
sustainable cost management.

New technologies are emerging which are allowing participants to customize their plans in ways that provide greater value to them. Approaches such as telemedicine and video chat are increasingly being used for doctor consultation. Additionally, Seeger touched on wearables, and the role they can play in tracking not only vital signs, but also can be used to identify positive behaviors such as physical activity. Given that 50 percent of wellbeing is controllable through behaviors, to the extent that wearables can track physical activity, and that it can be reinforced, this could result in a significant improvement in health outcomes. Many organizations are integrating wearable devices into their wellness initiatives. Companies can upload information from the wearables and tie them to points and financial incentives.

While some of the scenarios offered by Seeger seemed a little more like science fiction than 2016, she cautioned participants to consider other recent shifts which beforehand would have seemed very unlikely, such as Blockbuster to Netflix, taxis to Uber, or CDs to iTunes.

NWPCA Works to Serve Members and the Industry

"We put our lives on the line for you," Patrick Atagi stated. tongue in cheek. He was referring to his participation in a fire marshalls outreach program where various outside lawmakers and other stakeholders (Cont’d on Page 14).
“Putting our lives on the line for members.” As part of an outreach program, a number of lawmakers and stakeholders, including NWPCA’s Atagi, received the opportunity to suite up and experience going into a fire to better understand the issues.

donned fire gear and went into the flames to get a closer feel for what firefighters do. Dealing with the firecode is one of the many issues that the NWPCA deals with, explained Atagi, NWPCA Vice President, Advocacy and External Affairs. He reviewed the range of government and agency relationships that the Association must manage in the course of representing its members and the industry. He commented on one recent win which involved GSA eliminating their preference for plastic pallets as being more environmentally preferable, a success which amazingly (by public sector standards) only took three weeks to achieve.

NWPCA also works with a number of universities, including Virginia Tech, Michigan State, Wisconsin-Studt, Penn State, and WVU, as well as a host of domestic and international trade associations.

A key initiative for NWPCA, in cooperation with WPA, and CWPCA, will be the Nature's Packaging Program. The related website is scheduled for launch prior to the upcoming NWPCA Annual Leadership Conference. He also played a video from WPA member Oakland Pallet, as a demonstration of great work being done to promote the sustainability of wood pallets. The link to that video is on Page 16.
A scene from the 2016 Annual Meeting. WPA meetings have long had a family flavor. Eric Conklin (at front right), of Shadybrook Lumber Products, is a WPA Director. Eric attended his first WPA meeting with his parents when he was in grade school.
Atagi played a recent video produced by Oakland Pallet as an example of a powerful message explaining the benefits of wood pallets. Click to play.

Defining the Lumber Supply Chain from Trees to Pallets

"On May 1, I will have been in this industry for 41 years," said Lori Collins of Sierra Pacific Industries at the beginning of her presentation on the lumber supply chain. "And today, as tomorrow, it is like going to a cocktail party everyday without the alcohol. I love the people, I love the trades, and I love the market. I tell our people we don’t make the market, we play in the market. I love being a part of an industry that is so environmentally proactive.

"The last little while, I have come to really appreciate the wood pallet and crating industry," Collins continued. "You guys do an awesome job for our sawmills and for our environment. You take a product that our sawmills do not want to make, you turn it into something that goes around the world. It is recyclable, it is repairable, it is reusable, and the fiber that you are taking is not going into a landfill, and isn’t going into a pile of woodchips.

Collins shared her insights into the regulartory hurdles of operating a lumber business across the western states, particularly in California. Bottom line, she said, when you buy California timber, you are buying the most sustainable material in the world.

When questioned about the lumber market, Collins replied that it really depends what part of the lumber market you are talking about, as there are many aspects to it. "If you are looking at the low grade market, I think it is going to be steady for awhile," she said.
Always ready with a warm smile and a sincere handshake, Tom Thayer, three-time WPA President and a backbone of WPA for many years, will be retiring in February. When called to the podium to be acknowledged, Tom received a well deserved standing ovation. Look for a tribute to Tom in the February edition. Do you have some thoughts to share? Email them to newsdesk@westernpallet.org

Lean Mean Fighting Machine

"Every time you touch something, you should be adding value, otherwise you are just wasting time and money," stressed Chaille Brindley, in a valuable session entitled Lean Mean Fighting Machine. He shared a number of key insights he has gathered through his work at Industrial Reporting. "Everybody has labor problems, right. One of the best ways to solve your labor problem is to do more with less."

He emphasized that if you have empowered employees who can find ways to solve customer issues, so that your company is so indispensable, then customers will be less likely to switch for incremental cost reductions.

Brindley emphasized the importance of taking calculated risks. "If you are afraid to take risks, you are not going to be a lean, mean fighting machine," he said. Citing the example of heat treatment, he noted that the companies that made the most on heat treatment were the ones who got into it the earliest, as now, competitive pressures continue to erode the profitability of this service.

Brindley encouraged companies to bring in an engineer from the outside, or less (Cont'd on Page 18)
expensive alternative such as a university intern in order for some fresh eyes to 
evaluate your processes. "Can we do this with fewer people or can we eliminate 
this activity altogether?" he asked.

"We are so deep in the grind that we don’t ask questions," Brindley continued. "I 
am here to entice you to ask those questions." Oftentimes, he noted, we handle 
products too many times, and drive too far. He stressed that building a lean, 
empowered culture is something that can be done informally. It doesn't 
necessarily need to be a formal Kaizen program.

Wood Pallet Quality Programs for the 21st Century

Pallet customers increasingly looking to verify pallet supplier quality processes.

As pressure to establish quality assurance programs in the supply chain continues 
to take root, wood pallet quality is increasingly becoming part of that 
conversation. "One of the things I personally have been dealing with at Millwood, 
and more and more of our customers and supply partners have dealing with, is 
quality," stated Ralph Rupert, Manage of Unit Load Technology for Millwood, Inc., 
speaking at the 2016 WPA Annual Meeting.

According to Rupert, a number of trends are resulting in customers looking to 
validate the quality assurance programs of their extended supply chain, including 
pallet suppliers. Such customers include food product and pharmaceutical 
manufacturers looking to better assure their supply chains, as well as companies 
with ISO programs pushing those requirements out to their packaging and pallet 
suppliers. Companies involved with ISO programs typically involve automotive 
and other OEM (original equipment manufacturer) companies.

When such companies seek to validate the quality of their pallet suppliers, this 
can involve requiring the pallet supplier to fill out appropriate paperwork to verify 
that they have a quality system in place, as well as onsite audits in some cases for 
additional scrutiny.

One of the requirements is with respect to how pallet specifications are 
documented. "Most of us use PDS, but where are these (printouts) located, and 
how do they get out onto the shop floor?" Rupert asked. While he believes that 
the pallet industry is doing a great job with quality, unfortunately it often falls 
short in terms of documentation.

While Rupert was visiting a pallet supplier with a customer auditor, the plant was
flagged for not having a documented procedure for HT stamped pallets coming off the production line. The auditor asked how the company ensures that the pallets are actually heat treated before they are shipped. The answer from the plant owner is that the untreated pallets are staged in the “to be heat treated” section, while treated pallets are staged in the “ready to ship” section. While the company did have an effective process, unfortunately, the company did not have a written

Sukhi Brar, at left, is a new director for the Western Pallet Association. At right, Michael Sheldon, Olympic Forest Products Company, sits on the Nature’s Packaging Marketing Committee.
procedure, or even signage which identified the specific staging areas. Going forward, having written procedures will be increasingly important.

Other aspects of interest to auditors include employee training documentation, preventative maintenance schedules and records, as well as other factors. For example, food processors are increasingly concerned that incoming lumber be stored in a covered storage environment, and that finished pallets also be stored under cover. In the work area, there is an expectation that no food is consumed. While bottled water is permitted (it doesn’t have sugar to attract ants or other pests), having lunch on the floor is not acceptable. In regard to quality assurance programs, companies can be expected to have pest control programs and bait traps.

In terms of training, it is becoming the expectation that one cannot simply place a new hire with an experienced person. The training process and skills to be mastered must be documented. The more formal approach documents the skills and knowledge required, and records the verification of successful acquisition of them by the newcomer. Likewise, it is not enough for preventative maintenance to be practiced. It also should include documented schedules and maintenance records.

“Our customers are expecting more and we as an industry need to step up to the plate,” Rupert concluded. “This is not going to go away. That bar is going to continue to be raised. Your documentation of your work flow, processes and training will help your business and the pallet industry as a whole.”

Wood Packaging Requirements for Entering Brazil

“We have received several calls and emails asking for clarification on regulatory changes related to ISPM 15 in Brazil,” Timber Products Inspection writes in its January newsletter. TP stresses that there has been no change with respect to conforming to ISPM 15 requirements. There has been, however, a change in practice with respect to how Brazil responds to the arrival of unmarked pallets into the country. Some companies have been sending unmarked solid wood packaging into Brazil and having it fumigated upon arrival because they found this practice to be cheaper than purchasing treated pallets in the country of origin. TP reports that Brazil is now refusing entry of shipments that do not arrive with ISPM 15 wood packaging requirements.

Also noteworthy, TP reports that companies have been enjoying quicker movement of their shipments through customs if they have documentation which
identifies the solid wood packaging as being ISPM 15 compliant. While paperwork to this effect is not required by Brazil, a failure to have it can result in physical inspection of the load and related delays.

Source: Timber Products Inspection

New WPA Member Introduces GreenBlock Pallet

A new hybrid pallet featuring plastic blocks and wood decks has been announced by Pallets LLC, the manufacturer of the GreenBlock Pallet. Pallets LLC’s new sustainability pallet will be introduced across the United States this January. According to the company, the new offering is cheaper and more sustainable than a traditional GMA Pallet, stating that the GreenBlock is a durable, eco-friendly revolution in materials handling. GreenBlock uses a modular approach combining both wood and high-impact copolymer polypropylene that is both recycled and recyclable. Pallets LLC’s GreenBlock Pallet not only offers greater strength over traditional all-wood pallets, it is cheaper, and it can reduce the amount of wood used in a standard GMA pallet by more than 50 percent.

Kevin Berwin of Pallets LLC elaborates that the company has been testing GreenBlock for the past seven months. Each individual GreenBlock has a crush point between 1,800 to 2,400 lbs. The heat deflection temperature is around 145F to 180F while the cold starts to impact at -20F. The company is selling GreenBlock Pallets in truckload quantities or the GreenBlock itself by the skid. The technology is suitable for both expendable and reusable pallet applications. The image above is of a load that was sent around the world, making multiple stops with no damage to load or pallet. For more information, please visit www.PalletsLLC.com.
VECOPLAN CHRISTENS NEW TEST LAB

SHREDDER TESTING ON YOUR MATERIALS

Vecoplan, a size reduction technology leader, recently christened its new state-of-the-art test lab. An integral part of Vecoplan’s continuing expansion, the lab serves two functions vital to Vecoplan’s long-term goals. “First it provides a practical hands-on environment to test the feasibility and ensure the quality of our R&D efforts,” states Gary Kolbet, VP Engineering at Vecoplan, LLC. “But just as important, the test lab is set up to provide real world conditions in which customers can view their own waste materials being processed - from feeding, through shredding and discharge/separation” adds Bob Gilmore, Vecoplan’s CSO.

The new test lab contains a representative selection of four of Vecoplan’s most popular shredders and a plastics granulator. The lab is also configured with an open slot to allow for the installation of other machines on an as-needed basis. One of the semi-permanent machines is horizontally fed and four are vertically fed via hoppers. The horizontal shredder, a VTH-VU, is equipped with a vibration feed conveyor and pneumatic discharge system.

The hopper-feed shredders include a VAZ 1600 M XL T, a V-ECO 1300, and a VAZ 1300 M NewGen. Carefully selected to demonstrate a range of feed opening sizes, horse-power drive options, and material shredding capabilities – including plastics, paper, cardboard, wood, MSW, and general waste, specific shredders also feature patented Vecoplan innovations such as the SureCut™ Film & Fiber shredding system and the energy saving HiTorc™ electromagnetic drive technology. Auxiliaries complementing these hopper feed shredders include a portable box dumper and inclined feed conveyor system, a VFB 650 F3 modular belt conveyor, a multi-station KKF paddle-chain conveyor equipped with a rotary drum magnet for ferrous metals separation, a bypass gate for materials discharge, and a complete dust collection system. Control panels for each machine, like the shredders they operate, represent Vecoplan’s range of control package options.

Other amenities in the lab include customer-viewing stations with built-in windows, located at key processing points on each shredder. Cameras positioned above each shredder’s hopper provide live video feeds of materials as they are being processed in the cutting chamber. Video can be viewed on the lab’s LCD monitor and recorded for the customer on USBs, DVDs or CDs.
Vecoplan recently opened a new test lab.

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### Upcoming Events

2/9/2016  WestPack, Anaheim, California  
www.westpack.packagingdigest.com

www.palletcentral.com

www.unitedfresh.org
See you next year at the 2017 WPA Annual Meeting!