

This Profession We Call Logging

Lorrie Woods, Consulting Forester

Happy New Year! I feel very lucky to be back in touch with the Logging Community in Montana. For those who don't know me, I am an "experienced" forester and I have been retained by the MLA to assist with the ALP program this year.

I left school in 1979 and that was when I started learning. As I applied my "book learning", I was "educated" on the practical side by many of our MLA members. Oh, they were patient fellows! I learned engineering from the road builders and silviculture from Mother Nature and the men who harvested the trees. What my formal education provided was a starting point that has never ended. How does this apply to the ALP program? Education is important to all and comes in many forms. Education provides a platform for all that we do, every day and we should never stop learning.

Education does a number of things besides teaching us more about a topic. It helps us learn to analyze different points of view, systematically gather and evaluate data, improves our reasoning and facilitates making informed decisions. You will often hear that one of the issues with education is that it can't eliminate uncertainty. I think we have that covered in this industry—there is nothing in logging that is certain except uncertainty!

So as I look at the ALP program, I see opportunity for each member to move ahead in the industry. It doesn't matter if you work on Federal, State or private lands, every bit of education leaves you better equipped to address the operational portion of your livelihood and make more informed decisions. Education helps you analyze the economics in your job, provide a safer environment for your crew, leave great habitat for the Grizzly Bear and start a forest that your grandkids will harvest. Education opens the door to make very rational, reasonable decisions that affect your bottom line.

Yes, you already know a great deal. Each of us carry assumptions based on our education. These assumptions need to be respected, and then understood. By understanding what created those assumptions, we can correctly and successfully apply them to a different place and time. In the end you will make more rational, informed decisions about your business.

ALP lets us continue to find perspectives and answers to questions we have all run into. We may find answers to some of the questions we have had, and it may create other questions. Education creates the opportunity to share ideas, and viewpoints that we have never thought of before. Ideas build this way and the logging industry is no exception. As you learn about topics associated with your profession, you can help them advance as well. We want to be a group that is invited to the party as part of the solution.

To stay competitive, we need to do more that provide the service of harvesting trees, putting out fires or building roads. We have to communicate with landowners and land managers so they recognize what an asset we are. We have to share our experience, situational awareness, knowledge and informed and improved reasoning of what we see in the environment around us. We need to be able to speak the same language as the folks

we are working for so we understand their vision for their forest and, ultimately, achieve their goals.

Our continued education and work will ensure we have a diverse environment that generations will want to live in. We will leave the forest better than we found it, and know we have done our best. Let's build on your past and create a great future for your company and our forests.

I look forward to meeting those of you I have yet to meet—and renewing relationships with “old” friends—this spring. *Lorrie*