

# DAVY'S COLUMN

*MLA President, Davy Sheets*



**Effective the first of October...** the MLA is welcoming Jason Todhunter back to the fold as the MLA's new "Headwaters Regional Representative." The Headwaters Region consists of all MLA members and activities east of the continental divide.

Jason's hiring coincides with Keith Olson's announcement that—after 37 years—he will be retiring the end of this year. Mr. Olson's decision to *step* aside spurred then-MLA President, Dyrk Krueger to appoint a *Transition Team* to formulate a "succession plan" for our organization.

That *Transition Team* met several times to review MLA membership trending and how it is impacted by mill capacity and closures, member benefit participation and other forces at work in this profession we call logging. One of the key decisions the *Transition Team* wrestled with was the pros and cons of hiring inside or outside our current employee base.

Ultimately, the *Transition Team* submitted a reorganization strategy that maximizes the talent of existing staff... and, further, builds upon the "regional model" that the MLA's board of directors has adopted for shaping MLA leadership roles.

In that model, the MLA recognizes three geographic regions:

- the **Northwest Region**—consisting of the Flathead and Kootenai Chapters—will be represented by John Hansen;
- the **Southwest Region**—consisting of the Clark Fork, Missoula and Deer Lodge Chapters—will be represented by Bryan Lorengo; and
- the **Headwaters Region**—which essentially consists of members residing and operating east of the continental divide—will be represented by Mr. Todhunter.

The *Transition Team* believes—and the MLA executive committee agreed—that this reorganization strategy will improve member relations, retention and recruitment... and will enhance the association's ability to deliver member services and benefits as required by the MLA Strategic Plan which was formulated and adopted during President Krueger's term.

Clearly, this regional strategy will require coordination with MLA headquarters in Kalispell... and to that end, Coleen Michael has assumed the role of Administrative Director of the MLA. All other staff members will remain in their current capacities, including Erica Potts as Insurance Coordinator and Mindi Thomas as Membership Manager.

Importantly, Lorrie Woods has agreed to continue as the Coordinator of the MLA's *Accredited Logging Professional* program for another year... and Mr. Olson has agreed to remain engaged in congressional affairs on behalf of the MLA for the foreseeable future.

In late October or early November—after Jason gets acclimated and staff has a chance to iron out some of the wrinkles of this regional strategy—we will host chapter meetings across the state to allow members to suggest ways the MLA can better serve our members. In the meantime, any questions about the administrative functions of your association can be directed to Keith Olson or Coleen Michael in Kalispell.

Till next issue... be safe and productive. **Davy**