

fieldtrip2004

Every year, the Railway Tie Association (RTA) conducts a major event that has become one of the most important activities on its annual calendar. Open to all members, RTA's Annual Field Trip takes attendees to manufacturing and rail facilities in search of new ideas for safety, new ways of doing things, new processes, new technologies and new material handling technologies that can be applied to their own operations. This year's excursion covered 700 miles in two days in the tri-state area of Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Maryland. Planned tours of facilities were augmented by impromptu visits to two spectacular sawmill operations. This pictorial recounts some of the activities of the two days.

ARRIVAL

Annual field trip attendees are always greeted upon arrival with a reception usually sponsored by an industry vendor. This year, however, the event was hosted by the University of West Virginia's Forestry Department at the Westvaco Natural Resources Center. Here, Dr. Joe McNeel explains the mission of the center and provides a review of the activities of his department.



RTA President Ken Laughlin of Arizona Pacific Wood Preserving thanks Dr. McNeel and Edd Bills for arranging the reception and providing wonderful food. The center is available for meetings of forest products groups and is truly a great facility for educational and corporate events.



In a preview of what is to come on the remainder of the field trip, the covered timber bridge at the Westvaco Natural Resources facility is decked with 3"x14" treated Parallam.

DAY 1



Rising at 5:30 a.m., and on the road a short time later, attendees travel to Beaver Falls, Pa., to visit with CSX personnel, including one of its bridge maintenance crews. The 1,787-foot structure dates to 1910 and spans the Ohio River.



CSX's D.T. Taubken gives a safety briefing, reminding everyone that this is an active bridge and that the trains going across it usually travel at about 50 mph, so very strict safety guidelines would be observed.



Small groups ascend a steep slope to view the maintenance activities.



1,787 feet doesn't look all that long from this perspective, but Taubken explains it feels like more than a mile when you are in the center of it working and a 150-car train passes by at full speed. "Even a sturdy structure like this one sways and gives under those loads. It's quite a lonely feeling for a bridge crew."



A ballast regulator and tamper pass by—slowly—while we're there.



8"x10" bridge ties were the subject of the maintenance work.

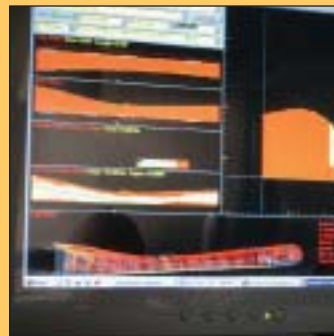


Replacing ties at this height is slow, methodical work. The strap attached to rail and the personnel is known as a rail slide and anchors bridge personnel to the rail so that if a fall occurs they'll be saved from a long drop with a difficult ending.



"Off the bridge" comes the call. It was easier going up; going down you'd better hold on to the rope so that if your feet slip out on the ballast you won't take everyone with you on the way down.

Then we're off to our first impromptu stop—Appalachian Timber Products and the sawmill facilities of John Marschat. Marschat explains that the company got started by selling logs to overseas clients, later investing more than \$1 million in the sawmills and dryers.



And quite an operation it is; computerized optimizing and state-of-the-art equipment make this a must-see operation.

RAILROAD TIES

Arizona Pacific Wood Preserving

Choice of species.
Quality controlled.
Less than truckload orders.
Easy rail and truck access.
Choice of chemical treatments.
Good proximity to major tie markets.
Three decades in the railroad tie industry.

APWP

Call Ralph Morris at 530-534-7350 or Ken Laughlin at 520-466-7801
A member of the **PWP** Pacific Wood Preserving Companies
The Leader in Wood Preservation
information@pacificwood.com • www.pacificwood.com



Finely tuned flow of material makes the work efficient.



Marschat has also invested in a Danish-made vacuum dryer that can take 15,000 BF of 4/4 maple from green to dry in four days, eliminating the need for stain control chemicals that dull the wood.



Our next stop is Koppers' Green Spring, W.Va., operation. Built by the B&O Railroad in the early 1900s, Koppers has owned and operated the facility since 1973, says Plant Manager James Hatch.



The facility receives its ties on rail and has 96 acres to store and process the material.




Tried and true stacking methods are employed for air seasoning.

We are Tied to Quality, Service & Environmental Stewardship


In Providing the Nations' Railroads with the Highest Quality Pressure Treated Forest Products

- Crossties • Switch Ties
- Bridge Material • Tie Plugs

Conserve the Forest  Preserve the Wood[®]

EAMAN TIMBER COMPANY INC.

PO BOX 372 • 1051 Hwy. 25 South • Montevallo, AL 35115 • 205-665-2536





Of course, quality is job one, and the grader at this station is key to achieving the highest level of quality possible.



Thompson Industries' Jeff Broadfoot visits with Robby Johnson of Seaman Timber Company and Jim Watt of The Crossie Connection as they view the grading operation.



Laughlin and Tony Helms of Thompson Industries also discuss the operations.



Ties everywhere means that the facility is staying busy trying to maintain pace of demand.



Hatch explains trammung for treating and that the three 150-foot cylinders that are in use are original to the plant.



Old-styled bolted doors belie the sophisticated controls in use at the plant. The cylinders are all slated for replacement within the next few years.



As the day comes to a close, we say goodbye to Koppers' Green Spring plant.



But one last late stop takes everyone to the wind farm along the ridges of West Virginia that produces 66 megawatts of clean electricity. The wind turbines are 228 feet high at the hub with 115-foot blades making the overall structures a beautiful and staggering football field length high.

DAY 2



We start day two in Beverly, W.Va., at Armstrong, the largest hardwood-flooring mill in the world.



L.J. Tallman explains that this mill utilizes more than 50 million board feet of material annually. That's the equivalent of more than 1.25 million ties.



Shown here is a portion of Armstrong's 14 million feet of inventory—hard to imagine that this represents only three months of working stock.



Dry kilns and shed space for storing dry stock are also major investments at a plant like this.



Tallman explains that 3/4" and 5/16" flooring patterns are finely milled to ensure tight fit tolerances.



After milling, finishing and packaging take up the balance of the operation's space.



Just down the road from Armstrong, we made another impromptu visit to a Coastal Lumber facility. The company's Dailey Yard employs state-of-the-art computerization to sort and package grade lumber.



Plant manager Levi Judy explains how this facility can quickly pull custom orders of thickness, width and length by using this technology.



The computerized process can be set to spray identifying numbers on the boards so that sorters can efficiently pull exactly the right material for the customized orders.

There is a Difference.

- Custom built equipment
- Gang Saw cut-up lines
- Band Saw cut-up lines
- Scragg Mills
- Log Merchandising Saws
- Multi-trim saws
- Cut-Off Saws
- Incisor Drums
- Incisor machines

Brewer, Inc. - Golden Eagle
 Contact your Golden Eagle Sales Representative.
800-345-6516
www.BrewerInc.com



Mike Neidert and Harry Bressler, chairman of RTA's Manufacturing & Handling, Safety and Resources Committee, along with Levi Judy, discuss the finer points of this new plant.



Saving what some felt was the best for last, we traveled to Trus-Joist's Parallam plant in Buckannon, W.Va. Here, Trus-Joist representative John Falstrom provides an overview of the upcoming tour.



Logs enter this facility and are peeled into thick, veneer-like stock.





Our tour guide, Bill Brady, explains that the material is then dried so that it can be processed into Microllam and Parallam billets.



For Microllam, the veneers enter in whole pieces and emerge as a finished engineered product.



For Parallam, lower-grade veneers (those in which imperfections can be clipped out) ascend the production line to be clipped into smaller pieces before being reformed into major structural components like bridge timbers up to 66 feet long.



These components can then be machined and cut into customized sizes.



Even though the process takes less than 24 hours from veneer to finished billets, the final product material does not ship to the customer until it receives several quality control checks for strength and adhesion, including destructive testing shown here.



The entire field trip crew wants to express our sincere appreciation to all those responsible for making this trip memorable and educational.

RTA Field Trip Participants

Ken Laughlin, Arizona Pacific Wood Preserving; Harry Bressler, Mike Rosiek, Doug Gentry, Buddy Downey, Mike Neidert and Floyd Bowlby of Burke-Parsons Bowlby; Bill Moss of Chemstar LLC; Billy Davis of Durable Wood Products; Steve Yost of Georgia Department of Transportation; Gary Williams and Tim Ries of Koppers Inc.; Walt King and Bill Rousis of Norfolk Southern; Jim Gauntt of the Railway Tie Association; Ken Peirson of RailWorks Wood Products; Robby Johnson of Seaman Timber Co.; Jimmy Watt of The Crosstie Connection; Jeff Broadfoot, Clayton Bryson and Tony Helms of Thompson Industries; and Kris Hedding, Brad Martin, Jeremy Myer and David Whitted of Webster Industries.