



Lumber Prices Reach Historic Highs, Stumpage Prices Remain Low



As mills return to capacity and a greater supply of lumber enters the market, lumber prices are falling dramatically — but not before prices reached historic highs during the pandemic.

*By Adam Maggard and Daowei Zhang,
Auburn University*

While COVID-19 safety measures increased home renovation projects and low interest rates spurred a boom in demand for forest products, stumpage prices for landowners remained low throughout 2020. However, limited supply and increased market demand caused this year's boost in lumber prices.

As mills return to capacity and a greater supply of lumber enters the market, lumber prices have fallen drastically — but not before prices reached historic highs.

The strong housing market of 2019 continued, driven by high demand for new housing starts, low mortgage interest rates and low unemployment. For most of 2020, interest rates for 30-year home mortgages ranged between 3.2-3.5%, even reaching below 3%.

U.S. lumber prices were approximately \$402 per thousand board feet (MBF) to start the year and increased to \$457 MBF toward the end of February.

Initially, COVID-19 affected southern U.S. lumber production and overall capacity. Lumber mill managers enacted COVID-19 operating guidelines set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, such as social distancing and maximum persons in an

area at one time. A slowed economy was expected to weaken the housing market and decrease lumber demand.

During March, lumber prices steadily declined and bottomed out in April at approximately \$264 per MBF before slowly rising through May and the first part of June. Prices reached approximately \$350 per MBF before increasing exponentially through the summer and early fall.

These factors paved the way to a shortage in lumber and an increase in price. During the second quarter of 2020, home renovation projects soared as more people stayed at home following quarantine orders.

Housing starts simultaneously accelerated. Wholesalers and retailers weren't expecting an increase in demand for lumber. As a result, softwood lumber inventories were depleted. Reduction in lumber production and capacity of mills magnified the situation.

By the second week of September, lumber prices neared a record high at approximately \$989 per MBF. Lumber production and consumption are still behind 2019 values, as is the pace of new home construction.

Meanwhile, southern pine sawtimber stumpage prices averaged \$22.70 per ton in the third quarter this year compared to \$22.78 per ton the same quarter in 2019, according to Timber Mart-South.

An oversupply of standing timber has resulted in low prices. Since the 2008 recession, many landowners opted to not harvest due to poor prices from the housing market collapse.

Additionally, tree planting over the last few decades has increased, leading to a serious oversupply across the South.

As 2021 nears, there's a bright spot for consumers as lumber prices fall. Though stumpage prices remain low, there's good news for landowners, too, as forestlands are as productive as ever. ■

DON'T GET COMPLACENT ABOUT HUNTING SAFETY

By David Rainer, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Although the number of hunting accidents has held steady the last several years, Capt. Marisa Futral doesn't want Alabama hunters to take anything for granted during the state's lengthy hunting seasons.

Futral, the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) Division hunter education coordinator, said accidents the past five years averaged about 20 per hunting season. It's encouraging — but not the ultimate goal.

Of the 22 accidents during the 2019-2020 season, WFF staff had reports of eight non-fatal firearm accidents, one fatal firearm accident, 10 non-fatal tree stand accidents and three fatal tree stand accidents.

"Of our non-fatal firearm accidents, half of them were self-inflicted," Futral said. "The other half failed to properly identify the target. The one fatality was failure to identify the target during turkey season. We really need to emphasize properly identifying the target before you put your finger on the trigger.

"And don't get complacent. Hunters need to be constantly aware of the muzzle direction of their firearm," she added. "Of the 13 tree stand accidents,



Staying aware and not being complacent are critical to successfully and safely using a tree stand during hunting season.

the victims either weren't wearing safety harnesses or they weren't attached to the tree. You need to be attached to the tree the entire time you're off the ground."

Futral emphasized the last statement.

"A wide variety of accessories is available to ensure you are attached to the tree at all times," she said. "Harnesses are much more comfortable than they were 10 years ago. They are easy to put on and are lightweight."

Several non-fatal tree stand accidents involved failures of straps or other parts of the tree stand.

"Always check the condition of your tree stand before you attempt to climb," Futral said. "Tree stands left out in the weather can deteriorate quickly.

"It's so easy to get complacent. Your family wants you to come home from the hunt safely. Even if you've been doing this your whole life, take that extra minute to be safe. Make sure you're hooked to the tree. Unload your firearm when you cross the fence. If you think it'll be OK 'just this once,' don't do it."

Despite accidents, hunting remains one of the safest recreational activities available. According to American Sports Data and the National Shooting Sports Foundation, hunting ranks lower than basketball, football, tennis, cheerleading, bicycling, golf and bowling in total number of injuries per 100 participants. ■

ELEVEN TIPS TO USE A TREE STAND SAFELY

- ▲ Always wear a safety harness, also known as a fall-arrest system, when in a tree stand, as well as when climbing into or out of a tree stand. Statistics show the majority of tree stand incidents occur while climbing in and out of a stand.
- ▲ Select the proper tree for use with a tree stand. Select a live, straight tree that fits within the size limits recommended in the tree stand's instructions. Do not climb or place a tree stand against a leaning tree.
- ▲ A safety strap should be attached to the tree to prevent falling more than 12 inches.
- ▲ Inspect the safety harness for signs of wear or damage before each use.
- ▲ Follow all manufacturer instructions.
- ▲ Follow the three-point rule of tree stand safety. Have three points of contact to the steps or ladder before moving. This could be two arms and one leg holding and stepping on the ladder or one arm and two legs in contact with the ladder before moving. Be cautious as rain, frost, ice or snow can cause steps to become extremely slippery. Check security of the step before placing weight on it.
- ▲ Hunt with a plan and, if possible, a buddy. Before leaving home, tell others an exact hunting location, estimated time of return and who is going.
- ▲ Carry emergency signal devices such as a cellphone, walkie-talkie, whistle, signal flare, PLD (personal locator device) and flashlight at all times. Keep them within reach, even while suspended in a fall-arrest system. Watch for changing weather conditions. In the event of an incident, remain calm and seek help immediately.
- ▲ Never leave a tree stand installed for more than two weeks, since damage could result from changing weather conditions or from other factors not obvious with a visual inspection.
- ▲ Use a haul line to pull up gear and an unloaded firearm or bow to your tree stand. Never climb with anything in your hands or on your back. Prior to descending, lower equipment on the opposite side of the tree.
- ▲ Know physical limitations. Don't take chances. Do not climb when impaired by drugs or alcohol, or if sick or fatigued. If you start thinking about how high up you are, stop climbing.





Wildlife Trends

with Andy Whitaker



FALL AND WINTER WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT



Harvesting an adequate number of deer each year is essential to keep the herd and habitat healthy. Managing a balanced adult sex ratio will also result in a healthier herd.

Although biologists provide guidance on how many and which deer to harvest, hunters are the real deer managers. Each time the trigger is pulled, it's a deer-management decision.

Even not harvesting a deer is a management decision. Unfortunately, many landowners who hope to produce high-quality or trophy bucks allow the deer herd to overpopulate because they like to see 20-plus deer when they go to a stand. This often results in a poor-quality herd with significant dispersal of deer to surrounding properties, less reproduction and fawn recruitment, and poor-quality antlers.

Harvesting an adequate number of deer each year is essential to keep the deer herd and habitat healthy. In addition to maintaining a desirable deer density, doe harvest is the primary tool used to manage the adult sex ratio of a herd. Maintaining a balanced ratio will result in a much healthier deer herd, better quality bucks, increased fawn survival and exciting hunting.

Balancing the adult sex ratio also increases breeding competition and gets mature bucks on their feet so clients can see or harvest them (which is always more challenging than growing them).

When harvesting does, especially early in the season, attempt to do so in a way that minimizes hunting pressure and preserves hunting quality. When possible, avoid harvesting many does on food plots before the rut if planning to hunt the food plots for

mature bucks later.

There are always low-impact options for taking does. Places such as woods stands, power lines, gas pipelines or clear-cuts are great choices.

Flood Duck Ponds To Full Pool

Monitor water levels in duck ponds as fall arrives. Many areas in the Southeast have been fortunate and have gotten abundant rain. However, too much water too early can be bad for growing duck pond crops and plants.

Water-control structures allow managers to regulate water levels and are valuable when a rain event such as a tropical storm comes through. Once a crop matures, allow ponds to slowly flood to "full pool." Ideal water depth for dabbling ducks such as mallards, gadwalls, wood ducks, etc. is 12 to 18 inches with pockets of 4- to 6-inch depths.

Flood ponds two to four weeks before hunting season to give ducks a chance to find the ponds and get accustomed to using them. Flooding too early (more than a month before the season) may result in seed deterioration, leading to less food during the late season.

For good hunting throughout the season, do not over-hunt the duck pond, and allow a rest period between hunts. If multiple ponds are available, designate one as a no-hunt area to provide a place for ducks to loaf. This will keep them on the property. ■

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear ATFA Members,

What a year 2020 has been. How many of us would have imagined the challenges we would face this year? With a pandemic, a contentious national election and hurricane after hurricane, it has been a trying year.

As Americans and Alabamians, we will get through these challenges and be better for it.

With these issues, we were not able to accomplish our usual goals for the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association. We were unable to have board meetings as usual, and many activities we would ordinarily sponsor were canceled. We have, however, held steadfast as a grass-roots organization and will move forward as life returns to normal.

In our limited scope of activities, we were still able to accomplish important things. The board voted to establish the John Dorrill Memorial Scholarship. John, who died earlier this year, was a huge supporter of our organization and was a former ATFA president. Additionally, we sponsored a prescribed burn tract in Autauga County, experienced growth in membership and saw increases in our liability insurance program. License plate sales are also up substantially.

Next year, it is important for us to hit the ground running with new programming, educational opportunities and natural resource events to help our membership and the public. Everyone will be ready to get out and be active.

On a personal note, I have been honored to serve two years as president of this impactful organization. It has been a particular honor to be associated with so many landowners who volunteer their time to make Alabama's natural resources better. I think we have one of the best organizations of its kind in the nation. ATFA has been blessed with good leaders and members throughout its tenure. We also have a great executive director in William Green, who has helped us on the board and continues to guide the organization. At our next meeting, we will elect new officers to lead the association.

ATFA will continue to promote, educate and improve our natural resources and be good stewards of what God has given us. Be safe and stay tuned for good times ahead.

Gary M. Cole
ATFA President

OUTSTANDING FORESTRY PLANNING COMMITTEES HONORED



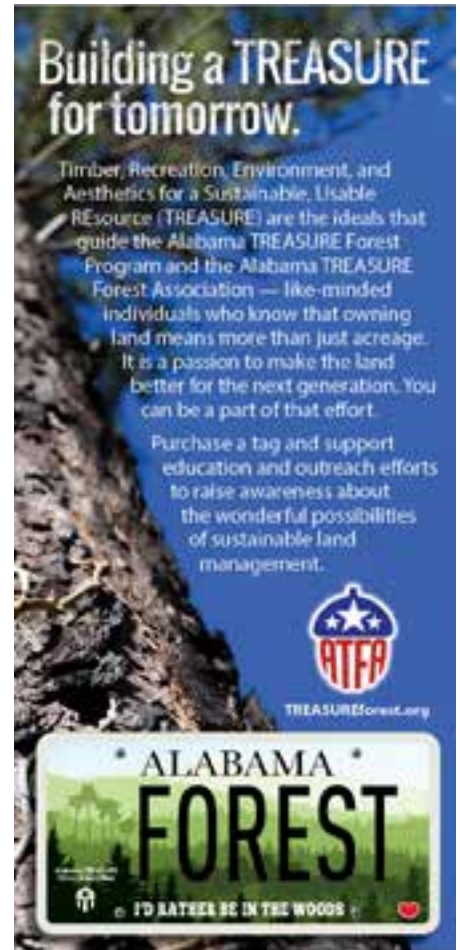
Chambers County was named an Outstanding Forestry Planning Committee. From left are Tim Albritton, ANRC Outreach Committee chair; T.R. Clark; and Dr. Mark Smith, executive secretary of the W. Kelly Mosley Environmental Awards Program at Auburn University.



The Bibb County Natural Resources Planning Council was named an Outstanding Forestry Planning Committee. From left are Extension Coordinator Matt Hartzell, ANRC Outreach Committee Chair Tim Albritton, Alabama Forestry Commission's Sammy Holdsambeck and Dr. Mark Smith of Auburn University.

The Alabama Natural Resources Council (ANRC) seeks to promote stewardship of Alabama's forest resource by motivating Alabama landowners, leaders and citizens to be wise stewards of forests and related sustainable natural resources. County Forestry Planning Committees facilitate, coordinate and deliver programs that address those issues related to natural resources. The Outstanding County Forestry Planning Committee Award Program recognizes local councils that further the ANRC's mission in exemplary fashion and is supported by the W. Kelly Mosley Environmental Awards Program.

The ANRC's Outreach Committee reviews nominations each year and selects up to three planning committees for the award. The competition is statewide, and the committee considers accomplishments from the previous year. The recipients receive a cash award and are recognized during the Alabama Landowners Conference. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 conference was canceled. This year's winners were honored in separate presentations. ■



TREE ID →

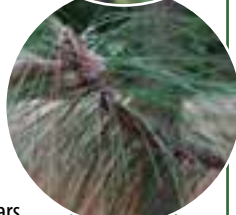
Sharpen your dendrology skills and soak up identifiers of four important trees found in Alabama forests.

Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) – A large deciduous shrub or small tree native to eastern North America from Canada to Mexico. Characterized by heart-shaped leaves, small pinkish-purple flowers and a 3-inch bean-shaped fruit.

Willow oak (*Quercus phellos*) – A medium-sized deciduous tree in the red oak family. Native to the eastern U.S. and commonly found growing in lowland floodplains or along streams. Characterized by its willow-shaped leaves and prolific acorn production.

Longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) – Pine native to the southeastern U.S. and Alabama's official state tree. Heavily dependent on fire, it is easily distinguishable by its long needles and its first few years when in the "grass stage." Extraordinarily long-lived, longleaf pines can be several hundred years old.

Bigleaf magnolia (*Magnolia macrophylla*) – A medium-sized understory tree found in rich mesic woods. Also known locally as the "cowcumber magnolia," it is easily recognized by its large leaf size, which can be 20-30 inches long. ■



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Executive Director

(334) 612-5235

wmgreen@alfafarmers.org

Darci DeBruner

Stewardship Coordinator

Alabama Forestry Commission

(334) 399-4702

darci.debrunner@forestry.alabama.gov



THE ALABAMA TREASURE FOREST

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