

2023 Field Trip

By Barbara Stacey

The Annual Railway Tie Association Field Trip took place June 12-15 in and around North Little Rock, Arkansas. The attendees spent time learning, visiting organizations that support the wood tie and railroad industries, and networking with other RTA members. ■

DAY 1

Following their arrival in North Little Rock, attendees were welcomed with a reception sponsored by Brewco and featuring Seth Stephenson of the Arkansas Forestry Association as presenter.



Mike Goldston of Brewco was on hand to speak about the importance of wood railroad tie manufacturers and the RTA to his business.



Arkansas Forestry Association Communications Director Seth Stephenson spoke about the state of forestry in Arkansas.



From right, Matt Seinfeld of Genesee & Wyoming chats with Todd Schoffstoll and Jonathan Whitehead of Viance at the reception.



From left, Jason McDiarmid of Koppers, Jeff Wilson of Wilson Brothers Lumber, Jens Findel of Progress Rail Services, and Chad Sorrells of Sorrells Sawmill listen to Frank Wilson's story at the reception.

DAY 2

The group boarded the bus and headed to the Stella-Jones plant in Russellville, Ark. Industrial Power Inc. was next on the tour followed by a visit to the Rail Service Group facility. The evening's reception was sponsored by Stella-Jones and featured Andy Johnson of the Hardwood Market Report as a speaker.



The group poses at the Stella-Jones plant in Russellville.



Stella-Jones Production Manager Roger Turner explains the plant's processes.



Bridge Fab Supervisor Donnie Ellis (R) explains the bridge deck process to Elijah Coleburn (L) of Stella-Jones.



Dave Sanders, tie inspector for 41 years, explains his process to Jason McDiarmid and Bob Bradley of Koppers and Harrell Wilson of Wilson Brothers Lumber.



Aaron Baker (L) of Industrial Power Inc. explains the workings of the wood incisor as Mike McNail (R) of Missouri Tie LLC goes in for a closer look.



Eric Jones of IPI explains the drafting process as Vuk Milicevic (R) of MiTek looks on.



The group poses for a picture at IPI headquarters.



The group poses with a Union Pacific locomotive near the Rail Service Group facility.



David McGehee explains the types of reclamation RSG does at this facility as Matt Senifeld of Genesee & Wyoming and Craig Silverblatt of Koppers listen.



Liz Russell of Stella-Jones talks with Leah Fletcher of Norfolk Southern about the activities in the RSG sorting room.



At the reception sponsored by Stella-Jones, Liz Russell addresses the group.



Mike McNail of Missouri Tie LLC talks with Andy Johnson of Hardwood Market Report about Andy's presentation.



RTA President Dave Koch of Wheeler Lumber entertains the room with his rendition of "You'll Never Leave Harlan Alive."

DAY 3

The day began with a tour of the Koppers plant in North Little Rock followed by a trip to Benton, Ark., to see WLS Sawmill. The group then went to the Union Pacific North Little Rock Operations facility and later to Diamond Bear Brewing for a networking event sponsored by Wheeler Lumber. The final night's reception was sponsored by Koppers.



The group posed in front of the Koppers sign before touring the plant.



Koppers Tie Grader David Brown goes through his process as Dave Bozarth of Union Pacific looks on.



Stacks of ties drying in the yard.



Koppers Plant Manager Chris Martin explains plant operations to the group.



Eduardo Silva and Amanda Battisti of Stella-Jones with Jimmy Sorrells (WLS Sawmill) watch the circular saw slice logs into ties.



The circular saw at work.



The group poses in front of the WLS Sawmill front office.



The group poses in front of the tie unloading railcar at the UP North Little Rock Operations facility.



Don Joseph of Union Pacific shows Liz Russell of Stella-Jones how to use the remote for the unloader.



Ties coming off the tie unloading railcar.



The group stopped at Diamond Bear Brewing for a tour and networking event.



Ted Woerle of Koppers shares a few words at the evening reception sponsored by Koppers.



Dana Spessert of the National Hardwood Lumber Association discusses the work of NHLA and its partnership with RTA.

A special thank you to our sponsors: American Wood Technology LLC, Brewco, Embry Automation, Industrial Power Inc., Koppers Inc., Missouri Tie LLC, Nisus Corp., North American Tie & Timber LLC, Stella-Jones Corporation, Viance LLC, and Wheeler Lumber.



ATTENDEES

Claus Staalner, American Wood Technology LLC; Gene Koenig, AmeriTies South LLC; Richard Anderson, Sean Ito, Tomio Okada and Hunter Smith, Arkansas Steel Associates LLC; Seth Stephenson, Arkansas Forestry Association; Matt Seinfeld, Genesee & Wyoming Inc.; Andy Johnson, Hardwood Market Report; Craig Silverblatt, Bob Bradley, Kevin Coker, Josh Kmoch, Jason McDiarmid

and Ted Woerle, Koppers Inc.; Jake Meisner, Koppers Performance Chemicals; Mike McNail and Matt Seal, Missouri Tie LLC; Vuk Milicevic, MiTek; Dana Spessert, National Hardwood Lumber Association; Shane Kitchens, Natural Wood Solutions; Leah Fletcher, Norfolk Southern; Will Cumberland, North American Tie & Timber LLC; Luke Reardon, Pandrol; Jens Findel, Progress Rail Services; Nate Irby and Barbara Stacey, Railway Tie Association;

Chad Sorrells, Sorrells Sawmill Inc.; Amanda Battisti, Elijah Coleburn, Kenny Dailey, Elizabeth Russell, Eduardo Silva and Gary Young, Stella-Jones Corporation; Steven Barr, Superior Tie & Timber; Kenny Peden, Tank Fab; Dave Bozarth, Union Pacific Railroad; Todd Schoffstoll and Jonathan Whitehead, Viance LLC; Dave Koch, Wheeler Lumber; and Frank Wilson, Jeff Wilson and Harrell Wilson, Wilson Brothers Lumber Co. Inc.