

NEWS

FOREST RESOURCES ASSOCIATION INC.

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M.A. RIGONI: 2016 NATIONAL OUTSTANDING LOGGER

Washington, DC – The **Forest Resources Association** honored M.A. Rigoni, Inc., based in Perry, Florida, as **2016 National Outstanding Logger** at FRA's May 5th Annual Awards Dinner in Colorado Springs, Colorado. FRA Chairman Tom Reed congratulated co-owners Gary Brett and Rodney Schwab, presenting them with a commemorative plaque.

Kent Hall of STIHL Inc, which has supported the Outstanding Logger Award Program for several decades, added his congratulations, presenting Gary and Rodney with a \$1,000 cash award on behalf of STIHL.



Gary Brett thanked FRA and STIHL and stated, “It is certainly nice to be honored in this way.” He thanked his long-term partner, Rodney, and expressed special thanks to his wife: “We have been incredibly blessed. This summer, we’ll have been married 41 years, and she’ll have been married to a logger for 40 of those.”

Rodney Schwab observed, “It’s hard to explain all the things that have happened in your life. You don’t always know why, but you know you’re supposed to be a logger.

We are blessed. There's a lot of good people in this industry.”

M.A. Rigoni, Inc., of Perry, Florida, had its beginnings in 1960, founded by M.A. “Matt” Rigoni—a forester-turned-logger who set a high bar for innovation and professionalism in logging. Current owners Rodney Schwab and Gary Brett joined the company in 1974 and 1980, respectively, and bought the company in 1995. The company has grown significantly in the past two years, now employing three company chipping crews and contracting with six logging crews for a combined weekly production of 600 truck loads.

M.A. Rigoni employs 44 and enjoys a stable and skilled work force. Half of these employees have been with Rigoni for over five years, and half again of those have been employed for over ten years. The roster includes eight Master Loggers, who renew their training in SFI guidelines annually.

The company performs all types of harvest: clearcutting, thinning, real estate-cutting, and harvests customized to clients' wildlife management objectives. The three company crews, with whole-tree chipping capability, are able to clean up sites and remove unmerchantable materials, allowing them to work in real estate development. The company has been awarded three USFS Forest Stewardship contracts, one in each of Florida's three National Forests, performing fuel reduction, road construction/maintenance, and pine cone harvest—all financed through the sale of timber.

M.A. Rigoni strongly emphasizes safety, and both Rodney and Gary wear full Personal Protective Equipment, as an example to their in-woods employees, and provide First Aid and CPR training to all employees every two years. If safety-related incidents occur, the company reviews them carefully and makes appropriate changes in procedures, communicating new policies at safety meetings. Safety policies include a very robust drug testing program, in force since the mid-1990s, along with a drug education program.

Rodney's sons Richard and Chad are both active in the business, positioned to carry

M.A. Rigoni into the next generation. Rodney, Gary, Richard, and Chad are active in their community and in local, state, and national associations. They have participated in hurricane relief and clean up efforts, and are all active in church leadership, Rodney, Gary, and Richard participating in missionary work in Central America.

FRA has honored 27 National Outstanding Loggers since establishing the national award in 1990. Recent National Outstanding Loggers include Comstock Logging of Hampden, Maine (2013), Anthony B. Andrews Logging of Trenton, North Carolina (2015), and last year's Moulton Logging, Inc. of West Charleston, Vermont. Nominees for this year's award passed through state-level recognition to regional award programs administered through FRA's Regional structure. A jury of national-level leaders in forestry and conservation selected the winner.

The Outstanding Logger program is designed:

- 1) to recognize outstanding logging contractor performance;
- 2) to raise the visibility of competent, professional independent logging contractors in the forestry community;
- 3) to encourage other independent logging contractors to emulate the outstanding performance of the award winners; and
- 4) to improve forester-logger relations by publicly recognizing outstanding logging performance as an essential element of every planned timber harvest.

The **Forest Resources Association Inc.** is a nonprofit trade association concerned with the safe, efficient, and sustainable harvest of forest products and their transport from woods to mill. FRA represents forest landowners and managers, wood consumers, independent logging contractors, wood dealers, and businesses providing products and services to the forest resource-based industries.

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Photo caption: "FRA Chairman Tom Reed (left) congratulated Rodney Schwab and Gary Brett of M.A. Rigoni, Inc., 2016 National Outstanding Logger."