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Wolf Administration: PA Hardwoods Enrich Lives Worldwide, Support Environment, Jobs, Economy

East Earl, PA – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding, Department of Conservation and Natural Resource Assistant State Forester Matthew Keefer and Pennsylvania hardwoods industry leaders toured Conestoga Wood Specialties in East Earl, for a behind the scenes look at one of Pennsylvania's premier hardwood products companies. Since 2015, Governor Tom Wolf has invested more than \$1 million in grants, loans and tax credits to help Pennsylvania hardwood businesses expand, upgrade equipment, train their workers and increase sustainable environmental practices.

"Pennsylvania's hardwoods industry is major economic driver that is essential to the success of Pennsylvania agriculture," said Secretary Redding. "From transportation and construction, to dinner tables and kitchen cabinets, hardwoods and woods products enrich our lives every day."

Pennsylvania leads the nation in the production and export of hardwood lumber. With 16.6 million acres of forestland, Pennsylvania has the most abundant hardwood forest in the United States and contributes more than \$39.1 billion to the state's economy annually.

In 2018, Gov. Wolf commissioned the first all-inclusive [economic impact report for Pennsylvania agriculture](#) which further defined Pennsylvania's hardwoods industry. The economic impact report was the basis of Gov. Wolf's [six-point plan](#) for Pennsylvania agriculture that led to the proposal and funding of the first-ever [Pennsylvania Farm Bill](#) in 2019. The historic legislation has since invested \$37.2 million into Pennsylvania agriculture, with a commitment to [invest another \\$13.6 million](#) by June 2022.

The [Pennsylvania Specialty Crop Block Grant](#) program was created under the PA Farm Bill to grow and promote high-priority specialty crops in the state, including hardwoods. The PA Specialty Crop Block Grants has invested more than \$160,000 in seven projects, over the course of 2019 and 2020, to support hardwoods projects related to promotion, education and workforce development.

"The Pennsylvania Farm Bill's Specialty Crop Block Grant has provided the funds to implement many projects on behalf of the commonwealth's forest products industry," said Pennsylvania Hardwoods Development Council Executive Director Roger Anderson. "These funds have allowed the Hardwoods Development Council and industry partners to implement projects aimed at workforce development via training and recruiting, promoting the benefits of well managed working forests, and educating students, consumers and builders on the importance of using real American and Pennsylvania hardwood."

The hardwoods industry directly employs more than 69,000 Pennsylvanians, accounting for 10 percent of the state's manufacturing workforce. Pennsylvania faces an agricultural workforce shortage, that at one point estimated a deficit of 75,000 workers as laborers retire and new

technology-based positions become available. In recognition of hardwoods industry workforce needs, Gov. Wolf created the [Green Ribbon Task Force](#) to analyze forest conservation and job growth. In 2016, the Green Ribbon Task Force released its final [Report on Forest Products, Conservation and Jobs](#), outlining recommendations to support conservation and sustainability, workforce development and economic growth.

“Whether it is helping bolster a critical industry or helping filter our air and drinking water, Pennsylvania forests and the hardwoods within them, are an important part of our natural resources and have a tremendous impact on our daily lives,” Keefer said. “Today, we highlight this administration’s efforts to prioritize conserving and sustaining forests, while also providing valuable hardwood commercial opportunities. Through adequate planning and sustainable forestry practices we can continue to be a leader in forest recreation and hardwoods commerce.”

Pennsylvania forests are the source of diverse, sustainable wood products, including lumber, veneer cabinetry, flooring, baseball bats and more. The [PA Hardwoods Development Council](#) develops, expands and promotes Pennsylvania’s hardwoods industry. The council promotes forest products education, connecting consumers and students to [forest careers](#) and wood product uses.

In 1964, Conestoga Wood Specialties began manufacturing cabinets doors and wood components in a family garage. Today, the corporation employs more than 900 Pennsylvanians and more than 1,100 employees nationwide. Workplace safety and conservation drive Conestoga’s mission. In 2008, Conestoga was the first member of the Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturer’s Association to receive the Environmental Stewardship Program certification, certifying sustainability practices and procedures related to air quality, product and process resource management, community relations and environmental stewardship.

“The employees of Conestoga Wood Specialties are extremely grateful to Secretary Redding for the support he has shown us and our entire industry,” said Anthony Hahn, Conestoga Wood Specialties President and CEO and PA Hardwoods Development Council member. “We are extremely pleased that the Department of Agriculture continues to make substantial investments in the forests of Pennsylvania and considers them to be an invaluable asset, key to both the economic and the environmental health of the Commonwealth.”

For more information on the Wolf Administration’s work to strengthen the resilience of Pennsylvania agriculture, visit [agriculture.pa.gov](#).

Note: Photo and video of the event available at [PACast.com](#).

MEDIA CONTACT: Shannon Powers - 717.603.2056; shpowers@pa.gov