



 Interviewees Adam Reed, Mill Manager, and Pete Hancock, Timberlands Manager, Roseburg Forest Products

Roseburg Forest Products: Moving East for New Business Opportunities

By Amanda Murphy, Director of Communications and
Kat Peters, Communications Intern

We sat down with Pete Hancock to talk about the company's Southeast operations and the new sawmill under construction in Weldon, NC. The facility, called Roanoke Valley Lumber, will process Southern yellow pine logs and include green lumber operations, lumber drying, and a planer mill.

The facility will be constructed in two phases, with the first phase supporting up to 300 million board feet per year of lumber drying capacity. The second phase will increase the total capacity to 500 million board feet per year. The NCFCA team had a chance to visit the Weldon construction site and pay our first visit to a sawmill operation built on a completely new site.

Q: Tell me about yourself. Our records show you've been an NCFCA member since 2017.

A: Roseburg joined the NCFCA in 2017, shortly after they purchased the initial 158,000-acre land acquisition in the Southeast, spanning Virginia and North Carolina. This land package was Roseburg's first timberlands acquisition in the Southeast. I came on board in the middle of 2018 as timberlands manager and was the first team member here for this Southeastern operation.

Roseburg historically had timberland operations in California and Oregon. In 2017, the company executed a disposition plan for the California timberlands and reallocated those assets to North Carolina and Virginia to diversify and support future growth. I spent my entire career in the footprint that Roseburg operates now. I graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in Forestry, went to work at International Paper in Southside Virginia, and am now responsible for some of the



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 Roseburg Logistics Manager Steven Brickell drives Amanda Murphy and Jessica Ireland on a tour of the mill under construction.

same tracts I managed for International Paper. In 2006, when International Paper divested their fee lands, I transitioned to North Carolina and began work as a consulting forester with GFR Forestry Consultants in Raleigh. In 2018, I joined Roseburg and since that time, I have been cultivating staff and a team for the new timberland operation. Today, we have 16 team members assigned locally — a mix of foresters, technical support, and administrative staff.

Q: What was your original reason for joining the NCFA?

A: Roseburg was established in 1936. In Oregon, they are proactive on advocacy and legal affairs from a corporate level because they have to be in that environment. If you are a stakeholder for large timberland investment, you have to be engaged in advocacy groups and political interface when it comes to pertinent issues.

One significant benefit of our membership in the NCFA is the information and communication of issues, as well as representation of all stakeholders involved. Roseburg is one of few vertically integrated companies presently, and it's good to have a reliable source of information that includes other stakeholders, landowners, and academia. A vertically integrated company is one that is family-owned, owns its land, timber, and processing facilities, can convert its own resources, and is not publicly traded. I also participate on the NC SFI-SIC committee as a function of the Southern timberlands SFI certification.

Q: Tell me about your organization.

A: Roseburg presently has their third CEO in the company history, and this is the first one who is not a member of the Ford family, which started the business almost 90 years ago. Roseburg is family-owned and generous with its philanthropy, investing in the company, team members, and local communities. There is a sense of inclusion here. Folks from the Oregon offices went out of their way and invited me to visit Oregon so I could get a feel for the company and check out the Oregon timberland operations. Roseburg's corporate headquarters are in Springfield, with a concentration of manufacturing operations in southern Oregon. As we look at expanding the operational presence in North Carolina with Roanoke Valley Lumber, Adam and I are committed to demonstrating the idea that we are ONE Roseburg.

Q: What is the biggest issue facing your organization today?

A: People, from the top down. Finding and recruiting talent and retaining and growing team members professionally is challenging. Locally, the team of 16 is still not complete. There are several more spots to fill, and we are taking time to get the right folks on board and to train them properly. It's tough to find good talent and team members who want to work for a company for a long time. Outside of that, vendors and contractors are having the same struggles. Trucking is a big issue

within our industry; more log trucks are parked and not being used because there aren't enough drivers. Establishing a positive presence in the area is also critical for our success.

How do you overcome that? We focus on finding strategic and valuable relationships. Sometimes you have to sacrifice to get favorable results in the long term. For example, when we took over timberland, the far majority of timber transactions were done on stumpage basis. Roseburg's mode of operation in Oregon is nearly 100% contract logging and direct delivery of timber. You can't have market share at a mill unless you've got a history delivering wood in the past. If you can get your foot in the door and deliver on what you promise, you can establish a positive track record. We are currently shifting our local operations to be more direct delivery instead of stumpage transactions. Roseburg doesn't have a long history here in North Carolina and Virginia. It takes persistence and patience to build relationships and earn market share. At the end of the day, it's important to deliver what you say you can and be consistent.

Q: What lessons have you learned along the way? Is there anything that you would do differently?

A: The biggest challenge I have is getting my peers in the industry and our business partners to understand the reputation that Roseburg has in Oregon. Exhibiting patience, integrity, and gratitude is crucial to demonstrate that reputation.

Q: What steps does your organization take to ensure healthy, productive, and sustainable forests?

A: The biggest one is that Roseburg has committed all of the eligible timberlands in the Southeast to be certified to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative standard. We are more proactive in measuring and monitoring resources, and productivity is our target. Every available acre that we own and operate needs to be as productive as it can be. We operate within the guidance of a non-declining yield modeling scenario — to ensure that we can operate within sustainable bounds. The goal is to always have a positive growth trend for timber volume.

Q: Are there economic reasons for taking these measures?

A: There are. One is to maintain the social license to operate and to validate that we are operating in a sustainable manner. What we do on the ground is valid, proven, and sustainable. Right now, we benefit from thinning plantations that I watched get established. I am trying to instill that in the younger generation and help them understand they'll get to see a full rotation of many stands of timber in their careers. Timberland's biological growth ensures you get a return on investment.

Q: How does your organization support the local community?

A: Roseburg supports local chambers of commerce, sponsors a youth soccer team, sponsors the local 4-H Harvest Day, and anything local we can support. In addition, Roseburg offers a 75% donation match for team member contributions to charity. In 2022, the Roseburg Team Member Giving Campaign raised over \$1.1 million for charity. Roseburg runs a grant program for local volunteer fire departments. In rural communities where they own timber, there are often local fire departments, and if the departments have resources to control wildfires before the NC Forest Service can mobilize, that is a critical resource. Roseburg supports these public servants to maintain equipment and certifications. This past year, we supported seven fire departments. Roseburg also reached out to the NC Forest Service to give them the opportunity to train their equipment operators on part of the Roseburg cutover land so they are efficient and capable. ■



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