

# THE LANDING

SPRING 2022



# EDITORIAL

## STILL CHANGING THE GAME

**Graham Hinch,**  
Director, Western Hemisphere Sales and Marketing

We recently sold our 1000th M-Series Tracked Feller Buncher. This is a significant milestone for John Deere. We've manufactured dedicated forestry machines since we introduced the 440 Skidder in 1965. Ever since then we've designed and built machines with one thing in mind — to meet the needs of loggers just like you who run the equipment every day.

When we introduced our M-Series Tracked Feller Bunchers in 2014, they represented a culmination of over three years of research and development. To design these game-changing machines, we collected invaluable input from customers all over the world. We then spent more than 11,500 hours testing the machines in everyday, real-world conditions. New features compared to previous models included more power and stability; roomier, more comfortable operator stations; and a host of other productivity- and uptime-boosting innovations.

Over the years we've added even more features to make sure these machines continue to meet your needs. Recent additions to our 800M- and 900M-Series machines include an optional heated-ventilated seat and updated premium Bluetooth® radio with XM Satellite Radio ready from the factory. These machines also offer Smooth Boom Control, which provides more effective control and a smoother operating experience with less wear and tear on the machine. Additional enhancements to our 900M-Series machines include standard and long-reach boom options, new shovel-logger and directional-felling configurations, and large fuel tanks.

Built on 185 years of groundbreaking innovation and backed by over a half-century of experience in the woods, our tracked feller bunchers continue to change the game. Thanks to customers like you, we'll continue to refine these machines so they redefine uptime, productivity, and low daily operating costs.



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Cover image:

Seventy-seven year-old Vernon Decker Sr. has been logging the Tennessee woods for over 60 years.

# SPRING BREAK

The beginning of the season is often a good time to reassess your maintenance program

Forestry machines work long hours in tough conditions, so it goes without saying that proper maintenance is absolutely essential. Daily inspection combined with routine maintenance will help keep your forestry equipment in top condition, helping you maximize uptime,

productivity, and machine life. At least once a year during slow times, you should take a close look at your current practices. Being proactive will help confirm your machines are ready to go for the long haul of the busy season. Here are a few things you should consider.

## Annual maintenance program

At the beginning of each season during slower spring months, take the opportunity to review your maintenance plan and refresh your crew's knowledge. Topics for a refresher course can include safety, checklists for daily and weekly inspections, service tips, other maintenance activities, basics about a machine's inner workings, and operating tips. An annual maintenance program combined with regimented routine upkeep will help make sure machines are properly maintained — and minimize downtime during busier times of the year.

Shutdown or slower months are also good times to closely inspect your machines. Consider how much life is left in the tracks or other major components and check hoses, pin joints, and bushings. Will they last all season? By proactively swapping out or updating major components and parts as needed, you'll get each season off to a good start and stay strong throughout the year.

## Daily walkaround

Start each day by methodically inspecting each machine to make sure everything is in working order. This should include:

- **Fluid levels.** Low fluid levels can cause premature wear on parts. Top off as needed.
- **Electrical components, connectors, and wiring.** Check wiring for wear, abrasion, or bare spots that can lead to electrical shorts or fires.
- **Hydraulic hoses and fittings.** Hoses need close monitoring, as they can be weakened by rubbing, chafing, and pinching. Check for wear and evidence of leaking, and replace them immediately if necessary.
- **Structural cracking.** Cracks can lead to catastrophic failure, often due to lack of regular inspection and early detection.
- **Any other unusual wear or damage.**
- **Debris.** Check the manifold, turbocharger, and other areas including the belly pan, and regularly remove debris to reduce the risk of fire.
- **Joints.** Make sure all joints are properly lubricated. Check for wear and excessive play.
- **Track tension.** Improper track tension can lead to excessive wear and even cause de-tracking. Refer to your operator's manual for proper track inspection and tensioning procedures.
- **Belts, pins, and bushings.** Check for wear and replace if damaged.
- **Tires.** Check tires carefully to make sure they are properly inflated and the tire tread is not overly depleted.

## Dealer support

Taking advantage of our world-class dealer network is one of the easiest ways to increase uptime and profitability. Your dealer knows the logging industry and will work closely with you to understand your operation's unique needs. Working with your dealer can help you create the regimented maintenance plan that's best for you. Dealers also offer extended warranties and maintenance agreements to help you keep costs down.

## Technology

Your John Deere machine comes with a powerful set of technologies to help you manage the health of your fleet. JDLink™ connectivity allows you to easily track and schedule periodic maintenance. You can also receive diagnostic trouble-code alerts remotely on your smartphone or tablet, so you can react quickly to minimize downtime. And through John Deere Connected Support™ enabled by JDLink, your dealer can closely monitor your fleet's health, remotely diagnose machine issues, and quickly respond with the appropriate part or solution.


Always refer to your operator's manual for complete details. And see your local John Deere dealer for additional information.

# ON THE MARK

## Automatic pre-marking system could help operators with thinnings

Machine operators have a demanding job. They might identify a curved tree that should be harvested for pulpwood but leave a dead tree standing to secure biodiversity. They need to identify trees that have the potential to produce big logs in the future and be careful not to scratch them. And they must do all of this quickly while protecting the environment and conserving fuel.

What if technology could be used to choose trees to harvest? Could automatic pre-marking help operators during thinnings and speed things up even more? To answer these questions, Finnish-based company Stora Enso collaborated with the University of Eastern Finland (UEF), John Deere, and Metsäteho, a Finnish wood-procurement development company.

A John Deere harvester simulator is shown in a forest setting. The machine is green and yellow, with "IBC" and "KÄRÄ" visible on its side. It is positioned among tall, thin trees, and the background is slightly blurred, suggesting a natural forest environment. The lighting is soft, possibly from an overcast day or early morning/late afternoon.

### Thinning assistance

A leading provider of renewable solutions in packaging, biomaterials, construction materials, and paper, Stora Enso commissioned research on thinning-assistive systems from the UEF in Joensuu.

“A forest-machine operator has an impact on the logging footprint, the biodiversity of the forest, and the carbon footprint,” says Stora Enso’s Development Manager Kalle Kärhä. “In order for us to support forest-machine operators, we first have to figure out what could be useful in thinnings.”

In one study, both experienced and inexperienced operators performed thinnings in pre-marked and unmarked forests using a harvester simulator provided by John Deere. Use of the simulator confirmed the operators were working in the same stand using the same equipment. Findings suggest a system assisting in the selection of wood could speed up logging work. In the test environment, marking the trees accelerated logging by an average of 7.6 percent for novices and 5.6 percent for experienced operators.

An assistive system could also have the potential to alleviate operator stress. “An operator has to make a lot of decisions in a short period of time and take many different aspects into consideration,” says Juho Räsänen, who conducted the research for his master’s thesis while studying forestry at the UEF. “Assisting the operator in decision-making and machine control can give a better boost to work productivity than an increase in the machine’s RPMs can.” Räsänen has personal experience with the stressful nature of the job. He was a harvester operator for about three years before beginning his thesis.

Reducing stress could help attract young people to logging, an industry that continually struggles with labor shortages. “It would be important that new operators could engage in productive work without the huge pressure,” Kärhä says.

### Simulators accurately measure the impact of pre-marking

Stora Enso also invited Senior Researcher Heikki Ovaskainen from Metsäteho to be involved in the research. “Innovations are created through collaboration,” says Kärhä. “It isn’t about the number of partners you get that matters. What matters is bringing together the best experts who look at things from slightly different perspectives.”

Simulators offer a stable research environment, but Kärhä wanted to know if the setup accurately reflects real thinning in an actual forest. Ovaskainen, a well-known expert in working methods and simulators, believes it does: “The study wasn’t pursuing absolute productivity. We were interested in what impact pre-marking would have on time use. The simulator indicates well the relative time difference between the methods.”

The research makes a compelling case for using assistive systems for thinning, but are they coming to forestry machines any time soon? John Deere AR&D Manager Marko Paakkunainen believes there is still a lot of development work to be done before a camera or laser scanner can see the forest better than an operator. But he predicts product development will move in that direction. “New solutions based on laser scanners and machine vision are of interest to us as a machine developer and manufacturer. And studies like these offer valuable information about how much assistive systems could improve the performance and reduce the stress of operators.”

# LOGGING THROUGH IT ALL

FAMILY BUSINESS TAKES ON TOUGH CONDITIONS IN NORTHERN ONTARIO



STORY: KRISTIN STIRES  
PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID LEE MJOLSNES

**F**orestry roots run deep in Hearst, a northern Ontario town established due to the construction of Canada's National Transcontinental Railway. It's been a logging town since its incorporation in 1922.

The town is about a 10-hour drive north of Toronto, and while it may seem slightly isolated, relationships tie the proud, hardworking community together. With a population of about 5,000, everyone knows everyone. Hearst is a predominately French-speaking community, with many of its first settlers relocating from Quebec.

In 2000, Sylvain Tessier, his wife Diane, and their family also moved from Quebec to Hearst. They started Tessier Logging Company, a perfect fit for the town where three mills are currently operating. Their son Vincent works the operation alongside Sylvain while Diane manages the business side. Although the family business consists of five employees, it's sizable for an area where many contractors are single owner-operators.

"My father has been operating a feller buncher for about 30 years," says Vincent Tessier. "He started the company with my mom. I joined the process, and I'm just loving it. It's fun that it's all a family company."

## CHALLENGING CONDITIONS

Logging in northern Ontario isn't for the fainthearted. The region brings tough conditions of difficult, swampy work in the summers and brutal winters with temperatures hovering around  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-22^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). Winter doesn't stop the work, though. In fact, that's exactly when Tessier Logging needs to operate at peak performance.

"Logging contractors operate year-round here," says Eric Marchand, territory manager for local John Deere dealer Brandt Tractor Ltd. "Work stops temporarily in the fall before everything is frozen and before spring to allow the snow to melt, but winter is when loggers are the busiest in the bush. That's when they make their big runs."

The Tessier family partners with Marchand and Brandt Tractor to determine the best equipment to stay running through the challenging conditions. They purchased a 903M Tracked Feller Buncher in 2018 and a 953MH Tracked Harvester with a Waratah H415X processing head in 2020.



**"It's fun that it's all a family company."**

VINCENT TESSIER, OPERATOR  
TESSIER LOGGING COMPANY



**“When you’re working, you want to work, you’re not wanting to fix machines.”**

VINCENT TESSIER, OPERATOR  
TESSIER LOGGING COMPANY

“In the winter, you need about 30 to 45 minutes before you even think about working just to get the machines’ hydraulics warmed up properly, so you don’t blow a hose or burst a cylinder,” says Marchand. “This environment is not only hard on the machines, but also on the workers. The guys might get up at 4 in the morning and then leave at 4 in the afternoon, and it could be  $-42^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-44^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). It’s tough on them and their families.”

#### KEEPING A COMPETITIVE EDGE

Working in a variety of wood — from smaller spruce to large, heavy aspen — requires versatile equipment. Tessier Logging likes to modify its equipment to stay competitive, and Marchand works with them to make it happen. He also teamed up with Remi Leblond, Waratah product specialist, to spec the processor head.

“Due to the harsh conditions here, we discussed going with a bigger carrier and a smaller head for processing,” says Marchand. “That way, you can use less power, save on fuel, and the machines will last longer.”

As an operator of the 953MH, Tessier experiences the benefits daily.

“Because we have so much power, we can just lower the rpm,” says Tessier. “The engine can work less. It’s better on fuel and it’s going to be better on durability. That’s good for us.”

Tessier Logging takes pride in its equipment — and it shows. The company keeps its machines in pristine condition with proactive maintenance.



“When you’re working, you want to work, you’re not wanting to fix machines,” says Tessier. “We thought that we would take the time on the weekend or at the end of the shift. If we see a hose wearing, we’re just going to change it now and not wait for it to break. We want to make sure on Monday, when everyone’s working, they don’t have to get their hands dirty. They need to operate.”

In an unpredictable industry, Tessier Logging appreciates the reliable service it receives from Brandt Tractor.

“It’s very good service,” says Tessier. “When we need some backup, they are there. We can count on that.”

### CARRYING ON A LOGGING TRADITION

While the forestry industry has transformed within the region over the years, it remains an important economic driver for Hearst. As the town celebrates its centennial this summer, Tessier Logging hopes to continue contributing to its logging tradition for years to come.

“It’s not always easy, but you figure it out,” says Tessier. “We have a family business, so it’s something to be proud of.”

*Tessier Logging Company is serviced by Brandt Tractor Ltd., Hearst, Ontario.*

 To see more of the story, visit [JohnDeere.com/TheLanding](https://www.johndeere.com/TheLanding)



**“It’s a very hard job. You need to be passionate about it.”**

VINCENT TESSIER, OPERATOR  
TESSIER LOGGING COMPANY



## GUIDING



### New IBC version introduces operator-assistance features for wheeled harvesters

Our latest version of Intelligent Boom Control (IBC) introduces several smart operator-assistance features that make work easier, improve productivity, and protect the machine from damage. **Feed Assist** significantly slows down the automatic feed function when feeding stems toward the machine and shuts it off completely in a defined safety zone. **Saw Assist** prevents sawing towards the cabin. And **Over-Rotation Protection** prevents the harvester head from over-rotating and damaging the hose.

IBC makes it easier to maneuver the harvesting head by automatically controlling all boom movements. IBC is available for our 1270G and 1470G Wheeled Harvesters equipped with select harvesting heads.

To learn more, visit [JohnDeere.com/ForestryTechnology](http://JohnDeere.com/ForestryTechnology).



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MACHINE**



# REINWOOD

Three generations of Deckers work together in the Tennessee woods

Story: Kevin Orfield | Photography: Dan Videtich



At a logging site near Dover, Tennessee, Decker Chipping & Logging harvests white oak, red oak, and other hardwoods including hickory and poplar. “White oak is the most popular right now due to the huge demand for whiskey barrels,” says Owner Vernon Ray Decker. Tennessee and neighboring state Kentucky are home to dozens of distilleries that are famous for producing high-quality whiskey aged in oak barrels.

Decker grew up about 30 miles from Dover in Paris, Tennessee, where the company's office is located. He has been around logging all his life. "Logging is all I know and what I love," he says. "I won't give it up until I can't do it anymore. I don't know when I'll retire."

If his father provides any indication, he won't be retiring soon. Vernon Sr. is 77 and still starts the day at 5 a.m. He runs the company's John Deere 437E Knuckleboom Loader from dawn until dusk. "Sitting around is not my thing," the elder Decker says. "I like to fish, but 45 minutes is about my limit. I'd rather be out here in the woods."

The two started the company, known then as Decker Logging, in 1992. Vernon Ray claims he has never argued with his dad. "We're so much alike and get along so well," he says. "It's tremendous to be able to work with him every day. I'm thankful he worked so hard to put us in a good position. He helped me a lot and paved the way for us. My son Scott is learning from him, too."

Vernon Sr. is self-deprecating and humble about building a highly successful logging business. "I'm the flunky," he says with a smile. "Everybody talks to Mama [his wife Barbara] because she keeps the books and knows more about the business than anyone."

### **Long, hard road**

Forestland covers 14 million acres of Tennessee, more than half the state. The Volunteer State may be better known for whiskey, barbecue, and country and blues music. But it is an international leader in hardwood, ranking second in the nation only to Pennsylvania in hardwood production.

Dover lies between the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers about 100 miles west of Nashville. It seems fitting that Ulysses S. Grant earned his nickname "Unconditional Surrender" during the Civil War in a battle nearby at what is now Fort Donelson National Battlefield. Tennessee's rolling hills are beautiful, but the unforgiving terrain gives no quarter. Hardwood logging in the region means working in steep, tough ground.

"Starting out was difficult," recalls Vernon Ray. "I had to borrow a friend's truck along with the money to pay for the gas." Vernon Sr. put up his house to purchase a new John Deere 648 Cable Skidder and a log loader. The company made six dollars a ton. "We were paid for every load when we hauled it in, and we'd cash the checks the next day just to pay for the diesel," Vernon Ray remembers. "It was a long, hard road."



**Forestland covers 14 million acres of Tennessee, more than half the state.**

Asked when things started to get easier, Vernon Ray replies: "Well, it's no different today. We go 24/7. I'm always pushing, pushing, pushing — I don't know how to do it any other way. In the logging business, if you're not hustling, you're not making it. The mechanized equipment has made the work easier, but there is more to manage."

### One tough man

In the early days, Vernon Ray ran the cable skidder while his father did all the cutting with a chain saw and the loading. "We'd finish five or six loads a day with him doing everything except dragging wood," Vernon Ray says. "He's one tough man."

Vernon Sr. grew up picking cotton in Missouri. When he was 15, he started logging with his brother. "I wanted to do better and make something of myself in this world."

When he and Barbara got married in 1965, Vernon Sr. was making 10 dollars a day. He'd run the chain saw and drag wood using horses and mules, while his brother would



**"In the logging business, if you're not hustling, you're not making it."**

Vernon Ray Decker, owner,  
Decker Chipping & Logging



roll logs onto the truck using chains. Barbara would often accompany him into the woods, measuring logs and carrying gas and oil for the chain saw. "This is how our marriage started and how it's been ever since," she says. "We work together as a family. Our family is our whole life."

When her husband and son started working together, she'd go get parts for them and cook out with them in the woods. Today she doesn't make it out to the logging site as much. "There's a lot more paperwork with more employees, trucking, and bigger equipment," says Barbara. "It's just a lot more to contend with."

The company depends on her to keep a close eye on the bottom line. "I do whatever I can to make it easier for them to come out in the woods and not have to worry about it. And if they need anything, I'm there to take care of it for them."



### Nothing like family

Today the company produces 30 loads a day, running John Deere equipment including an 843L-II Wheeled Feller Buncher, an 859MH Tracked Harvester, 748L-II Cable Skidders, and 437E Knuckleboom Loaders. Vernon Ray primarily runs the 859MH which, to borrow a line from a country music song, is “as smooth as Tennessee whiskey.” “I love running this cutter. It amazes me every day. With its weight and control, I haven’t run anything that can handle a large tree like this. And it doesn’t burn a lot of fuel, so it’s really efficient.”

The 859MH features a Waratah FL100 felling head. “We’re the first company in the region to run one,” he says. “It does an excellent job in big timber, and it’s extremely well built. I’ve run it for 1,000 hours without issues. Just keep it greased and maintained.”

The combination is highly productive. “The shoveling capability is unreal. I didn’t think it was possible what I can do with this machine. You have so much control over positioning trees where the skidder can reach them. That really reduces wear and tear on the skidder because it keeps it out of the rough stuff.”

“He’s very talented on that machine,” says Vernon Sr. “He can run circles around anyone. That’s what he’s wanted to do since he was five years old — run machines.”

Vernon Sr.’s passion is the John Deere knuckleboom loader. “I just love doing it. I don’t do it for the money. I do it for the enjoyment. Deere loaders are very comfortable and smooth — not jerky like other loaders on the market.”







Vernon Sr. and his son depend on support from their local dealer, Stribling Equipment, to keep them up and running. "We don't have too many issues with the machines, but Stribling is great about getting us any parts we need," says Vernon Ray. "They've been super."

He is also cautiously optimistic about his company's future. The market is good. He has a son in the business and a grandson who loves the outdoors. "But there are very few of us left. Young people just are not interested, and we need lots of people in the logging business. It's not a nine-to-five job, to be sure. But out here I don't have to punch a time clock. I'm my own boss, and I get to work with my father and son. There's nothing like family."

*Decker Chipping & Logging, LLC is serviced by Stribling Equipment, Jackson, Tennessee.*

 To see more of the story, visit [JohnDeere.com/TheLanding](https://www.johndeere.com/TheLanding)



**"I'm my own boss,  
and I get to work with  
my father and son.  
There's nothing like family."**

Vernon Ray Decker, owner,  
Decker Chipping & Logging

DOWN TIME

# FORE!

## A GOOD CAUSE

Golf is often defined jokingly as a good walk spoiled. At Papé® Machinery's golf outing in Fresno, California, at least the golfers are provided with golf carts to help keep the walking part to a minimum. "We always have such a great time," says Tim Messer, a logger from Auberry, California. "Papé does a terrific job with this event, which is for a good cause."

The third annual charity golf outing was held last October and attended by over 140 golfers. Messer teamed up with his son-in-law Stephen Ferguson and his local Papé representatives, Mike Huckabay and Robert Begley, for the scramble-format tournament. Messer is an avid golfer, and he regularly plays with Ferguson and Huckabay. The three also get together every year for Huckabay's Halloween party and the Messer family Christmas party. "The folks at Papé's Fowler store are like family," says Messer. "We go back a

long way. Robert's dad was shop foreman at our local dealership when we bought our first John Deere skidder in the mid-1980s."

"Tim is a lot of fun to be around," says Huckabay. "And he is very kind and giving." At the 2019 charity golf outing, Messer won a raffle. But rather than accept the prize, he had it reauctioned off, with the proceeds going to charity.

The golf tournament benefits the Ronald McDonald House Charities® (RMHC), which supports programs directly improving the health and well-being of children and their families. Last year Papé was able to donate \$15,000 to RMHC. "Papé is an integral part of our business," says Messer. "They support us so we support them. The event is one way for us to give back to them and to help our community."



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