



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREA WATTS

**In spite of their hefty price tag, drones are proving their worth by making work more efficient and safer out in the woods.**

employed by many forestry professionals, I also anticipate more frequent use of drones. I've had a consumer-grade drone for about a year, and while I don't use it every day, or even every week, there are times when a drone comes in handy for monitoring forest health issues, surveying regeneration, stand typing, wildfire suppression, and basic road assessment. Those are simple tasks that can be completed using a variety of consumer-grade drones, but logging sides around the PNW are using purpose-built drones to string haywire layouts ahead of jobs, and there are ventures utilizing drones for

seedling establishment, herbicide application, and LiDAR flights. The future of drones in forestry is very young and one that's bound to grow exponentially.

### Future considerations

In the northern California and southwest Oregon wood baskets I've worked, trucking has become a constraint. There are plenty of trucks but not enough drivers. Of the truck drivers I know, most are close to retirement; yet there doesn't appear to be a succession plan at individual trucking companies for getting the younger generation into trucking. It takes know-how and skill to drive a log truck in the Pacific Northwest. There are a lot of steep grades, narrow roads, and unpredictable driving conditions that log truck drivers in this region encounter on a daily basis. Those everyday challenges are compounded by high fuel prices and long days to make driving log truck a hard job to attract help for. The industry needs to work together to optimize the trucking capacity we have, and grow it by attracting young drivers. *WF*

**Sam Wheeler** is the forest operations manager for Murphy Company in southwest Oregon. A SAF member, he is also a member of the Pacific Logging Congress and director on the board of the Western Region Council on Forest Engineering. Wheeler can be reached

at [sam.wheeler@murphyvener.com](mailto:sam.wheeler@murphyvener.com) or (541) 499-1470.

## Editor's Note

By Andrea Watts

For my first contractor profile for *TimberWest*, I was overwhelmed by the unfamiliar terms casually mentioned by the logging contractor. *Processing head. Yarder. Loader.* Although my silviculture class included several site visits to active logging operations, forest operations weren't covered in my undergraduate classes or even graduate classes.

Forest operations are the "physical actions which change the forest, altering structure, composition, condition, or value in order to meet society's needs for clean air and water, forest products, wildlife, recreation, and other benefits" (USDA Forest Service). However, when selecting topics, I didn't want to focus solely on the physical actions; I saw value in exploring forest operations' aftereffects.

To that end, the articles in this issue explore forest operations from different lenses. Andrew Addressi, Lindsay Chiono, and Gerald Middel share how forest operations further the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's goal of promoting huckleberry, while James Rivers provides an update on the latest research of forest operations' effects on pollinator habitat. Jason Dorn details how Port Blakely is adapting its harvest operations to fulfill a new market need, and Deborah Page-Dumroese explains that producing value from logging slash is now feasible.

Thank you to the authors who contributed to this issue, and the SAF members and advertisers who make producing the *Western Forester* possible. Even as you're reading this issue, I'm already prepping spring's issue "Exploring K-12 Forestry Education." If you know of topics that may interest readers, please email me at [wattsa@forestry.org](mailto:wattsa@forestry.org). *WF*

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