Every day in the woods is an opportunity for you to not just meet the day’s quota but to take your operation to the next level. To help you accomplish this, we’ve developed an unrivaled lineup of forestry machines, leading Precision Forestry technologies, and a top network of dealers backing your fleet.

At John Deere, we believe you deserve the best equipment to help raise your game. Our new John Deere 768L-II Bogie Skidder is a great example of how we listen to our customers to design and manufacture machines that meet their unique and changing needs. Loggers are increasingly looking for opportunities to harvest in difficult terrain. The six-wheel 768L-II fits the bill perfectly, delivering outstanding traction, stability, and flotation in wet conditions and on steep slopes. To learn more about this highly capable skidder, check out the “Test Tract” story on page 12.

It takes more than productive, reliable machines to support your success. Taking advantage of our world-class dealer network is one of the easiest ways to decrease costs, increase uptime, and stay on top of mill quotas. Our dealers work closely with customers like you to understand your operation. They can recommend the right type and size of machine, special configurations, and Precision Forestry solutions that fit your business’s unique applications and needs. See your John Deere dealer for extended warranty and maintenance agreement options and financing solutions to help you manage your ownership and operating costs.

But our dealer support goes well beyond signing on the dotted line. From rapid service to preventative maintenance, your local dealer will help keep you up and running. Through John Deere Connected Support™ enabled by JDLink™, with consent your dealer closely monitors your fleet’s health, remotely diagnoses machine issues, and quickly responds with the appropriate part or solution. Our dealers receive Expert Alerts that help address conditions that might otherwise lead to downtime. Developed using data from thousands of connected machines, Expert Alerts provide preventative maintenance and repair protocols for faster, more accurate machine-health solutions.

With convenient locations across North America, our dealer network will help keep you running strong.

Put your JDLink™ subscription on PowerPlan™
Make low monthly payments and start saving on operating costs with the machine technology you already have.

Visit JohnDeere.com/RenewJDLink or talk to your dealer to request a quote today!

Cover image:
With its wet conditions and steep, rocky terrain, Northwest Georgia is the perfect testing ground for our new 768L-II Bogie Skidder.
On February 17, John Deere hosted a virtual Forestry Technology Panel. The panel was moderated by Danny Dructor, former Executive Vice President, American Loggers Council. It featured four John Deere customers who discussed their experiences with technology and its impact. Here are some highlights.
WHAT KIND OF RETURN ON INVESTMENT ARE YOU GETTING FROM TECHNOLOGY?

“I’m getting jobs I never thought I would get. Technology has opened all kinds of doors for us — prospective customers are amazed at what we can do. It’s been a great investment and I would recommend it to anybody. It has made a world of difference.”

DILLON STRATTON
DM Stratton Inc., Jacksonville, Florida

“The mill has been really impressed by our use of technology. They feel much more comfortable knowing operators have it on their machines, and it puts them at ease about the important issue of violating boundaries. They’ve opened up a bit about allowing us to do more things. And it’s allowed me to cut down on manpower, and I can manage more things on my own than before.”

SETH DICKINSON
Dickinson Logging Ltd., Hinton, Alberta, Canada

HOW DOES TECHNOLOGY HELP YOU ADDRESS CHALLENGES?

“John Deere TimberMatic™ Maps and TimberManager™ have made training operators easier, especially less experienced ones. I can take someone who can barely open a social media app, and by the end of the day, they know how to use the system and skid wood to the landing.”

THOMAS JOHNSON
Thomas Johnson Logging, DeRidder, Louisiana

“My crews are sometimes 50 miles apart. TimberManager allows me to see what they are doing in real time so I can keep tabs on productivity and feel more secure.”

DILLON STRATTON

“ Crossing property lines or working too near a creek is a very serious issue. TimberMatic Maps allows us to mark boundaries and areas of interest so operators know exactly where they are. I don’t have to stay awake at night worrying that they crossed a line somewhere, and I can check on them whenever I want to.”

SETH DICKINSON
“We can look on that screen and know exactly where our operators are and where the cut boundaries are. It gives them confidence, and we don’t waste time walking the logging site and talking on the radio. The mapping part alone has really helped inexperienced operators find where they need to go.”

**BRENDAN MOORE**  
The Lyme Timber Company, Hanover, New Hampshire

“Our operations run 24 hours and crews are often moving block to block. Using TimberManager and TimberMatic Maps, I can build a map in the office in the middle of the night and send it to our operators. They can move to a new cut block, and with a map right in front of them, they know what to do right away. It’s saved a lot of manpower, running around, and wear and tear on my old truck.”

**SETH DICKINSON**

“John Deere Precision Forestry technology makes us more efficient so I can reduce our fleet size and save money.”

**THOMAS JOHNSON**

“We do a lot of land-clearing projects. Construction companies can send us shape files that we can load into TimberManager. We don’t need to have survey crews, so we can get on with our job faster. This technology really gives us the upper hand on a lot of our competitors.”

**DILLON STRATTON**

**JOHN DEERE PRECISION FORESTRY TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS**

The core component of John Deere Precision Forestry, JDLink™ enables loggers to manage entire fleets from a desktop or mobile device, providing anytime remote access to machine hours and location, fuel consumption, idle time, maintenance reminders, and more. The TimberManager and TimberMatic Maps map-based production-planning and -tracking system allows contractors and operators alike to share real-time production and location information — taking the guesswork out of effective decision-making. And John Deere Connected Support™ leverages a suite of dealer and factory tools designed to deliver increased productivity and uptime while lowering daily operating costs.
On October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael barreled into Mexico Beach and Panama City, Florida. Michael was the second most intense hurricane to make landfall in the state and the first Category 5 hurricane to strike the Florida Panhandle. The hurricane cut a wide swath across the Panhandle, leaving flattened houses and fallen trees in its wake, while causing an estimated $25.1 billion in damage.

Logger Jack Sowell, owner of West Florida Timber Co., Southport, Florida, remembers the day well. “We were working on a 500-acre tract,” he recalls. “The landowners called and told us not to haul anymore because of the storm. I thought the worst-case scenario is we don’t work the rest of the day.”

Sowell called his foreman to check on operations. The equipment was fine, but there were no trees left — they were all on the ground. In one 20-acre area the crew was working, 300 large pines were down.

“They were piled up on top of each other like a bunch of matchsticks thrown on the ground,” says Sowell. “I had first thought we’d be down for just a day, but after I saw the devastation, I wondered if we would work again. I didn’t know what we were going to do.”

One of the biggest landowners in the state asked West Florida Timber to come back to work, but gas stations were shut down, so the company had no fuel. “They told us they had 10,000 gallons of off-road fuel that we could use,\"
says Sowell. “The state of Florida had lifted restrictions, so whatever we could put in our trucks, they’d let us burn. And they lifted the weight restrictions so we could haul more. But it was bad.”

Path of destruction
The hurricane damaged 28 million acres of Florida’s timberland, or 72 million tons of timber, according to the Florida Forest Service. That’s the equivalent of 2.5 million log trucks worth of wood. After Michael, pine inventory declined 28 percent and hard wood declined 19 percent. Initially, West Florida Timber helped clean up the wood on the ground, although it was a bit of a fiasco. “The feller buncher was useless. The landowners were running excavators equipped with saws to cut the wood, but for liability reasons, they wouldn’t let our guys run the machines. Their operators weren’t loggers and they were doing it wrong. We could have done a much better job,” says Sowell.

After nine months, the company moved on to cutting “leaners.” After the storm about 80 percent of the trees leaned at a 45-degree angle. Landowners paid a small bonus for clearing them out. “We eventually got through leaners, but it was a pretty rough period.”

The impact of the hurricane on the logging industry still reverberates throughout the region. Several loggers went out of business. A landowner who once had 10 years of trees on their land might now only have three.

Fork in the road
Sowell is used to dealing with adversity, having overcome a hardscrabble childhood. He grew up in Southport with five sisters, the son of a housepainter. “We were poor. We didn’t have heat or hot water. We didn’t get to play. We’d come home from school and go to work.”

Sowell’s father would pick him up after junior high school, and he would paint closets. “I eventually got good enough to paint other parts of the house.”

Baseball legend Yogi Berra once said that if you come to a fork in the road, take it. Sowell’s fork came when he was 18. One of his sisters married a logger, who seemed to be doing pretty well for himself. So on his 18th birthday, Sowell accepted a job with him. After five years running a chain saw, Sowell started working for another company where he learned how to run every piece of equipment. He eventually worked his way up to foreman, and in 1990, he started Gulf Coast Timber with his father-in-law.

Then in 1995, Sowell started his own company, West Florida Timber. “I worked under another logger as a producer,” he remembers. “It took me about 15 years to get my own contracts and work directly with landowners.”

In the aftermath of the hurricane, the company has managed not only to survive, but thrive. Today it produces 80 loads a week to meet the local paper mill’s quota. West Florida Timber mostly clear-cuts pine pulpwood.
In 1994 Sowell began buying John Deere equipment, including a 643G Feller Buncher and two skidders. Since then, the company has upgraded to a 643L Feller Buncher and two 648L-II Skidders. “The machines have improved a lot over the years,” he says. “They’re a lot more comfortable to run, with quiet spacious cabs, HVAC systems, and radios. On the L-II Series, grapples are larger so we can drag more loads in fewer trips. On a clear cut I often need to run only one skidder, which saves manpower and fuel. It’s a lot more efficient.”

L-II Series Skidders also feature over 1,600 component changes and less complex electrical and hydraulic systems that improve reliability. And the company’s local dealership, Beard Equipment, provides outstanding support, monitoring its fleet with JDLink™ and offering extended warranties that help control costs. “My dealer never lets me stay down for long,” says Sowell. “They always help me out and keep me going.”

After weathering the storm, the business forecast for West Florida Timber is looking brighter. “These are probably the best paper and lumber markets I’ve seen,” says Sowell.

Sowell attributes his success to efficiency and consistency. “If a customer gives us a quota, we always meet it. And we always pay our bills. Not everyone can say that, and our customers and vendors appreciate that.”

With retirement not far off on the horizon, Sowell looks back at a career in the woods that has afforded him the quality of life he could only dream of as a child. Logging changed his life for the better. “After the first day I wanted to quit, but I came back the next day. And the day after that. Thirteen years later I had my own company, and 44 years later I’m proud to say I’m still out here.”

West Florida Timber Co. Inc. is serviced by Beard Equipment Co., Panama City, Florida.

“WE WERE POOR. WE DIDN’T HAVE HEAT OR HOT WATER. WE DIDN’T GET TO PLAY. WE’D COME HOME FROM SCHOOL AND GO TO WORK.”

Jack Sowell
Owner, West Florida Timber Co.
SMOOTH BOOM CONTROL FOR TRACKED FELLER BUNCHERS AND HARVESTERS

Now available on John Deere M-Series Tracked Feller Bunchers and MH-Series Tracked Harvesters, Smooth Boom Control (SBC) instantly responds to operator input while smoothing out acceleration and deceleration of hydraulic functions. Overall machine movements are effective, especially when reversing motion. Better responsiveness and control results in more efficient operation, especially in demanding applications and challenging conditions. It also means a smoother experience for the operator and less wear and tear on the machine.

SBC is also available as an upgrade for existing M- and MH-Series machines. To learn more, visit JohnDeere.com/Forestry.
SBC software reduces the signal delay at the start and end of each operator command, refining the motion of boom, swing, and travel functions. The machine is always ready to go, resulting in significantly improved joystick and foot-pedal response.
TEST TRACT

STORY: KEVIN ORFIELD
PHOTOGRAPHY: NATE LUKE
TRIPLE J LOGGING PUTS THE TOUGH 768L-II BOGIE SKIDDER TO THE TEST ON STEEP TRACTS

Georgia may be known as “The Peach State,” but half of it is covered in pine. The state has more commercial forestland and harvests more timber than any other state. It’s also the seventh wettest state in terms of average annual rainfall, creating muddy conditions for logging. Loggers working the northwest corner of the state like Triple J Logging must also contend with the steep, rocky terrain at the southern end of the Appalachian Mountains. “We deal with all different types of terrain,” says Triple J Vice President Jason Dawson. “We may be cutting on a mountainside one day and in a swamp the next. But we tend to work in hilly ground.”
Triple J recently demoed the new six-wheel John Deere 768L-II Bogie Skidder on a steep, muddy logging site near its shop in Summerville, Georgia — the perfect “test tract.” The machine is designed to excel in these conditions, and Dawson was impressed. “It’s hands down a better machine than a four-wheel skidder in this environment. For what we need out of a machine, it’s built very well.”

**SILVER LINING**

In addition to relentless rain and tough ground conditions, Triple J deals with the usual challenges, such as having enough trucks to keep up with mill demand and finding qualified operators. “You definitely have to be an optimist in this business,” Dawson says. “I’ve never really been a person to worry too much. I always try to stay positive and plan with the assumption that everything is going to keep growing. If it doesn’t, there’s nothing I can really do about it, so I just do my best in the meantime.”

Dawson grew up on the family farm — his grandfather was a chicken farmer — but he has always been around logging. In 1977, the year he was born, his grandfather, father, and uncle started logging together. They hand felled initially before acquiring a feller buncher with a shear head. They also ran John Deere skidders. “I learned how to operate a skidder on a Deere 640D,” Dawson recalls.

In 2001 Dawson founded Triple J with his father James and his brother Josh. “We learned our work ethic from our father,” says Dawson. “He was the first one to work in the morning and the last one to leave at night.”

The three business partners ran a rubber-tire feller buncher, a skidder, and a log loader while employing three truck drivers. “We did all our maintenance and repairs in an old chicken house on our farm,” remembers Dawson. “The roof leaked, so conditions weren’t ideal. But we managed. We’d work for pretty much anyone who would allow us to cut wood for them.”

Today Triple J has over 40 employees. The company’s three crews haul 100 to 140 loads per week, depending on the type of ground. Dawson manages the business side, while his father and brother both supervise a crew and manage
“IT’S HANDS DOWN A BETTER MACHINE THAN A FOUR-WHEEL SKIDDER IN THIS ENVIRONMENT. FOR WHAT WE NEED OUT OF A MACHINE, IT’S BUILT VERY WELL.”

JASON DAWSON
VICE PRESIDENT, TRIPLE J LOGGING
Jason Dawson
Vice President, Triple J Logging

“On a steep hill, it allows you to reach further down an embankment,” says Dawson. “It also helps with positioning of loads in difficult ground conditions.”

Dawson is grateful for having a great team. “We’re very blessed that some of our employees have been with us since the beginning. We just try to treat people with respect and keep them in nice equipment, so they are comfortable and safe.”

In It for the Long Haul
Not unexpectedly, it rained the week Triple J demoed the 768L-II Bogie Skidder. “It has excellent traction, stability, and flotation, so it’s well suited for our terrain and environment,” explains Dawson. “It handles a heavier load in wetter, boggier conditions and on steep slopes better production. “I’m proud of how we’ve grown so much over 20 years,” says Dawson. “And I’m still able to work with my dad and brother — that’s pretty important to me.”
than four-wheel skidders, and it doesn’t tear up the ground. In my book it’s just all-around better in terms of production and ground disturbance.”

With its long wheelbase and large boom-arch envelope, the 768L-II can reach areas other skidders can’t. “On a steep hill, it allows you to reach further down an embankment,” says Dawson. “It also helps with positioning of loads in difficult ground conditions.”

Triple J depends on its John Deere 843L-II Wheeled Feller Bunchers to work in these conditions. “The L-II Series just handles trees a lot better on steeper terrain than previous Deere models, and they’re just all-around good machines. Two of our crews mainly clear cut and another crew does a lot of pine thinning, so it’s great to have that versatility.” For help in really steep terrain, the company also runs a Deere 759G Tracked Harvester. “We don’t have to use it all the time, but it really helps,” says Dawson.

Triple J has always owned John Deere skidders, and today runs 948L and 748L-II Skidders. Like all Deere skidders, the 768L-II Bogie Skidder is built tough to carry hefty loads over long distances. “Deere machines are very durable,” says Dawson. “We run our machines five or six years and put on 10,000 to 12,000 hours before we trade them in. We have a 748L-II Skidder approaching that milestone, and we’ve hardly had any issues with it. I’m very pleased with the service and production we get out of our John Deere machines.”

“THERE’S NO WAY TO DRAIN THAT BANK. THE 768L IS A GREAT SKIDDER FOR THE JOB.”

JASON DAWSON
VICE PRESIDENT, TRIPLE J LOGGING

To see more of the story, visit JohnDeere.com/TheLanding
With the support of Papé Machinery, John Deere recently donated the machine to the Pacific Northwest Logging Museum in Salem, Oregon. “Thanks to John Deere and Papé for this most generous addition to our growing number of exhibits,” says Kevin Smith, chairman of the museum. “The walking tractor is an interesting piece of logging history that our patrons will enjoy learning about.”

The walking machine had been on display at the John Deere Pavilion since 2012. Located at the company’s headquarters in Moline, Illinois, the Pavilion exhibits some of John Deere’s biggest machinery, from combines to dozers to excavators to swing machines. Visitors learn how these machines and Deere innovations like the walking harvester have changed how people work and inspired future designs.

The walking harvester was the result of hundreds of hours of prototype development and testing. The machine automatically adapted to terrain to keep the carrier level on uneven ground. Responding to sensor input, the machine evenly distributed its weight over all six legs, for incredible stability and reduced ground disturbance. It could turn on the spot; walk forwards, backwards, sideways, and diagonally; step over obstacles; and move in very confined spaces.

Ultimately, the consensus was that the machine was too slow. Although ahead of its time, the walking harvester provided automation and stability technologies that would be further developed and implemented on future John Deere forestry equipment.
OUTRUN™ DOWNTIME.

PROOF THAT LESS REALLY CAN MEAN MORE.

To deliver more uptime, we set out to reduce operating temperatures and potential failure points. That’s why G-Series Swing Machines feature larger, more durable coolers, more efficient hydraulic management, and a simplified electrical system. Less heat. Fewer parts. More uptime.
WORK, EVEN WHEN IT RAINS.

With incredible stability in soft or sloped terrain, the new John Deere 768L-II Bogie Skidder efficiently retrieves timber in hard-to-reach places. The bogie axles on this six-wheel skidder combine excellent traction and flotation with reduced ground pressure helping you move big loads long distances no matter the conditions. Add one to your fleet and get ready to OUTRUN.