



## Training the Next Generation

*By Jeff Skrivin, Natural Resources/Art Teacher, Knappa High School*

As with any major industry, logging has seen dramatic changes over the decades. In order to meet those demands, forestry programs at both the high school and college levels, face the challenge of preparing students for an ever-changing workforce. Students interested in a career in the woods will need to be more flexible and adaptive than ever before, to meet the needs of a career in forestry.

Jeff Skrivin's Knappa High School state champion timbersports team of 2009. Jeff is on the far right and the tall man on the left in the back is fellow teacher, Tim Kamppi.

As a Clatskanie native, and now as a natural resources teacher and high school timbersports coach, I have watched the art of logging shift to a much more complicated and diverse occupation. When I began my career as a forestry teacher four years ago, I found students whose family ties to logging stretched back for generations. They were excited about the idea of continuing the tradition and enthusiastic about the thrill of working in the woods and learning the trade. What they quickly realized, however, is that it takes a great deal more diverse knowledge than ever before to be competitive in today's forestry industry.

Natural resources students today need to have a strong understanding of all facets of forest management. Forestry brings together many complex issues surrounding sustainability. In addition to having the ability to run high-tech equipment, students must have a strong understanding of good land management skills, including riparian areas and reforestation. They must be knowledgeable about Oregon's Forest Practices Act and all other environmental rules that surround logging.

High schoolers in many areas of the Northwest are learning that being a forester can put many of their talents and interests to work in a demanding, high paying job. With high school forestry programs around the state, many students are getting exposure to, and a better understanding of, today's forestry industry. With organizations such as OSU's Forestry Extension Program, the Pacific Logging Conference, and the Oregon Forest Resources Institute, students all over the state are gaining a better understanding of the diversity involved in the forestry industry.

In mid-September, the Pacific Logging Conference put on a two-day logging and forest education conference in the woods just outside of Clatskanie. Students from around the state took part in such activities as climbing and plant ID along a mile-long trail system, which was filled with modern logging equipment. PLC also set up an active logging site in order to allow the students to see logging at work.

The event was a huge success with approximately 1,000 students from around the state attending on the first day and nearly 2,500 on the second. Many of the students got their first taste of what it might be like to work in the woods, by visiting stations and learning more about equipment used in logging. Some of our students were able to share the knowledge gained in their forestry classes with others and help run the stations. As a result, at least two school districts in Northwest Oregon are considering beginning their own forestry programs. It is this kind of exposure that will give students a better understanding of the complexities involved in today's world of forestry.

The logging and forestry industry has been a mainstay in America's economy for centuries. As with any other industry, it has seen its share of changes, and the recruitment of qualified and well-trained professionals will be vital to the continued



growth of the industry. It is critical to attract students who are interested in working outdoors and are ready to use a wide scope of knowledge and skills in an ever-changing profession. High school and college programs and organizations, like OFRI and PLC, will be integral in making this happen.