Hardwood forestry industry missing out on economic growth
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Elks County, Pa. — Pennsylvania's forests are growing two to three times faster than they can be harvested, creating large potential for economic growth, officials say.

This figure is measured in board feet of lumber, which the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture says is growing at a rate of 2 billion feet per year, or 2.4 times the harvest rate.

Former PA Rep. Matt Gabler, the current executive director of the Pennsylvania Forests Products Association, made this comment while discussing the economic possibilities for expanding the harvesting rate of the industry.

Hardwood forestry is currently a $21.8 billion industry for the Commonwealth, and the hardwood industry alone employs nearly 63,000 people in 2,100 operations statewide.

This makes the industry the ninth largest employer in the state.

Efforts to recruit and train workers for the varied careers in forestry was a major topic of discussion during the Pennsylvania House Majority Policy Committee's visit for a hearing in Elks County.

"We have the potential to increase production through improved workforce development, such as the recent general workforce development initiatives taken on by the General Assembly, custom fit to the industry to fill family-sustaining jobs," Rep. Martin Causer, committee chair, said.

The Pennsylvania Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee has been working to provide logger training and safety programs, as well as educate forestry practitioners and private forest landowners on how to steward forest resources, comply with environmental regulations, and maintain safety.

During a tour of Elk County's woodlands prior to the hearing, committee members were also shown some of the invasive species, such as buckthorn and Japanese knotweed, which are drowning out native plants and trees.

Source: https://www.northcentralpa.com/news/hardwood-forestry-industry-missing-out-on-economic-growth/article_b1cbbb16-c4bc-11ec-8d77-632547754277.html