Meeting Notes – Oct. 4, 2022 –

The LaFayette Rotary Club met on Tuesday, October 4 for its weekly meeting. Rotarian TR Clark was responsible for the program and presented to us some Alabama forest facts. In response to some national concerns regarding climate change, TR was able to report that in Alabama we grow more timber than we harvest and we manage our resources sustainably. Carbon dioxide, CO2, is often named as the culprit in climate change. However, forests clean the atmosphere. Enough oxygen is produced in Alabama to support 2/3 of the US population. Old forests are just storing carbon, not taking in any new carbon. New, young forests do take in the carbon and remove it from the air. When trees are harvested, the carbon remains trapped in the trees for 100 years. Forests also clean our water. Sixty percent (60%) of Alabama's surface water flows through private forests. Alabamians get more than half of their public drinking water from private forests.

Most of Alabama's forest land (93.19%) is owned by individuals who love the land and take care of it. In 2020, we had 43.61 billion cubic feet of live trees on forest land. This equates to 26 million log truck loads. This is up from 38.50 billion cubic feet in 2015. This increase is due to the excellent timber management practices that are used throughout the state. TR reported that there are ways to protect endangered species and still be able to harvest timber.

The timber industry has a very positive effect on Alabama's economy. Every county in the state is affected by the forest industry. We rank third nationally, behind Arkansas and Mississippi, in the forest products sector's contribution to the state economy. The 23.1 million acres of forest land in Alabama produce $27.7 billion dollars in total economic output. If the forest industry were to disappear from Alabama, the state would lose approximately $5.8 billion in total earnings, 111,000+ jobs and $492 million in taxes.

Diane Sherriff