

Cat® Equipment Helps Logger Achieve Production, Environmental Goals

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Exceeding Lofty Expectations

The crew of D&S Logging works long hours in tough, mountainous conditions to harvest timber, and they are also focused on conserving forest resources. The company's lineup of Cat® equipment helps them achieve their goals for production and conserving the environment.

D&S Logging, owned by Don Arndt, operates in the scenic Cascade Range in view of Mt. Hood, the highest point in Oregon at 11,239 feet. Arndt and his three sons – Larsen, Marshall, and Donnie Jr. – lead a team of seven employees. They primarily clear-cut tracts of 100-120 acres owned by private timber companies.

"We're a ground-based logging company, and soil conditions are a big factor every hour of the day," explains Don. "When it rains, the challenges are magnified. Erosion, runoff, sedimentation in the ditches – we just can't do that. So we constantly strive to avoid making mud, reduce compaction, and minimize soil disturbance. Those are huge components of our company mission, and a big part of our thought process when we approach a job."

Conserving natural resources and complying with regulations are important aspects of the company's work, but for Don it goes much further. "We don't want to just meet the regulations," he says. "We want to exceed them. That's why we lean more toward track skidders."

The company has a pair of them, two Cat 527 skidders. The Cat machines do double duty, skidding logs and building and maintaining skid trails. Don had high expectations when he invested in them, but the Cat 527 skidders have exceeded them. "They're more productive than I thought they would be," he says.

"Its high flotation tracks are extremely easy on the wet ground," adds Don. "It doesn't cut ruts and seems to float over the ground. With the 527s we're now able to skid logs on some of the wetter days, where in the past we could not skid at all."

"The 527 is an absolutely incredible machine," says Marshall. "And the grapple is a huge improvement -- it's stronger, faster, and lifts heavier loads."

D&S Logging also is equipped with a Cat 522B Feller Buncher, a Cat 324D Forest Machine with stroke boom delimber, and a second 324D Forest Machine utilized for log loading.

The 522B Feller Buncher has plenty of power and handles the heavy timber of the Northwest well, according to Marshall, and moves easily over the difficult terrain. "I think the electronics in the 522B have definitely helped me to be more productive," he says. The cab-mounted IQAN computer allows him to set the controls, adjust the hydraulics, change speeds and pressures – all from the operator's seat.

Don has been equally pleased with the performance of the company's 324D Forest Machines – reliable, productive, durable, and economical to operate.

"Caterpillar has steadily improved its forestry equipment," notes Don. "Caterpillar has improved their machines over time. They're quieter and smoother to operate, have more power, and have become easier to maintain and service."

He also praised the Cat brand for its reliability and durability. "The availability on these Cat machines has been really close to 100 percent," he says. "We just haven't lost much time at all. We put tens of thousands of hours on these machines, and we just haven't had any significant downtime."

Don runs the equipment for 5,000 to 6,500 hours and then looks hard at replacing it while the equipment still holds significant trade-in value. With this strategy, he avoids major repairs and keeps the machines under warranty, and he figures the equipment will not have any appreciable downtime.

Cat machines hold their value well or better than other brands in the region, according to Don. "In the Northwest, a Cat machine is just a good investment. I know the used equipment market bears this out."

He considers hourly operating costs and trade-in or resale value as integral factors in the ownership cost of a machine – not just purchase price. In figuring the true ownership costs of a machine, this is the reason he has gravitated to Cat forestry equipment. "They have treated us really well and help keep our hourly operating costs down."

D&S Logging performs all of its own light maintenance and minor repair work. Any larger service issues are referred to the local dealer, Peterson Cat. "But that doesn't happen very often," insists Don.

"Our relationship with Peterson Cat has been a great experience. Part of machine ownership is finding people you can trust to take care of you. You quickly learn if they are truly interested in your operation. We're a small business, yet I feel that Peterson values us as a customer."

"I consider them friends," he adds, "and I trust them to place my interests ahead of their own. This trusting relationship is a key reason I continue to buy their equipment."

Source: Corporate Trade Press Relations – Caterpillar