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Dear Matre Forestry Newsletter Subscribers:

### **Paper Mill Closures Commentary**

8/28/2025

By Mike Matre, ALC, RF, ACF

Consulting Forester & CEO, Matre Forestry Consulting, Inc.

Senior Advisor & Associate Broker, Saunders Land

Before jumping into our paper mill closures, I want to first offer prayers to all affected by the evil act committed yesterday against those precious children at their church/school in Minnesota, and we are all affected by that. I also pray for Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey who appears to have mocked prayer during his press conference.

I have been letting the IP paper mill closures in Savannah and Riceboro GA, and the associated Riceboro Timber and Lumber facility closure, sink in. Years ago, in 1999 we saw the St Joe Paper mill closing coming from a mile away, and we saw the writing on the wall with the WestRock paper mill closure in PC FL in 2022. Lately though these recent paper mill closures seem to be coming somewhat out of nowhere. Yes, we hear grumblings of mills struggling, but maybe those of us in the timber industry tend to be optimistic and assume our go to mills will likely always be there. The GP Perry FL paper mill closure in 2023 was a shocker to me, but from a distance as I work out of Albany GA. Then, GP Cedar Springs in my back yard closed recently, bringing the pain closer to home. Now, the IP news seems to be hitting even harder for me, because I was hopeful our remaining paper mills would hang on with costs of raw material (pulpwood) as a result of the closure of competing mills. The IP mill news was also an extra bitter pill to swallow because it was an announcement of the closure of not one, but two paper mills, plus a small sawmill closure at the Riceboro facility.



*Above picture: Recently closed GP Cedar Springs paper mill, Early County GA. Photo credit: Mike Matre*

I spent my career, since graduating from UGA Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources in 1996, helping landowners grow and sell timber and manage their timber for wildlife, tracking timber markets, and starting in 2006 brokering land as well. During that time, we saw sawmill closures in the early 2000s

as a result of cheap Canadian government subsidized lumber undercutting US sawmills. Since then we have seen the consolidation of sawmills from family owned sawmills dotted across GA and the southeast to most remaining sawmills being owned by a few corporations, mostly from Canada (Interfor and Canfor). I am no expert on trade matters, but I believe our government could have done better in leveling the playing field for US sawmills and American timber growers back then. I will say this, there have been people (communist) in our government and elsewhere that want American industries, and America itself, brought down. Fortunately, for now, our chip-n-saw and sawmill and pole markets are hanging in there, but prices are significantly down compared to early 2000s and earlier. However, those mills rely on paper mills to buy their waste wood, which is an important income stream and the sawmills need to remove their waste wood from their properties as it piles up continuously.

Now, it is our paper mills closing, and like I mentioned in the above paragraph, I blame a lot of it on people in our government and elsewhere that want American industry brought down. I will say it again – they are communist, and they often come disguised as “environmentalist”. If you think hardcore environmentalism is just about saving cute little critters and their habitats and promoting clean air, you are wrong. There are environmentalists out there with their heart in the right place, but the movement has been hijacked by people in power that want to see American, and European, economies brought down while lesser developed countries cash in with little to no environmental regulations. And, in more recent years they have injected steroids into radical environmentalism with “global cooling”, I mean “global warming”, I mean “global climate change” and related regs and policies. Just look at what they are trying to do to gas and diesel engines in the name of saving the planet. If you think battery powered cars and trucks and equipment are better for the environment, you should research the subject more. How about the clearing of timber and ag fields to erect huge contiguous acres of solar panels that I and many argue do more harm than good. Same goes for the massive bird and sea life killing windmills. Take a look at all of the taxes, and carbon credits being bought and sold, and wetland credits being bought and sold that are somehow saving our environment, or are they just lining certain pockets? And look at the latest news where some Georgia landowners can not cut their timber to convert to agriculture, but it is perfectly okay for the same landowners to cut timber for a neighborhood or industrial development, which is a whole other topic. That is purely un-American.

Again, I am no expert with global trade and what not, but it does not take a genius to see that our paper mills struggle to compete with South America and Asia mills where they can produce pulp and paper with little to no environmental regulations, with cheap labor, and with slave labor. I heard the Savannah IP mill is 88 years old. No telling how much was being spent on maintenance, and how much it would cost to modernize it. While our markets are flooded with foreign finished forest products and even foreign logs, GP and IP and other corporations likely have no choice but to close some mills.

What is next for American timber growers, loggers, truckers, mill workers, and all of the businesses that directly and indirectly support our great American timber and forest products industry?

**First**, my hope is that our remaining mills will be invested in and somehow become financially healthier and better able to compete globally.

**Second**, I pray that the American spirit through our capitalists, our industry, our research universities, and our forestry associations take advantage of these voids in our wood baskets and develop new uses for the tremendous amount of affordable, or dare I say cheap, natural and renewable wood fiber by developing new products; push along emerging products; improve existing products; invest in our existing mills; and build new mills. I talked with someone I highly respect in the timber industry (Robbie Kochanski with Eufaula Pulpwood) yesterday who said he is confident that mills will come into these areas with closed paper mills, and it will likely be mostly bio-energy wood burning related mills. He mentioned that AI facilities will demand so much power it is inevitable we will have to turn to wood chips/wood pellets/waste wood to power those and other facilities, and gave the bioenergy plant at the Albany GA P&G facility as a perfect example of the future for our abundant wood fiber and energy production. This is the American spirit I speak of. But, new mills have to come in fast before we lose a large part of our logging force and foresters, and before a significant amount of our planted and natural forests become severely overcrowded and unhealthy, leading to forest insect and disease outbreaks and catastrophic wildfires and diminished wildlife habitat.

**Thirdly**, we need to do a better job at educating well intentioned environmentalist that they should seek American forest products. We need to help them understand that we are the first true green industry. God gave us dominion over the natural world, and He blessed us with so many natural resources, and He expects us to use them to our benefit while at the same time tending to His beautiful garden that He gave us. We need to tell environmentalist that “for a forester, every day is Earth Day”, so naturally we produce environmentally responsible products.

**Fourthly**, to those on both sides of “the aisle”, we need to vote for politicians that will truly and actively look out for and promote our timber and agriculture industry, and all of our other great industries. We need common sense environmental regulations, and our global competitors must be on the same regulations playing field, or their products must be properly tariffed.

**Fifthly and lastly**, we can all do better at purposely buying American forest products. I am guilty of buying fake wood furniture, but partly because that is all we see in furniture stores that sell furniture within our budget. Going forward, I will spend the extra money on good old fashioned American wood whenever

possible. Also, I am guilty of using plastic bags at the grocery store because I want to be able to carry 20 bags at one time from the car to the house. At Publix they often ask if plastic is okay, and I am about to start saying "paper please". And yes, I prefer paper over reusable bags, because I want to buy forest products. I am going to start clicking the print button more often. I am going to make a concerted effort to buy more American forest products whenever I can, and I hope you will too.

Well, I am starting to sound like Billy Graham with the thirdly and fourthly and fifthly, but hey, that is a great man to sound like. Thanks for reading, and God bless America, and all of us directly and indirectly in the timber industry. Now, I am going to head to the woods, and I might just listen to some old Billy Graham message on the way there.

**Now that I have that off my chest, check out my latest listing, 652 acres with house and lake and timber and lots of food plots and significant annual income (some division considered):**  
<https://land.saundersrealestate.com/land-for-sale/3176-east-centerpoint-rd-sale/>

**I also just listed 233 acres in Worth County GA, but it went immediately under contract, as did a recent listing in Early County and a recent listing in Atkinson County. Land is hot!**

### **"Land, an investment you can truly enjoy"**

*Mike Matre*

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Sincerely,

**Mike Matre**, ALC, ACF, RF

Georgia & Alabama Registered Forester and Land Broker

Consulting Forester & CEO, **Matre Forestry Consulting, Inc.** [www.matreforestry.com](http://www.matreforestry.com)

Senior Advisor & Associate Broker, **Saunders Land** [www.saundersrealestate.com](http://www.saundersrealestate.com)

Accredited Land Consultant & Member Association of Consulting Foresters

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Office 229-639-4973 Cell 229-869-1111

[mike@matreforestry.com](mailto:mike@matreforestry.com) or [mikem@saundersrealestate.com](mailto:mikem@saundersrealestate.com)

129 Broadleaf Dr, Albany GA 31701, In the heart of beautiful Sowega!

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**Matre Forestry Consulting, Inc.** |  
[www.matreforestry.com](http://www.matreforestry.com)



Matre Forestry Consulting, Inc. | 123 Hugh Rd | Leesburg, GA 31763 US

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