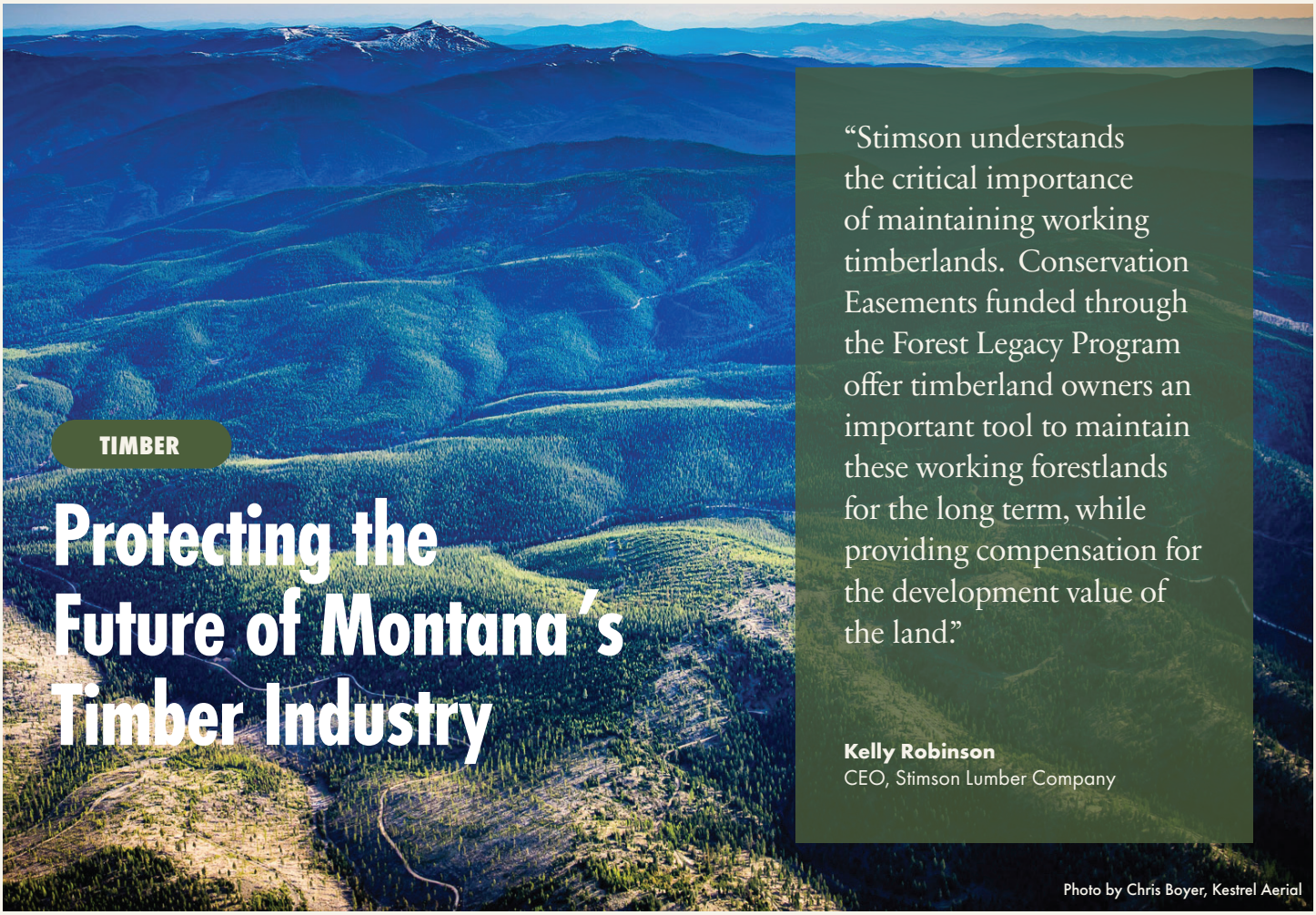


TIMBER

Protecting the Future of Montana's Timber Industry

"Stimson understands the critical importance of maintaining working timberlands. Conservation Easements funded through the Forest Legacy Program offer timberland owners an important tool to maintain these working forestlands for the long term, while providing compensation for the development value of the land."

Kelly Robinson
CEO, Stimson Lumber Company

Photo by Chris Boyer, Kestrel Aerial

Building on more than a century of forest stewardship, Stimson Lumber Company has used voluntary conservation easements to permanently protect nearly 130,000 acres of Montana's working forests.

Over seven generations, this family-owned business has grown into one of the nation's oldest integrated wood products companies. In Montana, Stimson's forests are working landscapes that produce timber, support local and regional jobs, strengthen rural communities, and provide important public benefits. Through active forest management, Stimson maintains forest health and helps reduce wildfire risk through sustainable timber harvesting, tree spacing, wildfire mitigation activities, and hazardous fuels reduction. These timberlands also provide Montanans with opportunities to hunt, fish, hike, bike, and enjoy their outdoor heritage while supporting habitat for a wide range of fish and wildlife species native to Western Montana.

Stimson's long-term perspective has shaped the company's approach to land management. Over the past 15 years, Stimson has voluntarily agreed to conserve nearly 130,000 acres of Montana timberland through conservation easements. Each project has spanned changing markets and multiple state and federal administrations while maintaining the consistent goal of keeping Montana's forests protected, resilient, healthy, and working.

Working in partnership with the Trust for Public Land and with support from the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program, Stimson has used conservation easements to voluntarily restrict development rights while retaining private ownership and the ability to actively manage its Montana forests.

WHY THIS MATTERS

- Reducing wildfire risk
- Maintaining working forests, open spaces, and Montana's heritage
- Sustaining forest industry jobs and economic contributions
- Supporting wildlife habitat and connectivity
- Providing public access to recreation



Photo by Chris Boyer, Kestrel Aerial

The Forest Legacy Program works with willing landowners and the support of local and state partners. The program requires perpetual easements, ensures permanent public access to enrolled lands, and provides funding for up to 75% of the value of working forest easements. These grants come from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which is funded through royalties from oil and gas revenues, - not taxpayer dollars. Timber companies, such as Stimson, often donate significant land value to facilitate these projects, demonstrating a long-term commitment to generational forestry. The land remains privately owned by timber companies that pay annual property taxes and actively manage the timberland. These lands remain working forests forever, helping support Montana's rural economies.

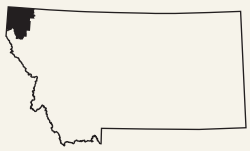
While easements are not the right fit for every situation, they have been an effective tool for timber companies, including Stimson, to strengthen their businesses while conserving Montana's landscapes for the long term.

Looking Forward

As Montana faces ever-increasing development pressure, Stimson's commitments have created an enduring legacy that will help sustain Montana's working forests for generations to come. The Forest Legacy Program provides a viable pathway for landowners like Stimson to continue owning and managing their lands as working forests into the future. Without this opportunity, the economic incentive to pursue subdivision and development can be too great.



Photo by Chris Boyer, Kestrel Aerial



NORTHWEST MONTANA
Lincoln County

PARTNERING LAND TRUST
Trust for Public Land

BY THE NUMBERS

Montana Timber

33%

OF MONTANA'S TIMBER PRODUCTION

Occurs on private land

$425M

IN WAGES

Generated for Montana workers by the timber industry

8,346

JOBS

Supported by Montana's timber industry

SOURCE FOR ALL ABOVE DATA: Sampson L. 2025. Montana's Forest Products Industry and Timber Harvest, 2022. University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER). Missoula, MT. https://www.bber.umt.edu/pubs/forest/fidacs/MT2022%20Tables.pdf