



Photo Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy/Kari Marciniak

From Forest to Floor

UP Maple Featured in National Event

Newberry, Luce County, Michigan - In the Fall of 2016, Connor Sports® hosted a responsible forestry education program at Newberry High School, Luce County, Michigan, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the Newberry High School to begin the production process for 2017 NCAA Men's and Women's Final Four basketball courts that will be manufactured at the Connor Sports' mill in Amasa, MI.

Real-World Sustainable Forestry Initiatives

The event held at the Newberry High School, and later, at the 5,000-acre Tahquamenon Area School District Forest, focused on providing a fun and real-world way to learn about responsible forestry. The event was highlighted by the felling of the first tree from timber harvests that continued several weeks in the Eastern Upper Peninsula in Michigan to supply the raw materials necessary for court production.

Newberry High School students began the day at the school with an assembly featuring a Connor Sports video showing the production process of a championship basketball court and a lumberjack storytelling session. The students then listened to veteran timber industry experts talk about Newberry's rich timber industry heritage and the valuable role the local community plays in the industry currently. Later in the morning, the students traveled to the nearby school forest and learned first-hand from Connor Sports and The Nature Conservancy about why timber for the court is only selected in forests certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

“We are focused not only on improving the health and sustainability of Michigan’s forests as a win for the environment, but also for the local communities such as Newberry that depend on those forests.” Rich Bowman, The Nature Conservancy

“Sustainability and sports has always been a priority for Connor Sports, and today’s educational forestry event with the Newberry School District was developed to show the students the process of responsible forestry and how those methods and products will be used for the official NCAA courts at the 2017 Men’s and Women’s Final Four,” said Jason Gasperich, Connor Sports Director of Sustainability.

Students observed much of the process, including:

- Hand cutting and tree selection
- Use of heavy equipment
- Sustainable forestry as it relates to wildlife
- Cutting of logs into lumber
- The “landing” area where cut logs are staged and prepared for transport to the sawmill



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After being rough cut in Munising at Timber Products, the rough-cut maple arrived at Connor Sports’ Amasa, Michigan plant. At the Amasa plant, the maple was cut to widths of 2 1/4 inches. Tongue and groove was put in place on each board by a “side-matcher.” The court was then made portable by assembling it into 4’ X 7’ panels.

Beginning in January of each year, schools in the hosting final four town, along with schools in Iron County, where the Connor Sport mill is located, collect recyclable plastics, which were used to manufacture a component of the subfloor. Patented Connor subflooring was put in place to provide the right balance of resilience and shock absorption to assure good performance and player safety.

Portable sections were stacked under stringently controlled temperature and humidity. In February, the completed panels were stacked, banded and sent to another plant to be sanded, sealed, painted and finished. The floor is then stacked to be transported to the host for the game.

Connor Sports as Champions of the Environment

- Connor takes its responsibility to sustainable harvest seriously. Founded in 1872, Connor Sport Court International has established themselves as the standard for professional and collegiate sports. Hardwood used in the courts is from a renewable resource, with the U.S. growing six times more hardwood than is harvested each year. Connor environmental activities include:
- Connor Sport Court International is proud to be the only sports surfacing company in the world that is independently audited and verified as “Zero Waste” and fully ISO 9001:2008 certified.
- As a member of the Maple Flooring Manufacturers Association (MFMA), Connor adheres to the strict grading and quality standards of that organization.
- Connor recycles 99% of its waste material and offers wood that is Forest Stewardship Council-certified.

The FSC mark represents products from well-managed forests. Connor was the first MFMA member to be certified by the Rainforest Alliance and is the only independently certified Zero Waste sports flooring manufacturer. More athletic events are played on Connor Sport Court International surfaces than on any other sports flooring in the world.

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to conserve the lands and waters upon which all life depends. In the Great Lakes region, the Conservancy works to make this among the most effectively managed ecosystems on Earth by protecting and restoring watersheds, forests, coastal areas and native fisheries. In Luce County, the Conservancy owns and manages over 24,000 acres in the Two Hearted River Watershed as a timber reserve – managing the timber under a FSC agreement. The floor was cut primarily from this Conservancy Reserve in 2016.