Thursday, May 14, 2026
Wide Plank Edition
Est. 2026 | Vol. 1, No. 37

THE LUMBER DAILY

MARKET PULSE | Lumber $575 | WTI $101 (-1.1%) | Diesel $5.64 | S&P 7,444 | 10yr 4.46%

■ TOP STORIES

Wilkes Lumber restarts Washington, Georgia sawmill

A sawmill once described as the largest east of the Mississippi in the 1990s came back online May 13 under Wilkes Lumber, in the town of Washington along Highway 78. Phase one is running with about 50 workers, with additional hiring planned as phase two starts in the coming weeks. The site had been idle for roughly a quarter century, originally shut down over chip-handling economics. The restart lands in a Southern pine basin still working through Hurricane Helene damage, the ongoing Brantley County Highway 82 and Clinch County Pineland Road wildfires, and a Georgia Forestry Commission outdoor burn ban through May 22 across 91 counties.

Senate confirms Kevin Warsh as Fed Chair

The Senate confirmed Kevin Warsh as the next chair of the Federal Reserve on May 13 by a 54–45 vote, mostly along party lines. Pennsylvania Democrat John Fetterman was the only crossover. Jerome Powell’s last day in the role is May 15. Warsh’s first meeting in the chair is the June 16–17 Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC). Markets took the confirmation as fully priced — the S&P 500 closed at a record 7,444.25 (+0.58%) and the Nasdaq at a record 26,402.34 (+1.20%) on May 13.

April PPI prints +6.0% year-over-year, biggest since December 2022

The Bureau of Labor Statistics released April Producer Price Index (PPI) data on May 13. Final demand rose 1.4% month-over-month against a 0.5% consensus, and 6.0% over the prior 12 months. Final demand energy jumped 7.8% on the month, with gasoline up 15.6%, accounting for over 40% of the goods component move. The print pushed the 10-year Treasury yield to 4.46%. Freddie Mac’s Primary Mortgage Market Survey (PMMS) printed 30-year at 6.37% on the May 8 reading; April energy at the producer level lands in May and June mortgage quotes and builder cost sheets.

■ DEEP DIVE: WIDE PLANK & THE ENGINEERED SHIFT

The wide-plank default

Boards 7 inches and wider are now the residential default in 2026, with 9- to 12-inch widths common at the high end. The legacy 2.25-inch and 3.25-inch strip floor has moved into specialty and restoration work. White oak is the dominant species across both solid and engineered. Matte and wire-brushed finishes have replaced the high-gloss aesthetic that defined the 2000s; natural blonde, soft wheat, pale sand, and warm greige tones dominate showroom palettes. The National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA) 2026 Industry Outlook survey put more than half of members expecting sales growth in 2026, with about 40% of contractors, more than 40% of retailers, and more than 55% of distributors forecasting gains. Pre-finished engineered is projected to lead category growth.

Solid unfinished versus engineered economics

Solid 3/4-inch hardwood expands and contracts seasonally; widths above 5 inches carry real cupping and gapping risk on a nail-down install over a plywood subfloor. Above 7 inches a solid board at typical interior humidity swings will fail structurally over a season or two. Cross-laminated engineered construction with a 4 to 6 mm wear layer eliminates most of that movement, allows gluedown over a concrete slab, and works with radiant heat — the three installation conditions that account for most modern residential and a meaningful share of light commercial. AHF Products launched Bruce Natural Choice 5/16-inch solid hardwood with the Summit Select adhesive system at the NWFA Expo in Orlando April 21–23, targeting direct-stick over concrete subfloors. Mullican’s Tennessee Artisan engineered collection runs Appalachian white oak and hickory through 1/2-inch x 7-1/2-inch random-length boards out of Johnson City, Tennessee. Mullican’s Castillian engineered line carries European white oak to 9.44-inch widths. Solid unfinished remains the choice for foyer-to-kitchen niches, period restorations, and jobs where the installer wants the customer to choose stain and finish on site.

Lamella production: where the top layer comes from

The visible top wood layer on an engineered floor is the lamella, typically 2 to 6 mm, bonded to a plywood or high-density fiberboard (HDF) core. Domestic engineered producers — AHF Products, Mullican, Carlisle Wide Plank Floors, Hull Forest Products — source lamellas from Appalachian white oak mills and from their own sawing operations. European lamella suppliers (Rolle in Ukraine, plus producers in Romania, Poland, and Germany) ship sawn and sliced oak lamellas globally, with standard thicknesses 3.3 to 6.4 mm and grades typically tiered as Super Prime, Prime, and Prime Rustic. Asian engineered output from Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia has grown as importers diversified away from China after the Section 301 wave. Lamella cut method (sliced veneer versus sawn) and grade selection drive appearance variance; rift and quartered white oak commands a meaningful premium because few North American mills can run the specialized sawing pattern at scale.

Raw-input pressure points

White oak is the constrained species. Appalachian high-grade white oak lumber log prices are up 12.8% year-over-year into May 2026 per the regional veneer log print, supported by lumber, stave, and veneer demand all pulling on the same raw material. Stave-grade logs continue to trade at a premium over flooring-grade logs as bourbon cooperage demand absorbs the top end of the curve. The Section 232 reciprocal-tariff structure that took effect October 14, 2025, layered up to 20% on engineered flooring imports depending on country of origin (United Kingdom 10%, Japan and Korea 15%, Brazil running 28% all-in with prior duties, much of Southeast Asia at 20%). The combination is a near-term re-shoring tailwind for US engineered producers, while domestic white oak lamella mill capacity has not scaled to absorb the volume that previously came from China and the lower-tariff Asian sources. The capacity wall sits at the sawing, drying, and lamella-cutting steps — standing oak in Appalachia remains adequate to feed a much larger throughput than mills can currently process.

■ WHAT YOU MISSED YESTERDAY

Wednesday, May 13 — business, markets, and the broader economy.

- S&P 500 7,444.25 +0.58% record close, Nasdaq 26,402.34 +1.20% record, Dow 49,761 +0.11%.
- April PPI +1.4% month-over-month / +6.0% year-over-year (largest since December 2022), energy +7.8%, gasoline +15.6%; 10-year Treasury at 4.46%.
- WTI crude $101.02 -1.1% on June contract; Energy Information Administration (EIA) US retail diesel $5.639/gal week ending May 11.
- Senate confirms Kevin Warsh as Fed Chair 54–45; Powell’s last day May 15; first FOMC under Warsh June 16–17.
- CME front-month lumber settled near $575/MBF (thousand board feet); Madison’s Lumber Prices Index $522/mfbm week ending May 8 (-$2 week-over-week).

■ INDUSTRY & COMPANY NEWS

- **Interfor Q1 2026 release scheduled today, May 14** pre-market, with analyst call Friday May 15 at 8 a.m. Pacific. First major Canadian integrated producer to report under the seventh administrative review’s preliminary roughly 24.83% antidumping and countervailing duty (AD/CVD) rate. Nairn Centre and Gogama indefinite curtailments still running log inventory into early-to-mid June, planers through late June.
- **Conifex Q1 2026 release Friday May 15** pre-market + 9 a.m. Pacific call. Mackenzie, British Columbia (BC) sawmill enters a seven-week curtailment starting May 19, target restart in July; the curtailment represents about 25 million board feet of supply impact, driven by log inventory and breakup conditions across the BC Interior.
- **Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Northwest Oregon District Cascades Field Office issued a decision record May 7** authorizing four timber sales analyzed in the Outlaw Ridge Timber Management Environmental Assessment, located in Linn County roughly 2.5 miles south of Lyons, Oregon — advances to the offer-and-sale phase.
- **BLM Coos Bay District Umpqua Field Office Decision Record May 1** for the Windy Bend, Tail Dragger, Mosetown, Stand Back, and Crane N Snow timber sales — approximately 991 acres of commercial thinning and road work in Douglas County, Oregon, under the Late-Successional and Riparian Reserve Restoration Management framework.
- **Bingaman & Son Lumber commissions new processing line** in Pennsylvania, integrating a Piche Inc. bin sorter, a Comact artificial intelligence grading system, and a Samuel, Son & Co. banding station — replacing four legacy machines and reducing manual labor. Bingaman is 35% employee-owned through its employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) and processes 50 million board feet of hardwood annually.

■ BY THE NUMBERS

INDICATOR	VALUE	TREND
CME lumber, front-month settle	$575 / MBF	Range-bound May
Madison's Lumber Prices Index	$522 / mfbm wk May 8	-$2 WoW
WTI crude (Jun contract, May 13)	$101.02	-1.1% DoD
EIA US retail diesel (wk May 11)	$5.639 / gal	Sticky
10-year Treasury yield	4.46%	+5 bps post-PPI
Freddie Mac 30-year PMMS (May 8)	6.37%	+7 bps WoW
FX: CAD/USD · EUR/USD	0.73 · ~1.15	CAD soft, EUR firm

On Deck: Today — Interfor Q1 pre-market; Census April retail sales 8:30 a.m. Tomorrow May 15 — Powell’s final day; Interfor call 8 a.m. PT; Conifex Q1 pre-market + 9 a.m. PT call; West Coast Dry Kiln Association spring meeting Eugene OR. June 16–17 — Warsh’s first FOMC.

■ THE BOTTOM LINE

Three things for your Thursday: wide plank engineered has become the residential default, with the binding capacity wall now at sawing, drying, and lamella-cutting throughput against a Section 232 tariff stack that re-shores demand faster than domestic mills can answer. Warsh inherits the Fed against an April Producer Price Index print of +6.0% year-over-year and +7.8% on final demand energy; the June 16–17 FOMC will set the 2026 housing demand path that flooring purchasing plans are already discounting. Interfor reports this morning and Conifex tomorrow, the first reads on how Canadian integrated producers absorb the seventh administrative review preliminary roughly 24.83% AD/CVD into a CME tape sitting in the mid $570s with diesel pinned at $5.64 and the 10-year at 4.46%.