

The Briefing



Triton Logging's SHARC system removing trees from Lake Volta, Ghana

INNOVATIONS

SAVE A TREE: LOG UNDERWATER

Our thirst for lumber means that each year we lose a swatch of forest about the size of Delaware. Now Triton Logging, based in Victoria, British Columbia, has figured out a novel way to put a dent in deforestation—by harvesting trees not on land but underwater. Until now, logging underwater trees was a dangerous business, with injuries common. But this spring Triton started harvesting ebony, mahogany, and other hardwoods from Ghana's Lake Volta using its patent-pending SHARC system. SHARC is a barge plus custom excavator with a saw on the end that can find, cut, and retrieve trees at depths even greater than 80 feet, using GPS, video, and sonar.

The innovation may mean big money: The small private firm, backed by institutional investors, estimates that 300 million trees worth \$50 billion lie underwater, mostly in lakes formed when dams were built. That's true of the Ghana trees, which were flooded during a 1965 dam construction and are worth some \$1 billion to \$2 billion. (Triton signed a 25-year license with Ghana's government.) —*Brian Dumaine*