



A Traceability System for New Pernambuco Bows

by Steve DeCoux, Lynn Hannings & Ole Kanestrom

Step 1: Inventory wood

It is a top priority to inventory your pernambuco. This must be done to determine the amount and origin of your wood. Fill out an inventory (alliance-international.org/bow-wood-inventory) following the detailed directions in the link. *This creates a base inventory-no wood can be added or subtracted from this list without further proof of origin and an updated inventory.*

It is important to start a file in which you keep all pertinent records including Bills of Sale or other documentation that indicates when and from whom you purchased your wood. In this file, keep your inventory and corresponding photos.

For US makers, it has never been required to register your wood with US Fish & Wildlife. Their recommendations in 2007 were to inventory your wood, take date-stamped photos, have the document notarized and save in a safe place. In 2022, they added that inventories should be periodically updated.

We recommend that Canadian makers also follow US Fish & Wildlife recommendations.

Step 2: Number boards



Boards are individually numbered on the end and weighed. White shellac and a sharpie marker are needed. Photograph numbered boards and *keep all photos as part of your inventory records.*

Start a journal to record all information.

If you are starting out with individual bow blanks cut at an earlier date or purchased as individual bow blanks, just shellac and number them 1, 2, 3.

Since they will not have the A, B, C after the number, as described below, it will be clear that they didn't come from a board.

Step 3: Cut and number individual sticks



Boards are then cut into blanks and photographed. Include in the photo the end-cut which includes the original board number for identification. *Keep all photos as part of your inventory records.*

Shellac and mark the end of each individual bow blank numbered with the board number included; 25A, 25B, 25C, 25D.

Weigh the total number of blanks and subtract the total from the board weight to determine the amount of waste.

Step 4: Purchase an interchangeable steel type



Finished bows, traditionally stamped with the makers name on the side facet, can now additionally be stamped on the bottom facet of the stick under the frog with numbers and letters that trace the bow to its original inventory.

A 1/16th size interchangeable steel impression stamp set can be found on eBay or a 1/16th size interchangeable steel type can be found on Amazon(pictured).

Either can be used to mark the stick. The letters are sharp and do not require heat, needing only a small amount of lampblack on the letters for readability and a light touch with a hammer.

Step 5: Stamping the bottom facet of the bow



The stamp includes the board and bow blank number and date (last 2 numbers of the year the bow was made).

The bow can then be traced from finished bow back to original inventory.

This information is also recorded on the *Declaration of Bow Materials* given to the buyer at time of purchase.

Pictured:

- 295-board number
- 1 bow blank produced from this board, otherwise there would be an A, B, C, etc. after the board number (Ex. 295A, 295B)
- 24- bow completed in 2024

Step 6: Updating inventory



Inventory needs to be updated regularly and notarized. For US and Canadian makers making small numbers of bows, averaging 5-10 bows per year, every few years is sufficient.

It is important that what is recorded in inventory is very close to the actual amount of wood in the maker's shop. If you haven't updated your inventory since 2007, please update it at this time. Be sure to keep all documentation and dated photographs.

A spreadsheet can easily monitor wood purchases or reductions to inventory including bow or wood sales and waste (breakage or unusable sticks due to flaws).

Time is money. If you find it faster and easier, hire someone to count and weigh your pernambuco to create a baseline inventory.

The goal of this article is to present a simple method that could be standardized for use industry-wide. It is estimated that presently 80% of bowmakers in Germany, who have CITES registered stocks of wood, follow similar guidelines.

Makers in other countries using this method would be providing for musicians and buyers the necessary information that tracks the finished bow back to the original pre-convention inventory. It is important that we bring our ideas to CITES as possible solutions, as they work on a feasibility study for the traceability of pernambuco.