

# Forest Health



## Storm Damaged Woodlands

by Jeff Stringer

**S**ignificant storm damage again has impacted Kentucky's woodlands. The devastating tornado that tore through several communities, including West Liberty, in March functionally destroyed approximately 20,000 acres of timber, according to estimates by the Kentucky Division of Forestry. While those woodlands will regenerate, the loss in timber value and dangers associated with wildfire are significant. The Kentucky Timber Damage Web site ([www.kytimberdamage.net](http://www.kytimberdamage.net); see "Where To Get Help")

was created to provide guidance, publications, and presentations on woodland damage from storms of all types. The site is a joint effort of the University of Kentucky, the Department of Forestry, and the Kentucky Division of Forestry and is managed by UK's Forestry Extension group.

Woodland owners who have timber damaged from ice, snow, straight-line winds, tornadoes, and other weather-related natural disasters typically have a number of concerns, including:

### Long-term Woodland Health and Vigor

It is important to determine whether the damage will affect survival of the remaining trees or the regeneration of the woods if the storm eliminated the overstory. What can be done to help?



There are numerous publications available to help you address storm damage on your woodlands. Visit [www.kytimberdamage.net](http://www.kytimberdamage.net) or contact your local extension office for more information.



Tornado damage near Salyersville in 2012. Broken and twisted main stems are common with tornadoes. Tornadoes can reduce salvage values to less than fifty percent of the undamaged timber values.

Photos courtesy: Jeff Stringer



## Immediate and Long-term Financial Loss

Did the storm result in significant enough damage to warrant declaring a loss on my taxes, and how is this handled? Safety. What types of hazards did the storm create in the woods? Each type of storm creates a different set of hazards that can affect your safety in the woods and potentially create conditions that produce severe wildfires.

## Ability to Access and Use the Woodlands

What is the best way to clear woodland roads of debris? What programs can help with these efforts?

Assessment of the woodlands is required to provide woodland owners with knowledge needed to make good decisions regarding a number of the concerns above. The publications available on the Kentucky Timber Damage site can help. Ultimately, foresters often are needed to answer questions such as:

- Is there a fair market-value loss that I need to report on taxes, and how is this done?
- Do my woods need a salvage harvest or not?
- Are there management practices that need to be done to improve the health of my woodlands?

Foresters from the Kentucky Division of Forestry can help with some questions, especially relating to woodland health, overall management, and whether a salvage harvest is warranted. They can also point you to consulting foresters who can directly assess and advise on financial issues and orchestrate a timber harvest.



Photos courtesy: Jeff Stringer

*Above: Ice damage in western Kentucky. Ice can uproot, bend, and break trees however the majority of damage is from damage to smaller tree branches reducing the crown size of trees.*

## Sources of Assistance:

Storm damaged woodlands can create safety issues and anxiety for their owners. Knowing about the information and assistance available is critical. The Kentucky Woodlands Storm Damage website ([www.kytimberdamage.net](http://www.kytimberdamage.net)) is a great place to start—not only does it contain photo guides, a recorded webinar, and publications but it also has links to organizations available to assist including the Kentucky Division of Forestry (<http://forestry.ky.gov>) and the Kentucky Association of Consulting Foresters ([www.kacf.org](http://www.kacf.org)).

## About the Author:

**Jeff Stringer, Ph.D.**, is a extension professor at the University of Kentucky and is responsible for continuing education and research in hardwood silviculture and forest operations. He is also an editor of the Kentucky Woodlands Magazine.

Cooperative Extension Service, Department of Forestry, University of Kentucky, 201 Thomas Poe Cooper Building, Lexington, KY 40546-0073; Phone: 859.257.5994; Fax: 859.323.1031; E-mail: [stringer@uky.edu](mailto:stringer@uky.edu)