

From the Woods...

Kentucky Woodlands Magazine interviewed Mark and Mary Lee of BeeTree Farm to learn about their experiences with small scale logging.

KWM: Please tell us a little about your property and your management objectives.

Mark Lee: BeeTree Farm started out as 40 acres bought in 1982 and now comprises approximately 125 acres of forest lands in Menifee County. The farm is a Kentucky Stewardship Forest and also is an American Tree Farm. Mary and our two children actually lived on the property for over two years in a one-room cabin without running water.

We immediately put a management plan into play and have added to the plan with each of the next three parcels of land obtained. Each parcel had been high grade logged by previous owners, but with timber stand improvement (TSI), regeneration cuts and follow up crop tree release we have a forest composite that is mostly healthy and can stand some selective harvesting throughout the farm.

I do some logging and selling of logs to local mills and I have some firewood markets developed. We have nearly two miles of roads developed throughout the forests, which provide access to much of the farm. We also have several wildlife plots developed, we have been beekeepers since our marriage in 1976, we grow shiitake mushrooms and we have a stocked pond. We are clearing land for the addition of Katahdin sheep also. We hope to provide continued sustenance and income from the farm during our retirement years. We have friends and family hunt, fish, hike, rappel and camp on the farm, making the most of the four components of a Tree Farm: wood, wildlife, water and recreation.

KWM: Have you worked with professional foresters or other natural resource professionals on the management of your property? If so, how?

Mary Lee: Mark is a forester, but despite this we have always used the Division of Forestry for the assistance they provide. We have had wonderful success working with foresters and fish and wildlife personnel over the years. The management plan provided has been a dynamic and growing guide to our objectives and has changed as we added the additional acreages to our Tree Farm. Mark needs the added professional guidance since it can seem overwhelming at times to best manage a Tree Farm and the changes resulting from nature such as ice storms, tornado winds, pine beetles, and now the threat of the emerald ash borer. Also we have used the management incentive programs in the past to offset some of the costs of timber stand improvement and wildlife enhancements.

KWM: What types of forestry related equipment do you have and how are you using it to manage your property?

Mark Lee: Chainsaws are a must. We have several saws, as well as various hand tools, cant hooks, axes, handsaws, etc., that are used less frequently. Chainsaws are the workhorse of a tree farm, providing a means of timber stand improvement, logging, salvaging, clearing roads, and cutting firewood. We also use a debarker attachment to a chainsaw for our sawmill.

Also we have a four-wheel drive tractor with front-end loader and a logging winch that provide invaluable opportunities for working a Tree Farm. There are a myriad of attachments available for the tractor for different applications. We have a brushhog, cutting harrow and a planter to keep up the food plots. We also own a Cook's portable mill and we plan to have a home built from wood from our woods. We also provide limited custom sawing.

KWM: What advice do you have for woodland owners that are considering purchasing and using forestry related equipment on their farm?

Mark Lee: Get a management plan from the Division of Forestry and put the plan to work as soon as possible. Your plan and objectives should provide some idea of the equipment to best meet your needs. And learn how to safely use the equipment, since most of the equipment used on a tree farm can lead to serious injury and/or death. Go to field days and consider becoming a Master Logger for your farm. Working safely on a tree farm beats a workout at a gym any day for our money and health.

