



KDF Corner

by Pam Snyder

The Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) has been extremely busy this past year. While some employees were deployed to fight wildland fires across the United States, others remained in the state to continue providing technical assistance to woodland owners while promoting our agency's mission. Part of that mission includes being prepared for the unknowns out in our forests. KDF employees receive Incident Command (IC) Preparedness training that can be applied to various types of emergency and natural disaster situations. Many forestry staff members hold IC qualified positions as sawyers, saw teams, dozer operators, firefighters, and other specialized jobs. These staff members can be quickly mobilized to provide emergency assistance.

Unfortunately, some recent events hit all too close to home. On December 10, 2021 many Kentuckians experienced firsthand the incredible devastation that occurred from an unimaginable night of tornadoes. We mourn the loss of all Kentuckians who were tragically lost, and we will forever remember them. Immediately after the first tornadoes struck, the Division was on scene to assist the Kentucky Emergency Management Operations Center (EOC) in Frankfort.

As many Kentuckians anxiously waited for the storms to pass, the EOC sent communications out to the Division Director and Forest Protection Branch. Before dawn, the Division had mobilized saw teams, dozer operators, and more staff to the EOC. The division sent five saw teams to Graves County, two saw teams and two dozers operating to Marshall County, four saw teams to Hopkins County, one saw team to Fulton County, three saw teams to Muhlenberg County, and one saw team to Taylor County. Over an 11-day period, 46 KDF employees helped with tornado response and cleanup. The teams sawed limbs, trees, and removed debris to open roads in many communities across western Kentucky. Some employees were even housed at the Pennyriple State Forest Training Facility and the Pennyriple State Park Resort Lodge to aid in the cleanup.

In the weeks following the tornadoes, calls came flooding into the division requesting assistance and guidance on what to do with their damaged woodlands. The Division Director facilitated communication between multiple partners, includ-

ing the University of Kentucky's Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, Kentucky Woodland Owners Association, Kentucky Forest Industries Association, USDA Forest Service, USDA Farm Service Agency, and USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. An internal division management team worked with the partners to develop a coordinated response, including tornado cost-share assistance fliers for woodland owners, aerial detection flights-GIS mapping projects, and postings on the Division's Facebook page.

As many of us know, Mayfield, Kentucky, was devastated by a large, destructive tornado, resulting in unimaginable damage that affected the entire community. The division selected Mayfield as host of the annual Kentucky Arbor Day celebration at Harmon Park on April 1, 2022.

The Arbor Day event provided a sense of hope, resiliency, and support for the Mayfield community. This article is dedicated to those forestry employees who lost everything in the tornado, to those forestry employees who assisted with tornado cleanup, and all Kentuckians affected by the devastating events of December 10, 2021, a day that we will never forget.



Photos courtesy: Pam Snyder

KDF employee clearing down woody debris in western Kentucky after tornadoes devastated the area.

About the author: **Pam Snyder**, is the Forest Management Chief with the Kentucky Division of Forestry and works on a variety of forest management needs for private landowners, farmers, and governmental agencies. She is one of the editors of the Kentucky Woodlands Magazine.

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