

by Jack Rentz, KWOA President

Most woodland owners do not necessarily think of their property in terms of the benefits provided to society as a whole. However; when you consider the facts, the benefits are significant. In the Kentucky Forestry Economic Impact Report 2012-2013 published by the University of Kentucky, two key numbers show that the forestry sector provided more than 51,000 jobs and \$9.9 billion to the Kentucky economy in 2012. Kentucky forests also have a large, positive impact on the environment. Forests help improve air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide and improve water quality by reducing erosion and sedimentation. Forests also provide food and shelter for wildlife, and provide attractive spots for recreation.

One of the positions of the Kentucky Woodland Owners Association (KWOA) is that these benefits should be reflected in public policies as they relate to woodland ownership. These policies include real estate tax assessment at

the county level, management and educational programs at the state level, and project funding at the federal level. In order for current and future generations of woodland owners to continue to provide the public benefits described above and at the same time manage their properties in a sustainable fashion, it is essential that support for woodland ownership be continued and enhanced.

The public benefits of responsible woodland ownership have been well documented. The story is compelling, and there is a need for it to be communicated accurately and regularly to those who influence, make, or implement public policy. This communication is especially important in the current environment of increased competition for a decreasing supply of public resources. This advocacy role has been undertaken by KWOA. Three recent examples of advocacy on behalf of woodland owners are cited below.

First, KWOA has supported efforts to have the unique aspects of woodland ownership reflected in the manner in which county property valuation administrators assess forest properties. The cash rent formula used by most counties does not properly take into consid-

eration the long-term nature of timberland ownership. In the most recent legislative session KWOA members encouraged the introduction of HB 111, which addressed this issue. The bill was not enacted into law, but the advocacy activities continue.

Second, earlier this year the Commonwealth of Kentucky contemplated not rebuilding the Kentucky Division of Forestry seedling nursery in Morgan County after the devastating 2012 tornado. The loss of the nursery would have had a negative impact on Kentucky woodland owners. A decision was made to rebuild the nursery, at least partially as a result of numerous communications from KWOA members and a meeting with state officials.

Third, in May two KWOA officers Henry Duncan and Bob Gossett participated in an American Tree



Henry Duncan (left) and Bob Gossett (right) met with Kentucky Representative Hal Rodgers in Washington, D.C. to garner support for Kentucky woodland owners and the whole forestry community.

Farm System “fly in” in Washington, D.C. This was done at no cost to KWOA, and provided an opportunity to tell our story to lawmakers and others who influence public policy.

We invite readers to find out more about KWOA at our Web site, www.kwoa.net, or by contacting us at info@kwoa.net. There undoubtedly will be additional opportunities for advocacy, and we invite your ideas and involvement.

Join KWOA today by visiting our Website or by calling us at 606.876.3423.

For more information log on to www.kwoa.net