

# Certification Isn't A Dirty Word

[www.kwoa.net](http://www.kwoa.net)

**I**n the past couple of years the new “buzzword” in the world of forestry seems to be forest certification. My first knee-jerk reaction was, “Oh no!!! I don’t want the government telling me what I can and can’t do with my own forest!” I tend to be a very cynical person and don’t blindly believe everything that I see and hear. I like to research and learn about new things before I form an opinion, so I started my journey to learn about forest certification. I started reading everything I could find online and in print about forest certification. I attended seminars and meetings about forest certification.

I don’t proclaim to be an “expert” concerning forest certification, but here are some of the things that I have learned:

**FOREST CERTIFICATION IS TOTALLY VOLUNTARY.** No one is making anyone get his or her forests certified. Forest certification isn’t for everyone, and no government agency is requiring woodland owners to get their forests certified.

**FOREST CERTIFICATION INVOLVES MANAGING YOUR FOREST IN A SUSTAINABLE MANNER.** It doesn’t mean that you can’t harvest your timber. It just means that you will conduct your forest management activities in a sustainable fashion using established best management practices.

**THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT CERTIFYING GROUPS.** All of the certification organizations have the same main goal – making sure that forests are managed in a sustainable, environmentally sound fashion. Some of the groups require a large monetary commitment from the landowner to obtain certification. Others require no monetary expense of the landowner. It’s up to the landowner to decide the program that fits his/her needs.

**I ALREADY HAD A CERTIFIED TREE FARM!!!!** I utilize the free services of the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) and have a written stewardship plan that was created for me by my KDF service forester. I follow that management plan and use best management practices on my Tree Farm. I meet the standards of the American Tree Farm System and registered my farm with the American Tree Farm System. That makes my woodlands a certified Tree Farm under the standards of the American Tree Farm System.

There are many woodland owners in Kentucky who have

stewardship plans, perform the best management practices outlined in those plans, and actually qualify for forest certification status. Many woodland owners just aren’t aware that their sound forestry practices make them eligible for forest certification.

At the present time, the timber markets are not paying a higher price for logs from certified forests. At the present time, the only “monetary” advantage of having a certified tree farm is the fact that your markets are increased and that you are eligible to sell your carbon credits.

Forest certification is just one of the many dynamic things occurring in the world of forestry. It’s hard for the average woodland owner to keep up with all the changes. One of the primary missions of Kentucky Woodland Owners Association (KWOA) is to promote healthy sustainable forests in Kentucky through education of woodland owners. One of the educational opportunities that KWOA provides on a yearly basis is our annual meeting. This year the KWOA Annual Meeting will be held at Carter Caves State Resort Park in Carter County, KY March 31 - April 1. KWOA invites the “experts” in many different aspects of forest management to speak and provide field demonstrations. Participants also have a chance to gain insight and share experiences with their fellow woodland owners.



Photo courtesy: Billy Thomas

*Woodland owners get updates on forestry programs and opportunities at the 2010 KWOA annual meeting. In the image, Dr. Andrew Stainback, of the UK Department of Forestry, discusses Kentucky woodland property tax issues.*

If joining our group or attending our annual meeting sounds interesting, please go to our web site, [www.kwoa.net](http://www.kwoa.net) for additional details.

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