Kentucky Master Loggers

Photo courtesy: Jeff Stringer

by Jeff Stringer

The Kentucky Master Logger (KML) program was initiated in 1992 as a voluntary statewide program of continuing education for the logging industry. It was, and still is, a cooperative program of the Department of Forestry at the University of Kentucky, the Kentucky Division of Forestry, and the Kentucky Forest Industries Association. The goal of the program is to provide up-to-date information that can improve the safety and the professionalism of loggers in Kentucky.

Voluntary and Mandatory

The program is voluntary. Participants—usually loggers, but anyone may participate— currently pay $85 per person to enroll in the introductory three-day program; after successfully completing the course, they attain master logger status. In 1998, the Kentucky Legislature enacted the Kentucky Forest Conservation Act. This act requires every commercial logging job using mechanized skidding to have a Kentucky Master Logger on-site and in charge of the operation. In the summer of 2000, the Kentucky Division of Forestry started inspections of logging jobs to ensure that a master logger was present and that the best management practices (BMPs) to protect water quality were in use.

Every three years, master loggers must obtain six continuing education credits (CECs) and apply for continuation of their master logger status. Anyone not completing the CECs and re-applying in this time frame must go back through the three-day introductory program.

What the Program Is and Is Not

The KML program is an awareness and education program. It provides both indoor and outdoor classes focusing on laws and regulations, water quality protection, and logging safety.

Kentucky Master Logger Statistics

Since 1992, there has been 154 introductory classes with over 6,707 individuals completing KML training. As of 2006:

- 3,528 active Kentucky Master Loggers
- 1,400 logging firms in Kentucky
- Kentucky Master Loggers harvest 764 million board feet of timber annually owned by 8,000 woodland owners
- $115 million of timber income to these woodland owners
- Kentucky Master Loggers protect 1,298 perennial and 3,577 intermittent streams annually

Participants are tested on these subjects to determine what they have learned while in the classes. What they do with the information is up to each individual. This means that the KML program certifies only that a logger with KML status has been to education classes in safety, water quality, and laws and regulations.

The KML program does *not* certify the performance of the logger. This fact has occasionally confused woodland owners and sometimes the general public.

and Woodland Owners

What Woodland Owners Need to Know

Woodland owners need to know several key pieces of information about Kentucky Master Loggers and laws relating to loggers. All commercial logging operations must have master loggers on-site and in charge. Woodland owners engaging in a timber harvest would be wise to ensure that the logging firm has a master logger; if not, the operation could be shut down until a master logger is in place. Also, all jobs must use BMPs to protect water quality including:

- leaving some trees around streams,
- keeping treetops out of streams,
- ensuring that roads and skid trails have water control structures on them, and
- revegetating roads, trails, and landings that are either steep or close to streams.

Photo courtesy: Jeff Stringer

If a particular logging firm or individual has been deficient in the use of BMPs to a significant degree on past jobs, they may very well have a "bad actor" designation. This designation is given to a master logger and/or a logging firm that has failed to abide by the use of BMPs to protect water quality. You can check to see whether an individual is a Kentucky Master Logger and whether a person or a firm is a bad actor by using the official Master Logger Web site found at www.masterlogger.org. Once on the site, click on "Find Master Loggers," and you can search for master loggers by name, county, and other options such as whether the logger is a bad actor. A full list of bad actors including logging firms is also listed on the "Find Master Loggers" page.

Woodland Owner Responsibility

It is important that woodland owners realize they must have a written Agriculture Water Quality Plan for their property and make sure that the plan is implemented. This plan must specific what BMPs will be used to protect water quality. The landowner must be sure that the logger uses BMPs or else the landowner can be held responsible for the water quality problems. "Forestry Water Quality Plan" an extension publication (FOR-96 available at www.ukforestry.org) of the University of Kentucky provides woodland owners with all they need to easily develop a water quality plan for their property.

Photo courtesy: Jeff Stringer

Master Logger Courses

From the inception of the KML program in 1992 through the end of 2006, 154 three-day introductory programs have been conducted with more than 6,707 individuals successfully completing the course. Also, 168 one-day CEC courses have been taught since 1996 with more than 5,297 loggers attending. At the end of 2006, there were 3,528 active Kentucky Master Loggers. The majority are from Kentucky, but there are Kentucky Master Loggers from 14 states other than Kentucky and more than 150 from Tennessee.

For more information on the program,
visit www.masterlogger.org or contact:
Kentucky Master Logger Program,
Department of Forestry, University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40546-0073
859.257.6230 or
E-mail: kml@uky.edu

Author:
Jeff Stringer, Ph.D.

Hardwood Extension Specialist at the University of Kentucky (UK) Department of Forestry. He is responsible for continuing education and research in hardwood silviculture and forest operations. His specialty is hardwood timber production and forestry best management practices. He is also editor of the Kentucky Woodlands Magazine.

Cooperative Extension Service, UK, 213 Thomas Poe Cooper Building, Lexington, KY 40546-0073, E-mail: stringer@uky.edu, Phone: 859.257.5994, Fax: 859.323.1031