

Local Forestry Organizations: Why You Should Be Interested

By Vernon "Tad" Norris

You may have read recent articles about emerging local forestry organizations; if you are like many people, you may have thought to yourself, "Now there is something else that I'm interested in but really don't have the time to worry with."

If this is the case, the following facts may help convince you to make the time.

- Forestry is the "invisible" giant among all of Kentucky's land-use activities. Nearly half of all of Kentucky is covered with forestland (some 12 million acres). Unfortunately, it is not considered as glamorous, romantic, or important as horses, bourbon, or tobacco.
- Of Kentucky's 120 counties, 112 have one or more wood-utilizing companies. The annual payroll for these industries exceeds \$800 million.
- Everyone in Kentucky is just one step away from the forest industry. Many of us have a friend or family member who derives their livelihood as either a logger or worker in a primary or secondary wood industry.
- Kentucky's forests are a varied, constantly changing, and inherently renewable resource that requires management if society's demands (be they wood, habitat, or recreation) are to be met.
- Learning about "how a forest works" is just plain fun. No other resource is more directly tied to Kentucky's past and present. Kentuckians are perhaps more proud of their roots and heritage than folks from any other part of the country. Who has a dry eye after hearing a recording of Happy Chandler singing "My Old Kentucky Home"? Who hasn't heard the old joke about Kentuckians already in Heaven coming back to the old home place for the weekend? Don't we owe it to our forefathers and the generations to come to learn about and properly care for this unmatched, God-given bounty?
- Forest management can put dollars in your pocket while helping you reach whatever goals you may have for your forest.
- 78 percent of Kentucky's forests are



Photo courtesy: Kentucky Division of Forestry

owned by only 10 percent of Kentucky's citizens (non-industrial, private landowners). To avoid a "tyranny of the majority" in land-use policies and laws, the minority must have a strong and loud voice in the public arena. Should folks who own no forestland tell those who do how to manage their property?

Established groups are currently addressing and working on solutions to various problems, including forestland taxation, forest health, the invasion of exotic species, and the lack of markets for low-quality logs (to name just a few).

If you would like to participate in an already established local forestry organization or if you live in an area that needs to have one, please consider taking action.

These groups are strongly supported by the Kentucky Division of Forestry, University of Kentucky's Department of Forestry, the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, the Kentucky Division of Conservation, the Kentucky Woodland Owner's Association, the Kentucky Forest Industries Association, and Farm Bureau.

Please contact either Tad Norris (Division of Forestry, 800.866.0555) or Billy Thomas (Cooperative Extension Service, 859.257.9153) for more information.

Note: Acreages, dollar amounts, and percentages were either taken directly from or derived from University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service publication FOR-53 by Thomas, Stringer, Conners, Hill, and Barnes.

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