

Making It Local!

by Billy Thomas

Forestry and natural resource organizations in Kentucky have been meeting over the last few years regarding how to best address the challenges facing woodland owners (see Karen Marshall's article in this issue). One of the reoccurring discussions has been the concept of fostering local woodland or forestry organizations that would facilitate more local involvement in forestry-related activities across Kentucky.

These local organizations would be open to everyone, based on local needs, and would be supported by the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, the Kentucky Woodland Owners Association, the Kentucky Division of Forestry, the Kentucky Division of Conservation, and Kentucky Farm Bureau.

Several states have been working on this idea, and we can learn much from their experiences. Typically, a local organization develops when a core group of individuals and organizations in a particular area comes together to discuss the potential for developing a local organization in that area. If the group determines it has potential and is a worthwhile effort, then a public meeting is held in the area to share the concept. From there, the direction of the local organization is determined by the local organization. They will determine the needs for officers, activities to be pursued, and the frequency of meetings. This can vary from organization to organization.

Local organizations are often made up of woodland owners, loggers, forest industry representatives, local elected officials, supporting agency personnel, and anyone else interested in forestry. Several of these organizations already exist in Kentucky and have been working on woodland field days and educational activities as well as working with their county Agricultural Development Boards to secure funding for forestry-related activities. In a state that is nearly half forested with more than 423,000 woodland owners and a wood industry with an annual economic impact of \$7 to \$8 billion, we believe that there is room for many more.

Author:
Billy Thomas

Extension Forester with the University of Kentucky Department of Forestry. He works primarily on nonindustrial private forest issues and is the associate editor for *Kentucky Woodlands Magazine*.

Cooperative Extension Service, Department of Forestry, University of Kentucky, 213 Thomas Poe Cooper Bldg., Lexington, KY 40546-0073, E-mail: billy.thomas@uky.edu, Phone: 859.257.9153, Fax: 859.323.1031



KWOA

Five state partners are cooperating in the development of local woodland or forestry organizations. The Kentucky Woodland Owners Association (KWOA) convened a meeting of agency representatives and other interested parties on May 18 in Frankfort to further define the structure and function of these organizations. Representatives of the State Farm Bureau, Kentucky Division of Forestry, University of Kentucky, KWOA, and Soil Conservation Districts provided input on the structure and function of county/regional woodland or forestry organizations.

Less than two out of 10 woodland owners actively manage their forest. Privately owned woodlands are not producing the products, values, or environmental amenities it could. Joe Ball, KWOA president, reminded the meeting participants of the daily struggles at the local level for woodland owners in dealing with sawmills, regulations, and pricing. A KWOA member described how assistance from the association and the university afforded a favorable outcome in his dispute with the local property valuation assessment over taxation of his woodland acreage. Participants concurred that local organizations have great potential to influence public policy from the ground

up. The participants agreed that local organizations should be "independent local groups, with varying levels of organization, created to address woodland and forestry issues in their area."

Issues that local organizations could address include forest health, fire protection, timber management, hardwoods regeneration, marketing of forest products, incentives for woodlands investment, forest wildlife, woodland owners' educational needs, and conservation easements.

Each participating organization has designated a point person to serve on a steering committee related to local organizations and is in the process of developing a list of counties and individuals who may be willing to work on the creation of local organizations. The steering committee will be meeting soon to address issues related to the creation and support of local organizations in Kentucky. Watch for future articles in *Kentucky Woodlands Magazine* for more information about local organizations.

Author:
Karen Marshall

Board member for the Kentucky Woodland Owners Association's northern zone and editor of its quarterly newsletter.

Karen Marshall, 3740 highway 330, Owenton, KY 40359, E-mail: hickorybend@kih.net, Phone: 502.484.0332