

Forest Opportunities Initiative

Photo by Thomas G. Barnes

by David Jackson

Since 1976, the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED) has developed partnerships with individuals and businesses to create economic opportunities that work for the people and communities of Appalachian Kentucky. MACED has spent many years working to enhance benefits derived from the region's diverse forests.

Throughout most of its 30-year history, MACED has made investments in Kentucky's wood-related enterprises and conducted considerable applied research on issues involving wood product marketing and forest certification.

MACED will soon launch its Forest Opportunities Initiative (FOI), a new approach to practicing forestry designed specifically for private, nonindustrial landowners in Appalachian Kentucky. Its primary goal is to help create sustainably managed "working forests" that promote increases in economic value and forest health, consistently generate ongoing income to landowners, enhance wildlife habitat, and protect soil and water quality. The Initiative is based on MACED making available to landowners a combination of loan capital, high quality forestry services, and educational outreach activities. MACED will offer these services as a compliment to existing forms of assistance provided by the state, consulting foresters and other associations representing forest landowners.

MACED will employ site specific long-term management strategies that support forest health and vigor while favoring tree species whose economic value is relatively high. Uneven-age silvicultural methods that emphasize retention of a healthy, fully functioning residual stand will be used to help achieve this objective. Dr. David Jackson was hired in May 2006 to lead the newly emerging program. Jackson brings more than 25 years of forestry experience acquired in industrial and academic settings.

MACED will inventory the economic value and ecological health of landowners' forest properties. Based on these assessments, loan capital may be extended to landowners interested in better managing and conserving their forests. Eligibility for the loan will be contingent on the landowner's willingness to follow a forest management plan prepared specifically for them by MACED or its partners. Loans will be tailored uniquely to each individual property.

Loan terms are unlikely to extend beyond 10 years but will depend on each site. Ordinarily, loan recipients may use their funds in whatever manner best fits their individual circumstances. For each landowner, MACED will plan and administer a timber harvest used to repay a landowner's loan. Timber harvest and other stand improvement activities will also be used as tools to help create future stand conditions supporting a sustainably managed, working forest.

MACED believes there is a substantial number of forest landowners in eastern Kentucky who will choose to practice sustainable, long-term forest management if they are provided the necessary financial and professional assistance needed to do so. Among MACED's goals is the desire to help such owners restore the overall health, integrity, and value of their forest properties for themselves and future generations.

Timberland owners in Appalachian Kentucky are encouraged to contact David Jackson at MACED's office in Berea (telephone: 859-986-2373; e-mail: djackson@maced.org or www.maced.org) and discuss in greater detail how MACED's Forest Opportunities Initiative can be applied to their forest properties.

Author:

David J. Jackson, Ph.D.

Forestry Program Manager with MACED. He is in charge of administering the Forest Opportunities Initiative program.

MACED, 433 Chestnut St., Berea, KY

E-mail: djackson@maced.org; Phone: 859.986.2373; Fax: 859.986.1299