

Tornado Decimates Morgan County Tree Nursery



*All photos courtesy:
Kentucky Division of Forestry*

The Morgan County Nursery was all but destroyed by the same tornado that hit West Liberty on March 2. This 50-acre nursery, located only a few miles west of West Liberty on the Licking River, is one of two seedling nurseries owned by the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF).

Most of the buildings, including the main office, two barns, equipment-storage building, and a cooler containing over 400,000 seedlings, were decimated. State and federal vehicles, fire-suppression equipment, a Firewise education-

al trailer, several tractors, tree lifters and mowers, and a refrigerated trailer full of seedlings packed for shipment also sustained significant damage. "Though the loss is extensive and the scene is devastating, we're already making plans to salvage as much as we can and begin rebuilding," said director Leah W. MacSwords.

Despite the debris and flattened trees scattered in the nursery's valley and along the adjacent Licking River, most of the seedling beds and a research plot with hybrid American chestnut trees remain intact. KDF

organized a crew of approximately 30 division employees from nearby districts to join with the nursery employees in a recovery and salvage effort.

The nursery will remain closed to the public until further notice. For more information about the state nurseries and the recovery effort at the Morgan County Nursery, please contact KDF at 1-800-866-0555, or visit the Division of Forestry at <http://forestry.ky.gov/> and click on their Facebook link.



Numerous vehicles, buildings, and pieces of equipment were destroyed in the tornado.



Many seedlings (white bags) were packaged and awaiting shipment when the tornado struck. While some seedling bags were recovered others were too damaged or lost. Seedling bags were found as far away as West Virginia.