

# KENTUCKY WOODLANDS NEWSLETTER

"BRINGING PEOPLE AND WOODLAND SUSTAINABILITY TOGETHER"



Summer 2026



Portia and Jerry Brown hosting a Kentucky Woodland Owners Short Course in 2018.



PHOTOS COURTESY : RENÉE WILLIAMS

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- President's Letter
- KWOA Communications Committee formed
- KWOA Leadership reflections
- 2025 Kentucky Tree Farmers of The Year
- Kentucky Woodland Owners Association Annual Conference

## KWOA Leadership Reflections

by Portia Brown

### Early Involvement

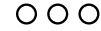
My years on the KWOA board since 2013, and as an officer since 2016, have shown me how deeply this organization matters—not only to those who lead it, but to the future of Kentucky's woodlands. I began quietly, often unsure whether I knew enough to speak up. Over time, that uncertainty gave way to a stronger sense of responsibility, shaped by the sincerity of KWOA's leaders and founding members and by the shared conviction that Kentucky's forest resources require both economic stewardship and environmental care.

### Operational Growth and Partnerships

As I became more grounded in that mission, I also saw more clearly the challenges facing our woodlands and how many landowners were still not connected to KWOA or engaged in sustainable management. That realization pushed me to think more intentionally about how the organization could broaden its reach and strengthen its operations. Over the past decade, KWOA has made important strides in both areas. We moved from paper-based systems for dues, newsletters, and correspondence to more efficient digital tools, improving communication, recordkeeping, budget planning, coordination, and visibility across the state.



## A Message From Your President



### Officers

President: Scott Taylor, Boyle and Casey counties  
Vice President: Jimmie Sizemore, Clay  
Secretary: Jack Rentz, Lewis  
Treasurer: Jerry Brown, Shelby  
Assistant Secretary: Jerry Schneider, Kenton  
Immediate Past President: Portia Brown, Grayson  
Past President: Doug McLaren, Breathitt

### Board of Directors

#### North

Jerry Schneider, Kenton  
Rodney Bruce, Greenup  
Preston Lacy, Scott

#### East

Jimmie Sizemore, Clay  
Will Bowling, Clay  
Jack Stickney, Estill

#### Central

Greg Kuhns, Bullitt  
Lanny Copeland, Warren  
Harry Pelle, Taylor

#### West

Mike Smith, Ohio  
James Vincent, Henderson  
Mike Devoto, Hopkins

### Board Members at Large

Steve Perry, Henry  
David Wise, Trimble  
Karen Marshall, Owen  
Frank Hicks, Greenup  
Gail Lincoln, Fleming, Greenup, Carter, and Rowan

### Emeritus

Steve Perry, Henry  
Karen Marshall, Owen  
Henry Duncan, Logan  
Frank Hicks, Greenup

### Kentucky Woodlands Newsletter

Founding Editor: Don Girton (1993-2005)  
Past Editor: Karen Marshall (2005-2024)  
Current Editor: Bill Furbee

*Kentucky Woodlands Newsletter* is published quarterly. We welcome submission of articles and information for inclusion in the newsletter subject to review and approval by the executive committee.

Submit copy to:

Bill Furbee, Editor, [editor@kwoa.net](mailto:editor@kwoa.net)

Summer is here and the weather is a little bit warmer than it was back in February, here in Kentucky. It seems like we're always working on big jobs in the woods this time of year on our farm; and those "big" jobs always seem to revolve around management of our forests. In our last newsletter, I spoke about how management of our forests is "a complex endeavor" — that it takes a concerted intellectual effort to learn how to manage a forest, and a driven personal effort to make that management happen. That intellectual component may be the most difficult to achieve.

Since most of us, as landowners, have little or no formal training as a forester, we are at a disadvantage when it comes to making the right decisions about which specific management actions to implement on our farms. We just don't have the education, training, and knowledge that a forester has.

So what are we to do? How do we acquire a sound knowledge base that allows us to develop our own management philosophy and skillset, so we can turn our forest land into a sustainable forest?

My first recommendation is to work with either a KDF forester or a private forester. These individuals are educated and trained in the management of forests; they can be your guide to making management decisions, and they can help you with the implementation of management practices.



As you progress in your working relationship with a forester, you will find he or she will be imparting knowledge to you, the client. In my opinion, it's critical that a forest landowner works with a forest professional, a trained and educated service forester, or consulting forester.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**

# A Message From Your President

continued from page 2



My second recommendation is to acquire some helpful books regarding forest management for landowners. You should have a book or two on the philosophy of managing your forest as a private landowner, and you need a book or two that cover technical management skills and practices — again, written for a landowner.

My third recommendation is to talk with other forest landowners. Generally, we like to talk about our forests and what we are doing. You may even find a forest landowner who can serve as a mentor.

I would also advise you to take a broad approach to your knowledge base. A forest is a complex biological system. It's very difficult (if not impossible) to have a healthy, well managed forest without managing the whole forest and all of its components. Learn about silviculture, wildlife, water and wild flowers, and other non-timber plants. Draw your circle big on a quest for knowledge.

I strongly encourage you to take on this effort of learning more about your forest. Be sure to discuss the things you are learning with your professional forester; you'll be amazed at how quickly your understanding of a forest will grow.

*Scott Taylor*

-Scott Taylor  
KWOA President



## Scott's Recommendations For Your Library

**Ethan Tapper:** *How to Love a Forest*

**Aldo Leopold :** *A Sand County Almanac*

**Paul Catanzaro and Anthony D'Amato:** *Tending Your Forest*

**Anne Larkin Hansen, Mike Severson, Dennis L. Waterman:**  
*Managing Your Woods*

## KWOA Communications Committee Formed

The Kentucky Woodland Owners Association (KWOA) has established a new Communications Committee to further strengthen communication and engagement with members across the Commonwealth. The committee will be led by Mike Devoto, Western Kentucky Board Member, and Portia Brown, Past President, and was formed with the goal of ensuring members remain informed and connected to all aspects of KWOA activities and programs.

The committee will provide oversight and coordination for four key communication functions within the organization: The Wood Post monthly publication, the quarterly KWOA newsletter led by Bill Furbee, the organization's website, and broader member outreach and communications initiatives. Working together, the committee hopes to improve the consistency, quality, and timeliness of information shared with woodland owners throughout Kentucky.

Through these efforts, KWOA aims to strengthen member engagement while continuing to support education, stewardship, advocacy, and the exchange of ideas among Kentucky's woodland owners and forestry community.



## Looking Back

### *Seasonal and Significant Moments in Woodland History*

June 4, 1897

#### **Forest Management Act**

Passed by Congress, the Forest Management Act established a legal framework for management of federal forest reserves.

July 1907

#### **National Forests**

Federal forest reserves were officially renamed National Forests on July 1, 1907.

July 28

#### **World Nature Conservation Day**

Created to raise awareness about the importance of natural resources, this global initiative has been celebrated annually since the early 1970s.

August 1886

#### **Yellowstone National Park**

The first official dispatch of wildland firefighters occurred at Yellowstone National Park in August of 1886, ushering in a new era of proactive timberland management which continues to this day.

continued from page 1

## KWOA Leadership Reflections

by Portia Brown

Those operational improvements also helped the board grow in capacity and perspective. What began as a shared commitment to sustaining forest resources became a broader effort to educate landowners, build partnerships, and think more strategically about KWOA's role and long-term direction. As a result, the organization expanded its educational and advocacy work and became better positioned to contribute to larger efforts in landowner education and forest stewardship.

### Emerging Challenges

As opportunities to expand our work have grown, so have the pressures that limit our ability to respond. Some are external: workforce shortages, instability in government programs, reduced agency capacity, shifting wood markets, and the continuing fragmentation of rural lands. Others are internal: slow membership growth, an aging landowner base and board, the absence of full-time staff, and the realities of managing a complex statewide effort through volunteer leadership. These challenges come at a time when Kentucky's woodlands need steady attention and long-term care to more fully align economic and environmental resources.

### Looking Ahead

This year, in order to pursue my artistic interests and attend to some health concerns, I stepped down from the presidency, though I continue to serve on KWOA's executive committee. The organization now feels to me like a small enterprise in transition—too valuable to stand still and yet not fully resourced for the growth it is capable of. Even so, I believe KWOA has built a strong foundation. We have strengthened operations, expanded partnerships, and increased our capacity for education and advocacy. The challenge now is to sustain that momentum, broaden engagement, and prepare for the next chapter of leadership and service.



Portia Brown

## HELP SUPPORT US



[www.kwoa.net/donate](http://www.kwoa.net/donate)



## JOIN KWOA

or Renew Your Membership by visiting:

SCAN ME



[www.kwoa.net/joinrenew-kwoa](http://www.kwoa.net/joinrenew-kwoa)

# 2025 Kentucky Tree Farmers of The Year

by Clay Turner, Forest Stewardship Coordinator, Kentucky Division of Forestry with contributions by Portia Brown and Christopher Will

The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) recognizes the stewardship of family and community forest owners. Founded in Washington in 1941, it grew from an industrial timber program into a national network that now includes 42 state Tree Farm programs. In Kentucky, the program promotes private stewardship that supports forests, watersheds, and wildlife habitat, with long-standing support from the Kentucky Forest Industries Association and inspections provided by the Kentucky Division of Forestry.

Portia and Jerry Brown are the 2025 Kentucky Tree Farmers of the Year and one of two regional finalists for the North Central region! They manage two certified tree farms in Grayson and Shelby counties.

Grayson Woods is a 120-acre woodland in Grayson County acquired by Portia's mother in the 1940's that has been in the ATFS system for 70 years. The Browns have built on her efforts and continue that legacy through sustainable management, conservation leadership, and community engagement, helping ensure Kentucky forests remain healthy for future generations.

In the years the Browns have owned the land, they worked with their local Natural Resource Conservation Service and County Conservation District to implement numerous management practices, such as invasive species control, pine harvests, non-commercial tree thinning, and improved stream crossings.

Their dedication to sustainability extends beyond Grayson Woods. They purchased a 143-acre farm in Shelby County in 1996; it became a Tree Farm in 1997. The Browns engaged in the same intensive management on their new farm and went further to promote conservation, including native grasses and more recently participation the Independent Seed Orchard Project to support white oak regeneration. They hosted classes and trainings for conservation-minded partners, groups, and organizations. The Browns applied science-based conservation practices, while also sharing their knowledge and experiences with others.

It is because of these tremendous efforts to improve their woodlands and forests across Kentucky that Portia and Jerry have been honored this year. A field day will be held in Grayson County in the late summer/early fall to celebrate this recognition. The Browns are exemplary woodland owners and excellent representatives for everything both Tree Farm and KWOA stand for.



Portia Brown, Jerry Brown, and Chris Will

# Kentucky Woodland Owners Association Annual Conference



October 19 – 21, 2026

Please mark your calendars and plan to join us for the upcoming Kentucky Woodland Owners Association (KWOA) Annual Conference to be held October 19–21, 2026, in Berea, Kentucky. Conference activities will take place at the Berea College Forestry.

## **Outreach Center:**

Berea College Forestry Outreach Center  
2047 Big Hill Road  
Berea, KY 40403



A block of rooms has been reserved for conference attendees for both Monday and Tuesday nights at the following locations:

## **Holiday Inn Express Berea**

219 Paint Lick Road  
Berea, KY 40403

## **Boone Tavern Hotel**

100 Main Street  
Berea, KY 40404

Additional hotel booking details and conference registration information will be provided soon.

Please note that one day of the conference will include a field day in the woods, so attendees are encouraged to dress appropriately for outdoor conditions and walking on uneven terrain. The KWOA General Meeting will begin Tuesday morning. We look forward to seeing you in Berea for an outstanding conference filled with fellowship, education, and woodland stewardship opportunities.

**KENTUCKY WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION**

P.O. Box 1201

Frankfort, KY 40602



# 2026 KWOA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**SAVE THE DATES**  
**OCTOBER 19-21**

**BEREA COLLEGE FORESTRY OUTREACH CENTER**