

KENTUCKY WOODLANDS NEWSLETTER

"BRINGING PEOPLE AND WOODLAND
SUSTAINABILITY TOGETHER"

Winter 2026

www.kwoa.net



Woodland Center Conference Room



2025 Fall Conference and Membership Meeting

by Portia Brown

KWOA's 2025 Fall Conference and Membership Meeting combined educational enrichment and fellowship. The educational segments also showcased KWOA's legacy of facilitation through partnerships and advocacy, highlighting the significance of collaborative efforts among organizations with shared interests. We came away with a profound sense of a larger picture unfolding in our woodlands.

We are so very grateful to our partners. Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) provided a presentation on KY Farmland Transition Initiative. Taylor Tompson, KFB Commodity Marketing Specialist, offered valuable insights into wood products as part of the broader agricultural context. UK Forestry and Natural Resources Extension, KY Division of Forestry, and KY Division of Fish and Wildlife also delivered outstanding presentations.

We extend our gratitude to KWOA directors and members who played a pivotal role in the successful event. Doug McLaren, as the Master of Ceremonies, skillfully orchestrated the Woodland Quiz. Scott Taylor crafted engaging questions for the breakout sessions, while Harry and Karen Pelle organized an exceptional silent auction. Frank Hicks handled registration and chaired the nominating committee, with help from Jack Stickney and Jack Rentz. Former director Walt Rybka designed and crafted the beautiful wooden plaques for the KWOA Friends of Forestry Awards. Members Bill Harned and Chris Will also contributed their professional expertise.

The nominations committee presented a slate of candidates, which was unanimously approved to serve three-year terms (2026-2028) on the board of directors. Frank Hicks, Doug McLaren, Harry Pelle, Jack Rentz, Jerry Schneider, and Jeff Stringer were re-elected. Long time member, Mike Devoto, was elected to serve in the West Region.

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Officers

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

Board of Directors

North

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

East

Doug McLaren, Breathitt
Jack Stickney, Estill
Jimmie Sizemore, Clay

Central

Dr. Lanny Copeland, Warren
Harry Pelle, Taylor
Dr. James "Greg" Kuhns, Bullitt

West

James Vincent, Henderson and Webster
Henry Duncan, Logan
Mike Smith, Ohio

Board Members at Large

Frank Hicks, Greenup
Jack Rentz, Lewis
Jeff Stringer, Fayette
David Wise, Trimble
Portia Brown, Grayson
Gail Lincoln, Greenup, Fleming, Carter, and Rowan
Jerry Brown, Shelby
Scott Taylor, Casey
Genia Toma, Nelson

Emeritus

Dr. Jim Corum, Bell and Harlan Counties
Karen Marshall, Owen
Steve Perry, Henry

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

A Message From Your President



It is a profound privilege to serve Kentucky's remarkable community of landowners, supporters, and partners. The dedication, knowledge, and passion that our members and partners voluntarily bring to the table fosters our mission. As we embrace the winter season, let us take a moment to reflect upon all we have accomplished together, and consider the future.

There is no question our advocacy and collaboration make a difference. The Fall Conference and Membership Meeting celebrated KWOA's long history of advocacy and spirit of collaboration.

We have worked hard to advance our mission of promoting healthy, productive woodlands. Your active participation in events, sharing of best practices, and willingness to support one another have truly strengthened our woodland community and made a lasting impact.

We have continued to build partnerships with local agencies, universities, and fellow organizations. These collaborations have expanded opportunities for learning and resource sharing, and have helped us advocate for woodland owners' interests at the local, state, and even national levels.

Many of you have taken significant steps toward sustainability, whether by enhancing wildlife habitats, practicing responsible timber management, or participating in restoration projects. Your efforts are helping to ensure that our forests remain vibrant and resilient for generations to come.

Looking ahead, we see that our successes in recent years have grown both our membership and services to support you in your stewardship goals. That's good news, but it also means we have grown beyond the capacity of an all-volunteer organization. The sheer task of coordinating all our activities requires us to seek some administrative assistance.

As we prepare for the coming year, the board will be exploring options to sustain KWOA. This may mean seeking funding sources beyond dues and looking for at least part-time staff to maintain and grow our services.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for your commitment to sustainable woodland stewardship. We encourage you to stay engaged, share your ideas, and continue to participate in our upcoming events and workshops. Together, we can continue to protect and enhance our woodlands, ensuring their value for our communities and for future generations.

Wishing you a peaceful holiday season and a prosperous new year!



Introducing Mike Devoto

NEW KWOA BOARD MEMBER AND DIRECTOR



GET TO KNOW MIKE



“

I grew up in northern Kentucky and graduated from the University of Kentucky. My wife, Laurie, and I now live on her family's 150-acre farm, which has been in her family for seven generations. We recently returned to the property and are restoring its historic 1830 farmhouse. Laurie's 98-year-old mother, a lifelong environmentalist who still lives on the farm, transformed the property from cropland to hardwoods more than 40 years ago through the Conservation Reserve Program. The farm has been guided by a forest stewardship plan for over 30 years and now includes a pecan and fruit orchard.

I hope to use my role on the KWOA board to reach more woodland owners across Kentucky – especially those who aren't yet members – and encourage them to get involved, share experiences, and take pride in caring for their woodlands for future generations.

”

Helicopter Treatments for Invasives

by Jacob Stewart, Private Lands Program Coordinator,
Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

If you own property in Kentucky, chances are you'll face an invasive species problem at some point. Ideally, you can identify and treat unwanted plants early before they take over your land. But if you find yourself waist-deep in kudzu or struggling through dense thickets of Autumn Olive and Bush Honeysuckle, there may be help from above.

Over the past four years, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) has used helicopters to apply aerial herbicide treatments to control bush honeysuckle on Clay Wildlife Management Area and nearby private lands in Nicholas County. Because native trees and shrubs lose their leaves earlier than honeysuckle, this timing allows for selective treatment with minimal impact to desirable vegetation. To date, approximately 4,300 acres have been treated, an



approach that has proven both cost-effective and efficient.

The main challenge with helicopter treatments is that most individual landowners don't have large enough infestations to justify the cost. To address this, KDFWR and partners recently tested drone-based herbicide applications for kudzu and bush honeysuckle. While it's too early to confirm results, initial findings are promising. Another option is for neighboring landowners to collaborate and combine areas into a project large enough to bring in aerial support.

Discover More Information at:

<https://eec.ky.gov/Natural-Resources/Forestry/wildland-fire-management/pages/outdoor-burning-laws.aspx>

Now more than ever, KWOA needs your support and active involvement in carrying out our mission. Especially during this season of giving, please consider making an additional financial contribution or serving as a committee volunteer. To learn more, please email president@kwoa.net.

HELP SUPPORT US



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Owners Foundation

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2025 Fall Conference and Membership Meeting

by Portia Brown

Key Takeaways From the First Day

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Kentucky Division of Forestry's Morgan County Nursery, which was destroyed in a 2012 tornado and initially considered for elimination, was saved through advocacy efforts by KWOA and other organizations. The nursery was rebuilt and continues to serve Kentucky. Charlie Saunders, Suzie Knott, and Anthony Kinney led us through the facility, explaining every aspect of nursery operations. We learned that the rebuilt facility is more efficient due to a straighter production line, which reduces breaks in the processing stream for packaging orders. We also visited the Full American Chestnut Orchard and the White Oak seedling plots, where we learned more about these ongoing projects over the next two days.

During the Land Survey discussion, members Bill Harned, a Certified Land Surveyor, and Chris Will, the President of Central Kentucky Hardwood Management, shared key points. They emphasized the importance of hiring a qualified certified land surveyor and paying the extra price to have property lines marked at closer intervals. They also stressed the need for durable and visible markers. The discussion covered various methods, including at 5' eye level purple paint, metal caps on in-ground stakes, bars possibly extending above the ground to enhance visibility, and "Timeless" markers that can withstand weather-related deterioration. Member Harry Pelle shared another innovative method that adds an extra layer of visibility. He uses discarded vinyl window blind slats to create reflective tags that can be tapped into trees at eye level or above. These tags are marked with survey stake numbers, making them visible at night and clearly indicating that the property is actively managed and watched.

Presentations on white oak and forestry for birds were previewed in the fall newsletter. Everyone was delighted to snag a copy of the new Field Guide to Kentucky's Invasive Species, provided by Dr. Ellen Crocker. Stay tuned for ongoing coverage on evolving management techniques and white oak regeneration.

Each presentation built on the other, complemented by informal breakout sessions and social networking. These combined to give us a greater understanding of significant advancements in forest health and productivity and are a testament to KWOA's collaborative efforts and advocacy.



Billy Thomas, UK Extension Forester won the Friends of Forestry Award for Outstanding Service from KWOA.



Tree Farmers of the Year: Mark and Mary Lee

by Clay Turner, Kentucky Division of Forestry

For over 70 years, Kentucky landowners have embraced the mission of the American Tree Farm System and sought to sustainably manage their woods for the benefit of trees, water, and wildlife. Each year, the Kentucky Tree Farm Committee selects a Tree Farmer who exemplifies these ideals and recognizes them as the Tree Farmer of the Year. In 2024, the Committee selected Mark and Mary Lee as Tree Farmers of the Year because of their shared commitment to implementing excellent forestry practices and promoting the Kentucky Tree Farm program to other landowners and natural resource professionals.

Over the course of more than 43 years, Mark and Mary worked tirelessly to create a vibrant, healthy forest on 118 acres of wooded area. The Lees have cared for their land with the objectives of recreation, wildlife habitat, and proper forest management in mind. Their property was granted the American Tree Farm System's official Tree Farm certification in 1991, and in the subsequent 34 years, the Lees and their children undertook numerous activities to improve their woodlands. To achieve their goals, they completed harvests, maintained forest roads, and completed forest stand improvements such as crop tree releases. Through their efforts, the Lees transformed a previously poor site suffering from high-grade harvests, wildfire damage, and overgrazing into a forest in excellent condition that will leave a legacy for their family.



Mark and Mary Lee

To celebrate the Lees' hard work and their dedication to the principles of sustainable forest land management, a field day was held on their property and at the Clark Energy Co-Op building in October of 2025. About 35 landowners attended, and it was an opportunity for the Lees to demonstrate the impact of their management practices, highlight a white oak harvest they are undertaking, educate landowners on growing shiitake mushrooms, and show how their management objectives benefit wildlife. This continues a long tradition of the Lees using their land for educational purposes for 4-H teams, youth groups, Boy Scouts, and any landowner who visits the property. It was a great way to honor the Lees and recognize them for doing their part to strengthen Kentucky's forests while embodying the core values of the American Tree Farm System.

Thanks to Kentucky Woodlands Magazine for sharing this article.

Looking Back *Seasonal and Significant Moments in Woodland History*

Kentucky Fall Fire Hazard Season

Annually, October 1 through December 15

35th Anniversary of the Pollution Prevention Act

November 5, 1990

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) notes this milestone for the act, which established a national policy to prevent or reduce pollution at its source.

55th Anniversary of the Clean Air Act

December 31, 1970

President Richard Nixon signed this significant environmental law, which regulates air emissions from stationary and mobile sources.

International Day of Forests

Annually, March 21

The United Nations General Assembly established this observance in 2012. It celebrates and raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests.



2025 at a Glance...

A look back at our accomplishments toward “Bringing people and woodland sustainability together” in 2025.

Advocacy

- Letters of Support: Lexington Tree Board Support ban on Callery Pear and Invasive Plant Species Sales; UK Mass Timber Project at the UK Wood Center; KSU Research on Invasive Species, Woodlot to Market, Valorizing Bio-Mass in Soil Amendments, and Data Collection Methods to Advance Hardwood Forest Management; and KWOA member nominated for the Leopold Award.
- Letter to KY legislature’s Disaster Prevention and Resiliency Task Force re: existing Water Quality Protection Measures in Kentucky Logging Operations (BMP’s).
- KWOA joined White Oak Initiative, KY Waterway Alliance, and Backcountry Hunters & Anglers in meeting Sen. McConnell Ofc. to express support for Title II conservation funding, NRCS funding, and NRCS staffing
- Signed on with a coalition of organizations across the US in support of:
 - Forest Conservation Easement Program, FCEP 2025 HR 3476, Senator McConnell’s Protecting American Farmlands Act (passed July 7)
- Educated members and “Wood Post” subscribers about KY legislation SB 89, affecting water quality.
- KFB - KFTI network raising awareness of state and federal legislation to help keep rural lands productive
- KWOA shared concerns at the KFB meeting of commodity executives, Senate Majority Floor Leader, Max Wise, and House Agriculture Committee Chair, Myron Dossett, and staff from Kentucky’s Congressional offices that efforts to roll back tariffs are not adequately including forestry
- KWOA representatives attended:
 - NRCS State Technical Committee Meetings and some regional meetings, KY Ag Council (KAC) quarterly meetings, 2025 Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee Meeting, a reflection of the 2023 Coordinated Stewardship Agreement that we went to the Capital to support at the initial signing
 - The Kentucky Woodland Owners Association (KWOA) is well represented on the 13-member Kentucky Forestry Best Management Practices Board (BMP), with a designated seat currently held by Harry Pelle. KWOA has nominated Jimmie Sizemore and Rod Bruce for the next term, and Director Henry Duncan was recently appointed for 2026–2029.

- KWOA adopted the following resolution: “Kentucky Woodland Owners Association (KWOA) supports the use of hardwoods for engineered products such as cross-laminated timber (CLT) panels for mass timber buildings.” This approach creates a market for low-value hardwoods that opens growing space for high-value species benefiting forests, industry and communities.

General Business

- Amended bylaws to allow professionals to serve on KWOA/KWOF Board, created new Assistant Directors, and Emeritus Directors. Due to flooding required board election and membership meeting held online in March. KWOA joined Kentucky Forest Industries Association, KFIA. Annual in-person meeting held in October in order for directors terms to begin on January 1.

Regional Meetings/Networking Events

- Elk Cave Farm, Casey & Boyle County, Scott Taylor hosted multiple events including Local farmers, bankers, businesses, and more, WOI Board meeting, KFB Forest Advisory Committee meeting
- Lightland Farm in Shelby County, Jerry and Portia Brown hosted WOI Roundtable Regional Field Day including American Bird Conservancy, Fish & Wildlife, Consulting Foresters, et al.
- WOSC tabling: Scott Taylor, Harry Pelle, Jimmie Sizemore, Genia Toma, David and Janeen Wise
- Open Canopy Workshop: KWOA directors attending Scott Taylor, Jerry and Portia Brown, David and Janeen Wise, and many of our partners plus peers from other states learning about the interface between woodland management practices and forest ecosystem health.
- Wood Expo: KWOA table Frank Hicks, Harry Pelle, Jack Stickney, Jimmie Sizemore, and Genia Toma
- KWOA Fall Conference and Membership Meeting

KWOF Pete Kovalic Scholarship Donations

- Kentucky Forest Leadership Program, UK Forestry Student Scholarship, Kentucky Envirothon Competition, a youth program of the Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts.

KENTUCKY WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION

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FROM THE WOODS TODAY

From the Woods Today is a weekly, livestreamed on-line program produced by the University of Kentucky's Forestry and Natural Resources Extension team.

The show, held each Wednesday at 11 a.m., features current information on woodlands and wildlife topics including woodland management, tree ID, invasive species, forest health, wildlife habitat management, and many other forestry-related segments.

Learn more at the website below or sign up for weekly show reminders.



<https://forestry.mgcafe.uky.edu/woods-today>