

Local Forestry Organizations in Kentucky: A Growing Idea

William R. Thomas

Justification

Forests (also called woodlands) are a dominant part of the Kentucky landscape. These forests are mostly privately owned by more than 423,000 woodland owners. However, most woodland owners do not manage their forests and surveys



indicate that they have a low level of knowledge about forests and forestry activities. Local forestry organizations (LFOs) can assist woodland owners to become better educated and more active in forestry issues at all levels. Kentucky's forests, whether rural or urban, contribute significantly to the local and state economies providing forest products, job opportunities, habitat for wildlife, a wealth of recreational opportunities, clean water, and a host of other benefits. Efforts that increase forest management and awareness of forests important role will ultimately benefit all citizens, as well as the state of Kentucky.

Supporting Agencies

The University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, Kentucky Division of Forestry, Kentucky Woodland Owners Association, Kentucky Division of Conservation, Kentucky Farm Bureau, and Kentucky Forest Industries Association have established a statewide steering committee to

coordinate interagency support for LFOs and assist those interested in forming a LFO. Each agency recognizes the need to make woodlands locally relevant and believes LFOs are a key element in achieving this goal. They have committed to assist interested individuals with outreach, planning, and related logistics associated with forming, organizing, and launching a LFO. While the supporting agencies are committed to assisting anyone interested in forming a LFO, the success and direction of individual LFOs will be determined by local leaders and volunteers.

What is a Local Forestry Organization (LFO)?

LFOs are independent local organizations comprised of woodland owners, forest industry, local leaders, and anyone else interested in forestry issues. LFOs provide interested individuals an opportunity to increase their knowledge on forest management and respond to local and state forestry issues. Community interest, citizen involvement, and agency support are the core elements of LFOs. The consensus of the LFO statewide steering committee is that LFOs in Kentucky should be:

“Independent local groups, with varying levels of organization, created to address woodland and forestry issues in their area”.

LFOs can empower individuals with forestry interests to accomplish more than a single woodland owner, a concerned citizen or forester could ever hope to achieve alone. LFOs have the potential to make woodland issues locally relevant and can help provide a voice for the more than 423,000 woodland owners in Kentucky.



Benefits of Forming a LFO

The LFO provides a forum for those with forestry interests to share information and join others to give more clout to their ideas. An LFO may become a strong advocate for forestry programs that help maintain productive sustainable forest resources,



while giving woodland owners fair treatment in the marketplace and with state and federal governments. A strong LFO can more effectively deal with important issues such as property taxes, forest health, government cost-share programs, treatments following natural disasters, market news services, insurance, and the reinvestment of tax dollars in a renewable resource.

Ideally, LFOs will decide on the projects that are important to them. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Address local woodland issues
- Assisting and conducting woodland education programs for woodland owners
- Ensuring county and state government affords proper taxation of woodlands and timber revenues are taxed appropriately
- Educational activities to increase public understanding of forestry, such as helping put on tree walks or other woodland related events
- Serve as a citizen advisory group on woodland issues
- Develop local woodland and wildlife demonstration areas
- Provide woodland information to local leaders on a regular basis

How are LFOs Formed?

Typically key woodland owners, those with a forestry interest, and forestry/agriculture professionals within a county or multi-county area band together to plan a local meeting for the purpose of forming the organization. The counties where this is most successful are locations where an important forestry issue is present and woodland owners and professionals see the need for organization and action. Personal contacts, internet, print and radio media are used to invite all those interested in attending an organizational meeting. This meeting should include woodland issues and the blueprint for the LFO is clearly defined. The organizational format can vary from organization to organization. Individual organizations may also choose to affiliate with aligned state or national associations, but this should be a local decision. Key landowners, committed professionals, and a forestry issue or cause are needed to foster the development of a successful LFO.

Supporting Forestry Agencies

UK Forestry Extension: 859-257-7597
www.ukforestry.org
County Agents: www.ca.uky.edu/county
KWOA: 606-876-3423
www.kentuckywoodlandownersassociation.com
Ky. Division of Forestry: 502-564-4496
www.forestry.ky.gov
Ky. Division of Conservation: 502-573-3080
www.conservation.ky.gov
Ky. Farm Bureau: 502-495-5000
www.kyfb.com
Ky. Forest Industries Association: 502-695-3979
www.kfia.org

This fact sheet provides an overview of local forestry organizations (LFO) in Kentucky. Additional information on LFOs can be found in companion fact sheets FORFS 07-02 Local Forestry Organizations in Kentucky: Formation and Organization and FORFS 07-03 Local Forestry Organizations in Kentucky: Project Ideas.

W. Thomas 2007

Educational programs of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. Copyright © 2007 for materials developed by the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service. This publication may be reproduced in portions or its entirety for educational or nonprofit purposes only. Permitted users shall give credit to the author and include this copyright notice.