



## State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet Kentucky 2025



### Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2024 Final
Community Forests and Open Space	\$600,000
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$203,027
Forest Legacy	\$0
Forest Stewardship	\$218,116
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$260,000
State Fire Assistance	\$1,387,792
Urban and Community Forestry	\$300,000
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$328,248
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,297,183</b>

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

The mission of the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) is "to protect, conserve and enhance the forest resources of the Commonwealth through a public informed of the environmental, social and economic importance of these resources." As a means of meeting this mission, the division offers a variety of programs and services ranging from landowner assistance and master logger training to forest health protection and wildland fire management. The division is also involved in the operation of tree seedling nurseries, urban and community forestry assistance, forest resource utilization and forestry education.

### Program Goals

- The cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership between the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the USDA Forest Service and many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies. The overarching goal is to maintain and improve the health of urban and rural forests and related economies as well as to protect the forests and citizens of the Commonwealth.

### Key Issues

- Forests are being fragmented and landowner objectives are changing. There are over 432,000 non-industrial private forest landowners (137,654 own greater than 10 acres) in Kentucky. These forest landowners consist of families, individuals, trusts, estates, family partnerships, and other unincorporated groups of individuals that own forestland. Eighty-eight percent of the forestland in Kentucky is privately owned which makes it a challenge getting technical assistance done on-the-ground.
- Humans cause ninety percent (90%) of wildland fires in Kentucky. Arson accounts for fifty-six percent (56%) of the wildland fire causes.
- Urban development and other land use changes, heat islands, and climate change are affecting Kentucky's urban and community forests. Economics, population demographics, and infrastructure expansion in rural and urban areas drive some of these issues. The development of self-sustaining community forestry programs that include advocacy groups, public education components, urban forestry staff, and properly maintained community trees and forests remain an issue in Kentucky.
- The emerald ash borer can be found in 103 counties across the Commonwealth and will eventually impact the entire state's ash timber resources. It is estimated that the ash disaster will cost Kentucky landowners and forest industries nearly \$100 million annually. In addition, a new invasive insect, the spotted lanternfly, has now been found in Kentucky as of October 2023. This exotic pest is considered a real nuisance in urban environments. The forest health impacts aren't known at this time.

## Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2024 Accomplishments	Value
Population	4,505,836	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	15,858
Acres of Forest Land	12,367,221	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	38,458
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	8,937,803	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	17,376
Number of NIPF Landowners	137,654	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	75
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	0	State Fire Communities Assisted	325
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	17,100,000	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	25
Number of Rural Fire Departments	770	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	419	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	49
Forest Based Employment	50,000	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	1,469,891
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	12	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	7,783
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	23,252,122		

## Program Highlights

### Cooperative Fire Protection

State Fire Assistance provides funding to support firefighting resources throughout Kentucky. In 2024, the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) suppressed 937 fires that burned 23,896 acres. The Federal Excess Personal Property Program and the Federal Firefighter Program assist in acquiring and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the state. The KDF administers the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) grant program to support rural community fire departments' fire prevention and protection efforts. The division provided VFA grant funding of \$324,449 to 87 fire departments and awarded \$99,455 in Firewise cost-share grants to eleven communities. Kentucky communities have completed 72 Community Wildfire Protection Plans, with 14 more in progress and five more pending grant funding to begin development. Of those communities, fourteen hold recognition as a Firewise USA Community. Currently, six more communities are working on their certification for recognition. Mitigation funds have been used to pay for law enforcement assistance from the Kentucky Department for Fish and Wildlife Resources. A 24-hour notification process is required for prescribed burn practitioners in Kentucky to perform prescribed burning. The opportunities for reducing hazardous fuels within Kentucky have never been higher. The KDF utilizes Community Fire Protection funding to complete hazard fuel reductions around communities adjacent to US Forest Service property. KDF has also partnered with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy to utilize their funding to further ecosystem management on properties they oversee through prescribed fire implementation.

### Forest Health Protection

Emerald ash borer (EAB) infestations have been confirmed in 105 counties in Kentucky. In September of 2018, APHIS published a proposal to remove domestic quarantine regulations for EAB. This proposal was approved after a public comment period and the ruling officially took effect on January 14, 2021. Once the deregulation of this exotic pest took effect, the USDA APHIS channeled all funding into the EAB Parasitoid Release and Recovery Program. EAB continues to move throughout western Kentucky and infestations in neighboring states of Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Tennessee suggest that the pest will be confirmed in the remaining 15 Kentucky counties in the coming years. The KDF Forest Health Program applied for the Parasitoid Release and Recovery Program and was accepted for the release of *Oobius agrili* in 2021. Since then, over 2,500 parasitoids have been released. The hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) is another exotic pest that is impacting Kentucky's forests. HWA infestations occur broadly across 32 counties in eastern Kentucky, with Garrard County being the newest addition in February of 2022. The Division has a dedicated field crew tasked with chemically treating hemlock trees on public lands in order to prevent the total loss of hemlocks from our forests. The Hemlock Treatment Program began in 2011 and treatments have occurred every year since that time. To date, the Division has treated 240,760

hemlock trees! In addition, a new invasive insect, the spotted lanternfly (SLF), has now been found in Kentucky as of October 2023. This exotic pest can now be found in 8 counties across northern Kentucky; however, the forest health impacts aren't known at this time. The Division continues to monitor for potential pests and pathogen complexes such as Thousand Cankers Disease and Laurel Wilt (LW). In 2024, 5 new county-level detections of LW were made in the western part of the state.

### **Forest Legacy**

Administrative funds were used for promoting Forest Legacy, evaluating and prioritizing Forest Legacy projects and participating in the technical training course. There are 10,220 acres protected to date through nine (9) acquisitions. This year, the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) participated in the National Forest Legacy Program Summit in Kalispell, MT.

### **Forest Stewardship**

KDF foresters developed 343 forest stewardship/forest management plans covering 38,458 acres for federal fiscal year 2024. The division completed forest improvement plans covering 2,552 acres of activities including tree planting, timber stand improvement, and many other forest enhancement practices through USDA Farm Bill programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

### **Landowner Assistance**

KDF continues to expand its efforts to involve woodland owners in sound management practices. The division, in cooperation with UK Extension, hosted two (2) in-person woodland owner short courses in conjunction with multiple virtual forestry webinars for woodland owners. KDF also offered numerous other educational and training opportunities for landowners of forested areas and schoolchildren, including field days, tree plantings, and conferences. This effort involved partnering with our sister agencies (i.e. Fish and Wildlife, Nature Preserves, conservation organizations, NRCS, USFS), and several forestry-related organizations, such as the Kentucky Woodland Owners Association, the Kentucky Arborists Association, the Kentucky Forest Industries Association, and the Kentucky Association of Consulting Foresters. The division continues to support the annual small, limited resource landowner conference with Kentucky State University.

### **Tornado Strike Team**

The Division of Forestry is in the process of building a tornado strike team to assist communities, landowners, partners, and natural area managers affected by the 2021 tornadoes. The Division of Forestry received \$3.75 million in FY23 USDA Forest Service Natural Disaster and Recovery Supplemental Funding to be used over five years to provide assistance across four program areas: forest health, stewardship, urban and community forestry, and wildland fire programs. The Division of Forestry is implementing this work through data collection and analysis, training, education and outreach, and targeted implementation of practices. Team members will carry out health assessments, forest pest treatments, mechanical and chemical removal of debris and invasive species, reforestation, community tree planting and distributions, tree canopy assessments, forest management prescriptions, prescribed fire, and Firewise assessments, and educational programming, and technical assistance. Outreach and partnerships are key to the success of these efforts. Education and outreach programs will be developed in the form of workshops, trainings, and hands-on implementation that will be presented to the public and held in conjunction with local partners such as local cooperative extension and conservation district offices.

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

In 2024, Kentucky celebrated its 128th Arbor Day. Kentucky Division of Forestry participated in a total of 45 Arbor Day events that included tree plantings and giveaways of 30,754 trees. Kentucky's official Arbor Day ceremony took place at Berea College; highlighting the college's work in managing their campus' forest. Three Spring Community Tree Recovery tree distribution events took place in flood impacted communities of Eastern Kentucky; with two Fall distribution events happening in tornado-stricken communities of Western Kentucky. A total of 2,190 trees were distributed in communities impacted by natural disasters across the Commonwealth. Thirty-five Kentucky communities were designated as Tree City USA communities, including 5 communities that received Growth Awards for significantly expanding their urban forestry programs. One community was certified as a Tree City of the World in Kentucky. This international program recognizes commitment to ensuring properly maintained, sustainably managed, and

duly celebrated urban forests and trees in their community. Over 25% of Kentuckians live in a Tree City USA community, and these communities spent over \$6.6 million dollars on urban and community forestry management. Fourteen universities and colleges received designations of Tree Campus Higher Education and one medical facility received designations of Tree Campus Healthcare USA. Additionally, three utility companies were designated as Tree Line USA. Three annual urban reforestation events took place in the spring and fall in partnership with KDF, which resulted in the distribution and planting of over 9,400 tree seedlings. Sixteen awardees were selected to receive a total of \$1.7 million in grant funding for urban and community forestry projects across the Commonwealth through funding provided by the USDA Forest Service. KDF continues to support the work of University of Kentucky's Urban Forest Initiative and other initiatives.

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