



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet Kentucky 2024



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2023 Estimate
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$212,904
Forest Legacy	\$0
Forest Stewardship	\$191,638
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$750,356
State Fire Assistance	\$1,365,722
Urban and Community Forestry	\$377,274
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$337,019
Total	\$3,234,913

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.
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of wildland fires in Kentucky are caused by humans. Arson accounts for forty-seven percent (48%) 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 2023 Accomplishments	Value
Population	4,505,836	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	14,411
Acres of Forest Land	12,367,221	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	45,232
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	8,937,803	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	10,180
Number of NIPF Landowners	137,654	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	0
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	0	State Fire Communities Assisted	110
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	57
Forest Based Employment	50,000	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	1,476,769
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	12	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	8,223
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	24,648,062		

Program Highlights

Cooperative Fire Protection

State Fire Assistance provides funding to support firefighting resources throughout Kentucky. In calendar year 2023, the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) suppressed 1,142 fires that burned 47,797 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 the fire prevention and protection efforts of rural community fire departments. The division provided VFA grant funding of \$396,858 to 106 fire departments and awarded \$103,594 in Firewise cost-share grants to eleven communities. Kentucky communities have completed 70 Community Wildfire Protection Plans, with seven more in progress and four 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 preform prescribed burning. The opportunities for reducing hazardous fuels within Kentucky have never been higher. The KDF is utilizing Community Fire Protection funding to complete hazard fuel reductions around communities that are adjacent to US Forest Service property. KDF has also partnered with US Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy to utilize their funding to further ecosystem management on properties they oversee through prescribe fire implementation.

Forest Health Protection

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) infestations have been confirmed in 103 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 17 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 230,346 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 is considered a real nuisance in urban environments; however, the forest health impacts aren't known at this time. The current detection was made in the border county of Gallatin, just 6 miles from the initial infestation in southern Indiana. The Division continues to monitor for potential pests and pathogen complexes such as Thousand Cankers Disease. In 2023, 8,680 acres were surveyed for symptomatic black walnut.

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 LENS pilot program. The LENS program is a free tool offered by the U.S. Forest Service to monitor conservation easements on Forest Legacy properties using satellite imagery. KDF currently does not have any conservation easements to monitor, however, the U.S. Forest Service was interested in how KDF can utilize the tool to monitor fee-simple Forest Legacy properties. The LENS program was considered successful as it provides an additional tool for KDF to use in the management of state forests that were acquired using Forest Legacy. The imagery provided by the LENS program includes recent aerial photos, a NAIP map that uses light spectrums to determine vegetative growth and a property boundary map of neighboring properties.

Forest Stewardship

KDF foresters developed 391 forest stewardship/forest management plans covering 69,515 acres for federal fiscal 2023. The division completed forest improvement plans covering 5,601 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

The KDF continues to expand its efforts to involve woodland owners in sound management practices. The division, in cooperation with UK Extension, hosted three (3) forestry virtual woodland owner short courses and forestry webinars, and other landowner and schoolchildren training opportunities across the state. This effort involved partnering with our sister agencies (i.e. fish and wildlife, nature preserves, conservation organizations, NRCS, USFS, etc.), 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, minority landowner conference with Kentucky State University.

Urban and Community Forestry

In 2023, Kentucky celebrated its 127th Arbor Day. Kentucky Division of Forestry participated in a total of forty-six Arbor Day events that included tree plantings and giveaways of 31,386 trees. Kentucky Arbor Day was celebrated in the community of Jackson, which was devastated by flooding in 2022. Two fall Community Tree Recovery tree distributions took place in tornado-stricken communities. A total of thirty-five communities were designated as a Tree City USA community, including five communities that also received a Growth Award for significantly expanding their urban forestry program. Over 34% of Kentuckians live in a Tree City USA community, and these communities spent over \$9.2 million dollars on urban and community forestry management. Thirteen universities and colleges received designations of Tree Campus Higher Education and two medical facilities 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 12,400 tree seedlings. KDF continues to support the work of University of Kentucky's Urban Forest Initiative and the Green Heart Louisville project, among other initiatives.

White Oak Initiative

The White Oak Initiative encompasses two USFS Regions (8 & 9), including 20 partnering states. The program is designed for easy engagement of partners that have significant and critical upland oak resources, specifically white oak which is a keystone species in upland oak forest management. State level activities include oak management demonstration areas, development of landowner cooperatives, and providing oak management support to landowners. The White Oak Initiative's Landowners for Oaks

Series publications and Upland Oak and White Oak Silvicultural Practices Series publications provide additional oak management support to landowners, foresters, and forest managers.

The White Oak Initiative's conservation plan called Restoring Sustainability for White Oak and Upland Oak Communities: An Assessment and Conservation Plan, continues to support phase two in white oak and upland oak management. Phase two involves the development and release of a Mobile app designed to provide forest landowners with oak management information as well as a general assessment of their forests. The White Oak Initiative Mobile app will help landowners who would like professional forest management assistance to communicate and connect with foresters in their area.

Contact Information



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