



The Kentucky Railsplitter

Newsletter of the Kentucky Chapter
of the American Chestnut Foundation

Working to Restore the American Chestnut
Volume 4, Number 1 Spring 2005

The President's Corner

It seems to me that TACF is at a major crossroad in our effort to restore American Chestnut. As we approach the time when the first blight-resistant seedlings will become available, interest in the restoration effort is spreading. As a result, TACF is expanding its network of partnerships. In the recent past, partnerships have been forged with Penn State University, the US Forest Service, and Peabody Coal Company. More partnerships are probably in the works as we gear up for the stretch run of producing the blight resistant tree.

In Kentucky, we also are forming a number of partnerships. We have always had a strong partnership with the Kentucky Division of Forestry, and I see that partnership strengthening in the years to come. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources is a very strong supporter of our restoration effort and is planning to plant several pure American breeding orchards on wildlife lands they administer. We have breeding orchards established at the University of Kentucky's Robinson Forest and also at Berea College. A new partnership is being developed with Western Kentucky University, with the potential of a breeding orchard being established there. Mammoth Cave National Park continues to support us as does the League of Kentucky Sportsmen. There is a great amount of interest in using American Chestnut is successful efforts currently going on to reforest strip mines, with the potential for new partnerships here. The timber industry of Kentucky is making significant contributions towards our national meeting in Lexington this fall.

Partnerships are incredibly important to us. Financial support to proceed with the breeding program is essential. Our greatest challenges lie ahead, when we tackle the huge job of restoring the blight free chestnut to the forest. We'll need many, many partners to accomplish that job.

Kentucky Chapter Annual Meeting

Come join us for our spring Chapter meeting at Robinson Forest on Friday May 20th and Saturday May 21st.

The meeting will begin Friday evening at 6:00 PM at Robinson Forest (see directions inside the newsletter). A dinner will be served at a cost of \$10 per person. We plan to have a speaker, an update of Chapter activities, and will discuss our upcoming pollination season. The program should end by 8:30 PM. Bunkhouse lodging is available at Robinson Forest for \$28 per person. For those who wish to stay in a motel, the towns of Jackson and Hazard are nearby to Robinson Forest.

The meeting will reconvene at 9:00 AM on May 21st. Breakfast will be served at 7:00 AM for those who desire at a cost of \$6.00 per person. Our Saturday meeting will be devoted to discussing the upcoming National meeting in Lexington in October. This will be followed by a visit to two of our breeding orchards nearby on the forest. We should wind up the meeting about mid-afternoon.

If you aren't able to attend the meeting, but could assist with the National Meeting in October, please contact Rex Mann at 859-745-3123 or at rmann@fs.fed.us, or by mail through Kentucky Chapter, TACF, 1236 Carmargo Rd. Mt. Sterling, Kentucky 40353.

Please try to join us at the meeting if you can. We want our National Meeting to be a huge success.



The American Chestnut Foundation Kentucky Chapter

Board of Directors Officers

Rex Mann, *President*
(859) 745-3123
e-mail rmann@fs.fed.us
Lynn Garrison,
Vice-President
(502)564-4338
Anita Mann, *Treasurer*
(859) 498-1724

Board Members

Bill Andrews
Rollie Beers
Bob Cornette
Scott Freidhof
Dr. Ray Hornback
Faye King
Dr. Bill Martin
Bill Morton
John Perry
Dr. Lou Shain

Newsletter

Marilyn Freidhof
(606) 784-5697
marilynf@mikrotec.com



KY Chapter Members Attend TACF Board Meeting

Rex Mann, President of the Kentucky chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation, and Dr. Ray Hornback, Vice Chairman of the Board of TACF, attended the organization's spring board meeting on April 14, 15 & 16 in Bristol, Va.

Mann gave a report on the activities of the Kentucky chapter and participated in the science cabinet meetings as well as the board meeting. Hornback, as Vice Chairman, attended the executive committee meeting and conducted the development cabinet meeting as well as participating in the board meetings. The two discussed the annual meeting to be held in Lexington on October 27-30 and promoted attendance by all board and cabinet meetings.

One of the highlights of the three-day meeting was an afternoon tour of the research farms in Meadowview, Va., on a Friday afternoon, April 15. Dr. Fred Hebard, who heads the research efforts on the three farms, conducted the tours and discussed the progress being made to develop blight resistant American chestnuts to eventually be placed in the rest of the eastern United States where the American chestnut was once the predominate species.

Board members were shown the American chestnut selected to be placed on the White House lawn. Earlier this year, Rex Mann suggested this idea to President Bush during a forestry gathering in Washington D.C.

A wide range of business was conducted at the Bristol meeting which Mann and Hornback will report to the membership at the upcoming meeting to be held at Robinson Forest.

"We learned a great deal about what is going on in other states," said Mann, "and the board members are excited to be coming to Kentucky for the annual meeting. We have a lot of work ahead of us planning for the event and will need all of the help we can get to make sure we do a great job in hosting people from all over.

New Mother Tree Orchard

The Kentucky Division of Forestry has started a "mother tree orchard" at its Morgan County Nursery.

Approximately 60 American chestnut sprouts have been transplanted from Harlan and Bell Counties to the nursery this Spring. This orchard contains 4 distinct lines of origin documented by Lat/Lon.

In addition, TACF KY Chapter Intern Mike French and volunteer Caleb Sheehan helped establish an orchard of 2nd generation Chinese/American crossed seed. The seed orchard contains over 100 individuals with each planting location varmit protected with a section of black drain pipe.

Having the hybrid and the mother orchards co-located will aid dramatically in the controlled pollination.

Partnership Meeting Between TACF and USFS

On February 3rd and 4th, a partnership meeting between TACF and USDA Forest Service was held in Asheville, North Carolina. Rex Mann, who is Timber, Fire and Wildlife Staff Officer on the Daniel Boone National Forest attended the session.

Several Timber Staff Officers, Silviculturists, Wildlife Biologists and Forest Supervisors from the Southern Region of the Forest Service attended the session. Attending for TACF were Dr. Fred Helard, Dr. Paul Sisco and Phil Prichard.

Information was shared about the organization of the two groups, the silviculture and diseases that affect American chestnut and current ongoing research. There was considerable discussion on how the Forest Service could cooperate, such as hosting breeding and seed orchards, looking for new trees, communicating to the public and assisting with pollination.

Dr. Fred Helard issued a standing invitation for Forest Service personnel to visit the TACF Meadowview Research Farm.

Partnering Chestnuts and Mine Reclamation

The Kentucky Chapter of TACF has formed a partnership with Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative. This group works with surface mine companies and government regulatory agencies to help mine companies in seven states better reclaim their mines for native hardwood tree growth.

Certain members of this group, University of Kentucky professors, and members of the Kentucky Chapter all feel that there is great potential for using mine lands to grow American chestnuts. This spring, a study has been implemented that will begin a series of studies to determine the best planting techniques and mine spoil substrates that will allow for favorable conditions for growing chestnuts in mine spoils. Both pure American chestnuts, and surplus TACF advanced backcross trees were direct-seeded into differing loose-dumped spoil material. If American chestnuts and TACF hybrids show the enormous growth rates and survival success that other hardwood species have shown in similar growing conditions, then at some future time, mine spoils may also be used for our breeding orchards.

As these mine spoils are initially devoid of soil microbiota, this may be a solution to avoiding the *Phytophthora* root rot problems which have decimated some of our orchards and trees in western Kentucky and elsewhere. If chestnuts can thrive in these conditions, in the future, reclaiming mines with chestnuts may become a key part of returning these wonderful trees throughout its native range.



2004 Pollination Results

By Mike French

Kentucky Chapter Intern

In 2004, the Kentucky Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation experienced its most successful harvest to date. More than 2140 nuts were harvested in 2004, representing a 33% increase in nut production compared to the 2003 harvest.

A total of six trees were pollinated this year, three of which had not been previously pollinated. Of the six trees pollinated, five produced viable seed. The only tree which failed to produce any viable nuts was an extremely sick tree in Marshall County.

The following summarizes the results of our pollinations. The mother tree (county) is followed by the pollen source and the number of viable seeds produced.

Adair:

Wayne=93
Clinton=265
GL-185=597
Jackson, TN=264
Webster=441

Clinton

AB-52=146
BE-134=154

Marshall

GL-94=0

Letcher

GR-331=10

Wayne

BE-138=164

Webster

AB-419=6

Trees and pollen sources that are referred to by the county of their origin are 100% pure American. We produced 1063 pure American chestnut seeds by crossing the Adair tree with pure American pollens.

All of the mother trees are named by the county in which they are located, as are the pollen sources unless the pollen source in the above list is an abbreviation, then the resulting offspring are ACF advanced hybrids, and the pollen was harvested from trees located at the ACF research farms in Virginia.

The vast majority of hybrids produced are approximately 94% American and 6% Chinese. The only exception are the ten seeds produced by the Letcher County tree. These ten seeds are nearly 97% American and 3% Chinese.

One interesting cross was achieved with the help of Dr. Joe Shibig and Mark Vance from Vol State Community College. They brought pollen from the Tennessee state champion tree and applied it to our state champion in Adair County and we were able to harvest 264 pure American nuts.

Our pollination and harvest were greatly aided by the collaborative efforts of the US Forest Service, The Kentucky Division of Forestry, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, the University of Kentucky, The American Chestnut Foundation, and countless volunteers and landowners. The American Chestnut Foundation thanks you all for your continued support.



TACF KY Chapter Spring Meeting

UK's Robinson Forest

Fri. May 20th - Sat. May 21

See meeting details on page 1

The Robinson Forest, managed for research, teaching and Extension education by the University of Kentucky Department of Forestry, is one of the largest research and educational forests in the eastern United States. Robinson Forest is a collection of seven tracts totaling 14,800 acres, and is located on the Cumberland Plateau in southeastern Kentucky.

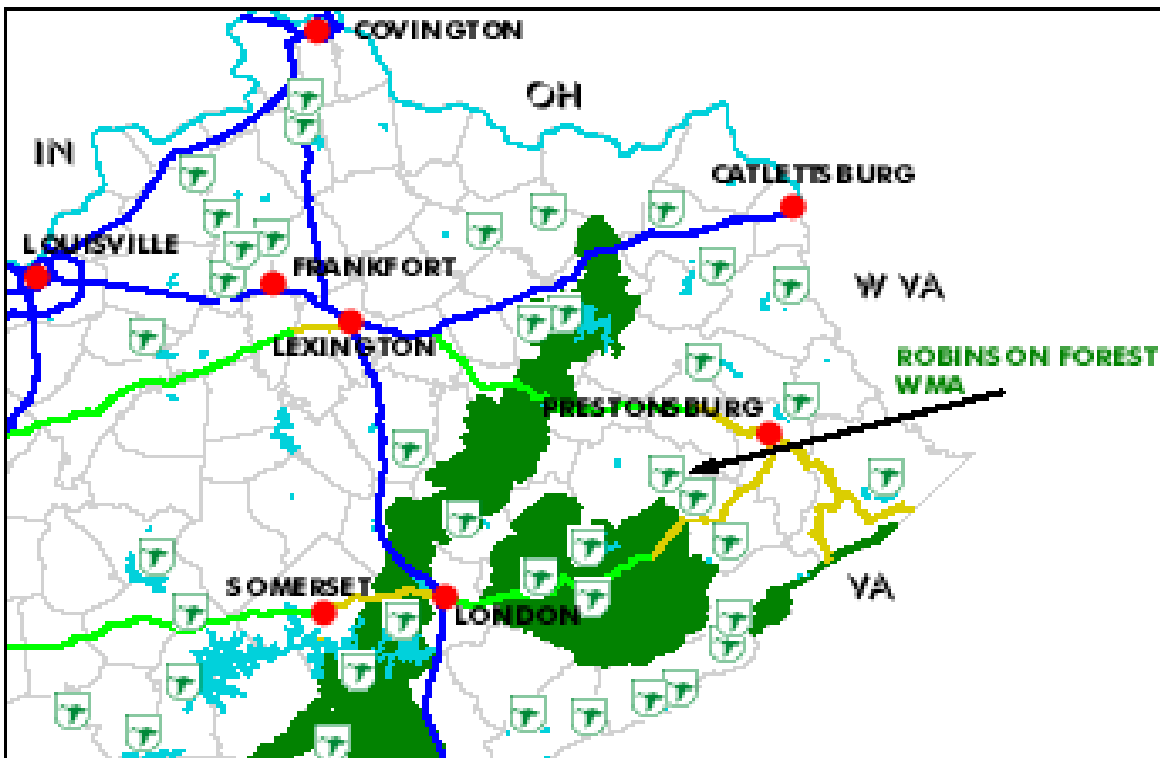
Directions

From Lexington, take I-64 East to the Mountain Parkway exit. Take Mountain Parkway to the Campton/Hazard exit (Hwy 15). Follow Hwy 15 past Jackson approx. 6 miles and take a left on KY 476. There is a flashing yellow caution light there. Follow KY 476 approx. 12 miles, just past the Perry County line to a left turn, across a narrow bridge, and onto gravel Buckhorn Creek Rd., proceed approximately 3 mi. to Camp Robinson (UK work station) on Clemons Fork Rd.

There are brown road signs directing you to Robinson Forest. If you have questions or need better directions please call Rex Mann or Mike French.

Robinson Forest (606) 666-5034

Mike French's cell phone is (270) 312-1161; Rex Mann (859) 745-3123



Letcher Countians Team Up To Restore American Chestnuts

One tree has residents of Letcher County working together all for one purpose. Once found in abundance in the Appalachian mountains, the American chestnut tree is now a rarity. Students from Kingdom Come Elementary School, residents of the Line Fork and Gordon area and the American Chestnut Foundation hope to keep the memories of the American chestnut alive as well as bring back the tree to the mountains.

In writing class, students have been working on their research skills.

"We've been going to the computer lab and looking on chestnut web sites trying to figure out how long they have been here," said Mikey Tolliver, an 8th grader from Linefork.

Students compiled all of their information and came up with a list of questions about the American chestnut tree that they did not find answers to while researching. Eleven 7th and 8th grade students asked those questions to elders who remember the good old days of the American chestnut.

Clarence Huff, 92, of Linefork, was one of the people the students interviewed. He said that Pine Mountain was at one time full of American chestnut trees.

Otis Cornett, 85, another person the students interviewed, has a barn behind his house that is made mostly of American chestnut wood.

"I'd like for the students to get the American chestnut trees back in the woods," Cornett said.

In cooperation with the Gordon Fire Department, Kingdom Come Elementary School received a \$5000 grant to help with the chestnut project. Members of the fire department went along with the students when they interviewed the elders of the community. Several people that were interviewed are members of the Linefork Fish and Game Club.

"The purpose is to record history-how the chestnut trees impacted people of the community," said Tim Brown, language arts teacher at Kingdom Come Elementary School.

The students will take the information they gathered from the interviews to write stories for their portfolios.

They will also create a song with Debbie Tuggle Pendley, a musician who is a Letcher County native, that will be performed at the school's chestnut festival on October 2.

"I'm going to come to Kingdom Come School twice this month to teach them songs related to this project, create lyric booklets called "Song Seeds", and also to create a song with them in celebration of the American chestnut tree, (which will be included in the booklets)," said Tuggle.

The chestnut project is going to be a long-term project.

"We're learning as we go," said Betty Caudill, principal of Kingdom Come Elementary.

The American Chestnut Foundation has chosen Kingdom Come Elementary School To help speed up the process in

finding chestnut sprouts. The students will dig up the sprouts and transfer them to the school's greenhouse. When the plants are healthy enough they will be planted in the community. In five or six years when those trees are healthy enough they will be planted in the community. In five or six years when those trees are big enough to flower, they will pollinate the selected American chestnut trees.

KCES Principal Betty Caudill said the chestnut project is important for the students because it is a real world application. "I think maybe for the children, it's the hands-on experience of taking an endangered species and rejuvenating it. Instead of working just with books, this is a hands on project."

From a Mountain Eagle article Trying to Save the American Chestnut Tree by Sally Barto. Sept. 15, 2004



Seventh and eighth grade students from Kingdom Come Elementary School look at Otis Campbell's barn that is made mostly from American Chestnut Wood.



Clarence Huff, 92, tells Elizabeth Triplett and Erin Allen what it was like to gather and boil chestnuts. He told the girls that American chestnuts taste much better than Chinese chestnuts.

KY Chapter President Attends MOU Signing

Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth (left) signs a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Marshal Case, president and CEO of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF), to bring back the majestic tree to the eastern forests.

Chestnut was once a dominant species from Georgia to Maine and the Appalachian chain until an exotic pathogen decimated nearly four billion chestnuts through the 1950's.

TACF has been in the forefront of efforts to develop blight-resistant chestnut trees. The MOU allows TACF to utilize National Forest lands and resources in its breeding program.

Witnesses to the signing are (standing, left to right): USDA Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) Deputy Under Secretary **Dave Tenny**, Deputy Chiefs **Tom Thompson**, NFS; **Ann Bartuska**, R&D; **Joel Holtrop**,



S&PF; forest health specialist and master of ceremony **Safiya Samman**, Forest Health Protection (FHP); **Rex Man** (behind Safiya), president of the Kentucky chapter of TACF and FS employee at the Daniel Boone National Forest; **Herb Darling**, TACF board chairman; **Fred Hebard**, TACF plant geneticist; and **Rob Mangold**, director of FHP. The signing was held during the Forest Service National Leadership Team meeting held October 12, 2004 in Traverse City, Michigan.

Photo taken by: Karl Perry, USDA Forest Service Office of Communication

KY Chapter The American Chestnut Foundation
4455 CCC Trail
Morehead, KY 40351



Kentucky
Chapter
of the
American
Chestnut
Foundation