

Tennessee SAF members support proposed registration

On January 21, Richard Evans, KT Teller reported that 81% of SAF foresters in Tennessee support the proposed registration of foresters. Surveys were mailed to all Tennessee foresters on the SAF roles (210 members) and 69 ballots were returned (33%).

Along with their ballots some folks chose to add comments that outlined their opposition to the proposed credential. Comments opposing forester registration included concerns that qualified and ethical foresters who have not been actively practicing forestry for a number of years will not be eligible for registration, the grandfathering process will enable all jack-legs to practice forestry, and registration will serve no purpose other than to protect the interest of a few individuals.

The committee on credentialing foresters reported their findings at the KT winter meeting in Bowling Green and was thanked for their excellent work. The proposed registration document is on the K-T SAF website www.ktsaf.org/current_issues.html

Next steps in the forester registration process will be establishing an implementation committee that includes folks who have an interest in forestry and who are savvy in the political process in Tennessee.

Formalized credentialing of foresters in Kentucky and Tennessee has a long history going back to 1952 when the K-T established a committee to examine licensing foresters in Tennessee and Kentucky. K-T voted to support registration of foresters in Kentucky in 1960 and planned to present a proposal to the KY Legislature in 1964 then to the TN legislature in 1965. Legislation failed in Kentucky and the K-T subsequently decided not to pursue licensing in Tennessee. In 1974 forester licensing passed the KY House but was killed in the Senate.

Like sprouts from a chestnut tree, the 1984 K-T SAF Legislation & Policy committee was charged to study the certification of professional foresters and report their findings at the summer meeting. A Licensing & Registration committee was reestablished in 1987 then declared inactive in 1989.

Outside of the K-T, the 1998 Tennessee Forest Management Advisory Panel, established by a Senate Joint Resolution recommended registration for professional foresters adding, "*As society expects better and more sustainable forest management, it becomes increasingly more important to ensure that professional foresters are adequately trained and registered. The Panel recommends that the Tennessee Forestry Commission consider developing a registered forester program for Tennessee*". House Joint Resolution 189, passed in 2003, tasked the Tennessee Forestry Commission to evaluate the Southern Forest Resource Assessment and make recommendations to address those issues pertinent to Tennessee. One issue raised by citizens during the public input sessions was a call to certify foresters in Tennessee to ensure quality and professional standards.

If we are lucky, a bill establishing forester registration will be introduced next legislative session and we'll harvest the efforts of our predecessors.

Dave Walters, TN Forester Credentialing Committee Chair