

Society of American Foresters award Jerry and Portia Brown the Herman Baggenstoss Recognition Award

This year the Herman Baggenstoss Award was presented to Jerry and Portia Brown of Louisville, Kentucky. The award is presented by the Kentucky-Tennessee Chapter of the Society of American Foresters to individuals or groups where their contributions to forestry have been beyond the demands of their regular employment. Jerry and Portia own two American Tree Farm certified properties in Kentucky. A 120 acre forested property in Grayson County as known as Grayson Woods and a second farm of 145 acres in Shelby County comprised of woodlands and native grasses.

Conservation activities date back to the 1940's when Portia's mother acquired the Grayson County farm. At the time, the past agricultural practices had severely degraded the highly erodible soils and she began planting pine trees. The farm entered the American Tree Farm System in 1965 and became Kentucky Tree Farm # 216. Throughout the decades the Browns have worked with their local Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and County Conservation District to enroll the farm into various conservation programs. These practices included hardwood tree plantings, non-native invasive species control, non-commercial thinnings, and improved stream crossings. They have also completed two timber sales from the original pine Portia's mother planted.

The Shelby County farm was purchased in 1996 and enrolled in the Tree Farm System in 1997. The Browns engaged in the same intensive management on their new farm. The Shelby County farm offered a unique location and a barn that was converted into a classroom and recreational center for visitors. As they implemented their many projects, the Browns opened their farm to many conservation-minded partners, groups, and organizations. They hosted prescribed fire trainings with the Nature Conservancy, Native Plant conferences with the Wild Ones, Kentucky Master Stewards Training, the Kentucky Association of Environmental Educators, and a Woodland Owners short course with the University of Kentucky Forestry Extension. Not only were they applying science-based conservation practices but they were sharing they're knowledge and experiences with others.

In addition, the Browns have put to good use their organizational and leadership skills by directing many volunteer organizations, they're best known in the forestry community for their work with the Kentucky Woodlands Owners Association. They have 20 years of membership in the group and 10 years serving on the board of directors. Jerry is the treasurer, a position he has held since 2019 and Portia is the current President. Their efforts have seen the organization grow membership, expand educational opportunities, and improve outreach. It is with great honor that the Kentucky – Tennessee Chapter of the Society of American Foresters recognize the Browns for their contributions and tireless efforts to promote forestry.