

National Network Formed to Assist Private Landowners

ATFA Provides Leadership

By **KIM G. NIX**, Editor

It's no secret that the state of Alabama is a national leader when it comes to forest stewardship. For example, the Forest Stewardship Program was patterned after the TREASURE Forest Program in 1990. Now the concept of the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association is making the transition to the national level.

The network began when the U.S. Forest Service held a meeting of national State and Private Forestry directors in November 2000. Nine states that had shown a landowner involvement component in their stewardship programs were selected to send representatives to the meeting. The states were Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Texas and Wyoming. At this meeting, Alabama was recognized as a leader in the area of landowner involvement. All the state representatives at the meeting were private landowners; attending from Alabama were James and Joan Malone of the ATFA and State Forester Timothy C. Boyce.

Another meeting was held in January 2001 with the nine states and representatives from the National Association of State Foresters and the U.S. Forest Service. Bylaws had been prepared using the ATFA's as a template. The official name of the organization is the National Network of Private Forest Landowners. In

addition to passing bylaws, officers were elected and committees formed. James Malone was elected chairman, while Joan serves in a valuable role on one of the committees. Jill Cornell of New York is vice chairman; Gene Meyers of Texas is treasurer and Marisol Miranda-Greene of New Mexico was elected secretary.

According to James Malone, the purpose of the national network is to involve more people. "The ultimate goal is to provide an opportunity for family forest owners to understand the potential of what they own and allow them to become involved in forest stewardship," he said. "While there are 10 million landowners in the United States, less than 5 percent of them have any involvement with a government forestry agency or private group." Additional goals are to facilitate the sharing of information and to act as a clearinghouse for technical support, grant information, etc.

The bylaws state the mission as follows:

"To provide our country's 10 million non-industrial private forest landowners, who manage or wish to manage their forest resources under responsible forest stewardship principles, with an opportunity to network for the purpose of inspiring, encouraging, educating and listening to other landowners, the non-landowning public, elected officials and our children, focused on appropriate and sustainable

use of all forest resources, and the positive role private forest landowners play in the economic and environmental future of the United States."

Two areas of work have been identified as priorities for the national network. One is for the network to serve as a spokesperson for private family forests at national meetings. Recently James spoke at the National Governor's Association meeting and at a national meeting of the U.S.F.S. This is a way for forest landowners to be heard in a similar way to other organized groups.

Another area of work will be the formation of a web site for forest landowners. Categories of information to be provided will include tree identification for different parts of the country; urban forestry; forest facts; forest management; forest agency and industry organization links; economic information relating to forestry; and a listing of schools and colleges with forestry or environmental studies. The list is sure to grow as the site is developed.

Because James Malone is now chairman of the network, the national office is located in Mobile at the ATFA office. For more information about this national effort, contact the National Network of Private Forest Landowners, C/O University of Mobile, P.O. Box 13220, Mobile, AL 36663-0220; 251-442-2424. ☎

ATFA "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" Leadership Conference Schedule

July 12-13

Joe Wheeler State Park
Rogersville, AL

September 13-14

Lakepoint Lodge
Eufaula, AL

October 4-5

Gulf Shores State Park
Gulf Shores, AL

For more information call the ATFA at 251-442-2424.