



Tree Farmer of the Year

SLIPPERY HILLS TREE FARM

Dr. Dwayne Wilson, Wildersville

*Nominated by Jon Marden,
TN Division of Forestry, Area Forester*

Located in Northeast Henderson County, is Slippery Hills Tree Farm, owned and operated by Dr. Dwayne Wilson. The farm has been in the Wilson family since 1849 when Uriah Leonard bought the land from the State of Tennessee. The Wilson's grandchildren will become the 6th generation owners. Dr. Wilson can trace back much of the history of this farm to his great grandfather, Dr. Dan Bradfield whose log cabin (built in 1870) is being carefully renovated by Dr. Wilson. Dr. Wilson assumed part ownership of the 134.5 acre property in 1957 and has since added acreage to the tract for a total of 405 acres. The property became Tree Farm certified in 1985.

Dr. Wilson has quite the story to tell and has many ongoing, exciting projects "in the works." He has decided to see "what retirement feels like" by switching from Executive Vice-President and CFO of Freed Hardeman University to full time teaching at the same institution which allows for "summers off". It should be noted that Dr. Wilson serves as Treasurer of the 412 Corridor Forestry Association, and is very active in many regional forestry education events. He has held several field days on the Slippery Hills Tree Farm.

The real meat and taters of this story is the forest management on his Tree Farm. He has a hands-on role and intimate knowledge of every last acre. The management of Dr. Wilson's Tree Farm started back in 1970 with improvement cutting. Back in those days, Dr. Wilson would fell and pull out the trees he needed to cut and the local logger would come and collect them. Nowadays, all aspects of his forest management are done personally by Dr. Wilson along with help of his area TN Division of Forestry area forester, Jon Marden. Dr. Wilson explains that his 4-step process for managing for quality white and other oaks include:

- Mechanically control shade tolerant mid-story stems
- Chemically treat invasives and stumps of non-desirable previous removed
- Cut low vigor pulpwood stems
- Release high quality crop trees and provide for quality regeneration by thinning low quality saw timber

Dr. Wilson doesn't use loggers or forestry vendors to do this work...he does it all himself. He even hauls the pulpwood and sawtimber to the mills himself with the two log trucks

he purchased. It's not an uncommon sight to see Dr. Wilson running a load of pulpwood down to the Gorman Wood Yard near Waverly. Over the last 5 years, Dr. Wilson has cut and hauled around 60,000 bd. Ft. of sawtimber and 505 tons of pulpwood. He has lost track of how many backpack sprayers of herbicide he's used to treat invasives and shade tolerant mid-story stems but thinks he uses about 100 each year.

Dr. Wilson states, "My intent is to leave a much better stand of timber that what we started with."

Dr. Wilson and Slippery Hills Tree Farm is truly a Tree Farm success story. TFA joins the Tennessee Tree Farm Committee on congratulating Dr. Wilson and his family as "2019 Tree Farmer of the Year."