



"Connecting people with nature by creating a national network of protected, mature, native forests"



April 9, 2025

The Pearman Forest at the LaRue County Environmental Research and Education Center inducted into The Old-Growth Forest Network

The Pearman Forest at the LaRue County Environmental Education and Research Center was inducted into the Old-Growth Forest Network on April 9, 2025. Brian Kane, Mid-Atlantic Director of the Old-Growth Forest Network, conveyed the distinction to the LaRue County Fiscal Court, The City of Hodgenville, The Knob Creek Conservancy, and invited guests at the forest entrance.

The 80-acre highly mature forest is nestled within the 217-acre preserve. The 80 acres exist in two adjacent tracts, and all 80 acres qualify as old-growth containing over 25 tree species represented. Some of the trees date to the late 1800's with trunks measuring 30 to 36" in diameter. The old-growth stands feature scattered blowdowns in varying states of decay, pit and mound topography, and no signs of human disturbance other than foot paths.

The LaRue County Environmental Education and Research Center was purchased by the LaRue County Fiscal Court in the fall of 2000 with funding from the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund. The land was purchased from Robert G. Pearman's surviving children. Robert bought the first of several tracts of land in 1921 that would become the Pearman Farm.

The forest offers visitors with access to roughly 1.25 miles of hiking trails with the revival of the East and West Primitive Trails by the Knob Creek Conservancy. The trails present users with a glimpse of a true mature forest, interaction with interpretive tree identification signs, a website, and wildlife viewing. The tree identification signage and interactive website was created by LaRue County High School students in teacher Amy Litton's dual credit 2023-24 biology class.

"Pearman Forest at the LaRue County Environmental Education and Research Center hasn't been touched since the days of Abraham Lincoln. To preserve such heritage and be recognized by the national Old-Growth Forest Network is a great honor to LaRue County," said Blake Durrett, LaRue County Judge Executive.

Hodgenville Mayor Jim Phelps added, "It is rare to see a mature growth forest this day and time. We are fortunate to have access to a greenspace where we can witness trees that date back to the late 19th century."

The Pearman Forest joins five other Kentucky forests already in the Network. Brian Kane noted, "With this remarkable forest in Network, we are pleased that more attention is being paid to these valuable forests that perform many ecological services in their communities - they reduce stormwater runoff, they store carbon, lower surface temperatures, and provide restful settings to deepen our understanding of the natural world."

Kane added, "We could not grow the old-growth network without the efforts of our volunteer county coordinators, who help us to identify old-growth forest in their home counties. We are particularly grateful to Jim B.Phelps who identified and nominated this rare forest that serves many members of the community."

The Old-Growth Forest Network (OGFN) connects people with nature by creating a national network of protected, mature, publicly accessible, native forests. OGFN intends to preserve at least one forest in every county in the U.S. that can sustain a forest. OGFN identifies forests for the Network, ensures their protection from logging, and informs people of the forest locations.

Founded in 2012 by Dr. Joan Maloof, the network currently has over 280 forests in the Network across 39 states. OGFN recognizes exceptional forest advocates, educates about the ecological benefits of old-growth forests, and speaks out regarding immediate threats to specific ancient forests. Learn more at <http://www.oldgrowthforest.net>.

Interested volunteers are welcome to contact OGFN through the website: www.oldgrowthforest.net.

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