



CONTACT

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Forester

The American Chestnut Foundation
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WHAT: Training Workshop for American Chestnut Restoration and Surface Mine Reforestation

WHEN: March 27, 2014 from 6:00pm – 8:30pm

WHERE: Pike County Central High School Library
100 Winners Circle Dr.
Pikeville, KY 41501

The American Chestnut Foundation Continues Historically Largest Project to Establish American Chestnut Trees on Reclaimed Mine Lands

Anyone interested in learning about American chestnut restoration, opportunities for surface mine reforestation, USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Programs, The American Chestnut Foundation's (TACF) breeding program, and volunteer opportunities with TACF is invited to attend the evening program from 6:00 – 8:30pm on March 27. Persons wishing to assist with the surface mine reclamation planting in Pike County on April 5, or with subsequent monitoring of the planting, are particularly encouraged to attend the workshop at the Pike County Central High School Library. Prospective volunteers who cannot attend the talk can email or call Michael French at (812) 447-3285 (michael@acf.org). This workshop will inform attendees about American chestnut history and biology and TACF's efforts to restore this tree to our forests. Attendees will also learn about opportunities for landowner assistance for reforesting surface mines, surface mine reclamation and reforestation techniques, and the significance of this planting.

The planting in Pike County is a continuation of a large-scale, multi-year project by TACF to reforest 12 reclaimed mine sites throughout five states (PA, OH, WV, VA, KY) funded in part by a Conservation Innovation Grant from NRCS. Over three years, Approximately 250,000 seedlings, including more than 14,000 blight-resistant American chestnuts will be planted by TACF and project cooperators on a total of 360 acres. This project is the largest planting of potentially blight-resistant American chestnut trees in the Foundation's history and marks a milestone in the restoration of this once dominant native tree. Forester Michael French of The American Chestnut Foundation says, "This NRCS grant is allowing us to demonstrate how chestnuts and high value hardwoods can return mine sites to a healthy forest, and also to improve water quality and wildlife habitat."

On April 5, The American Chestnut Foundation will plant approximately 625 potentially blight-resistant American chestnuts on 1 acre of a reclaimed coal mine site in Pike County. Another 29 acres surrounding the 1 acre area will also be reforested with high-value hardwoods by volunteers as a part of an outreach program by partnering organizations. TACF's potentially blight-resistant American chestnuts are the result of more than 28 years of careful breeding and research by TACF's Scientists in an effort to restore this native tree. Assisting in the April 5 volunteer tree planting event are volunteers from the local area and Warren Wilson College in North Carolina.

Once the mighty giants of the eastern forests, American chestnuts stood up to 100 feet tall, and numbered in the billions. They were a vital part of the forest ecology, a key food source for wildlife and an essential component of the human economy. In 1904, a blight accidentally imported from Asia, spread rapidly through the American chestnut population. By 1950 it had killed virtually all the mature trees from Maine to Georgia. Several attempts to breed blight resistant trees in the mid-1900s were unsuccessful.

In 1983, a dedicated group of scientists formed The American Chestnut Foundation and began a special breeding process, which in 2005 produced the first potentially blight resistant trees called Restoration Chestnuts 1.0. Now assisted by almost 6,000 members and volunteers in 23 states, the organization is undertaking the planting of Restoration Chestnuts in select locations throughout the eastern US as part of the Foundation's early restoration efforts.

TACF is a 501(c)(3) conservation organization headquartered in Asheville, NC. For more information on TACF and their work to restore the American chestnut tree, contact Mila Kirkland at (828) 281-0047 or email: mila@acf.org. Or visit www.acf.org.