



West Virginia Division of Forestry
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Joe Manchin III, Governor
Randy Dye, Director/State Forester

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Delegate Wants Your Help to Find the Eastern Panhandle's Largest Tree

MARTINSBURG, W.Va. - Del. John Overington is working with the Eastern Panhandle Conservation District (EPCD) and the West Virginia Division of Forestry to find the biggest tree in the Eastern Panhandle, but he needs your help. In exchange, if the tree you nominate is the largest in the Eastern Panhandle, Overington will donate \$500 to you or the charity of your choice. The deadline to enter is July 31, 2009, and the winner will be recognized at the EPCD Fall Banquet.

Trees will be measured using the criteria of the West Virginia Big Tree Program. Points will be determined based on the tree's circumference at 4.5 feet above ground, total height and crown spread, and the tree with the most points wins. Trees will be verified by the Division of Forestry. In addition to the \$500 prize, the winner will receive a copy of the poem "Trees" by Joyce Kilmer.

Overington says that his lifetime interest in trees was due in large part to his grandfather. "Fred W. Besley, my maternal grandfather, was appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt to help determine whether forestland could be best managed through a state or federal system," Overington says. "That appointment led to my grandfather becoming Maryland's first state forester. He served 36 years in that capacity and became the nation's longest serving state forester."

Overington, who serves on the state legislature's Forest Management Review Commission, says that he and his wife JoAnn have planted thousands of trees on their farm in the Bedington area. "Trees have special meaning for me, and I hope this contest can become an annual event." Overington says he hopes to help increase the public's appreciation of the benefits of trees. "As humans we use oxygen and give off carbon dioxide, trees and plants do the opposite."

For more information about the contest, contact Sara Wuertenberg at (304) 263-4376 extension 116 or visit the Web site, www.morgancountytrees.com.

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