MISSOURI WALNUT COUNCIL HOSTS SPRING FIELD DAY

The Missouri Chapter Walnut Council held their spring field day on Friday, March 20 and Saturday, March 21. They were fortunate to enjoy excellent weather on both days! On Friday, they began the visit at the log purchasing yard of Independent Stave Company (ISC) mill located in New Florence. Josh, the log buyer at ISC, went through the evaluation process with the members on how they grade and assign values on potential white oak stave logs. Brandon Wagner, the mill operator, discussed the processes they use in the mill and the differences in the staves they saw from logs. He also discussed the company's marketing, detailing the buyers of their staves and the destinations where pallets of staves are shipped.

Following the mill tour attendees went to the Copper Mule Distillery in Hermann where they sampled three of their bourbons followed by an interesting tour of their distillery. The owner of Copper Mule has many years of experience in planning distillery, and he often consults with companies designing the unique equipment needed when going into this business.

The Friday evening gathering was at the Scenic Regional Library in Hermann that began with the chapter business meeting followed with a catered meal and two speakers. Brian Schweiss, University of Missouri Forestry Extension, showcased the Missouri Woodland Mentor series developed in cooperation with the Missouri Department of Conservation. He discussed critical steps we need to follow “Ensuring the Future of Oak” that includes white oak regeneration plus the need to manage the growth stages in a white oak stand. Dusty Walter, University of Missouri, discussed the future of the oak stave industry using an AI generated response to a question he posed to Google Gemini that yielded a very informative five-page report that begins with the statement, “White Oak (Quercus alba) is a powerhouse of the North American forest, prized equally buy timber managers, distillers, and wildlife.”

Saturday morning, attendees met at the Harlan Palm family tree farm near Calwood. Brandon Palm, Harlan’s son, detailed the farm history and all the work his father had completed since 1975 when he and wife Betty first acquired this 33-acre property.

Bill Altman, member and consulting forester, discussed invasive species control and the need for the Palm family to keep thinning the walnut trees to ensure the quality of future harvests. Fred Crouse, member and consulting forester, reviewed Harlan's efforts in pruning and thinning hundreds of walnut trees, which improved the woodland’s timber quality. Jim Ball, member, carried out a demonstration of a Stihl power pole saw, demonstrating the saw pointing out the efficiency in pruning time, plus when used with the harness unit, it saves wear and tear on your shoulders.

After the tour concluded Saturday at noon, the group met at the Banded Rooster for lunch to begin planning the October forestry field day.