

Maryland Forestry and Parks
 CENTENNIAL
1906-2006

Celebrating a Century of Conservation and Recreation

April 5, 2006 is a very special day for the Maryland Forest Service.

Not only is it Arbor Day, when we celebrate trees and recognize the many values and benefits trees provide to society; but, it is also Founder's Day.

One hundred years ago on this day, April 5, 1906, Governor Edwin Warfield signed into law the 1906 Forestry Conservation Act. This marked the official beginning of the State Board of Forestry, now the Maryland Forest Service. This law introduced scientific forestry management on both public and private land in Maryland, the third in the country to initiate a statewide forestry conservation program.

Founder's Day is a reminder of the substantial role the Maryland Forest Service has played locally, regionally, and nationally, in forest conservation over the past 100 years. It's a time to reflect and take pride in our many accomplishments, and to renew our commitment to be a powerful voice for forest conservation, and remain ready and relevant to confront the conservation challenges we are sure to face in the next century.

Fred W. Besley, a student of Gifford Pinchot, the father of American forestry, was Maryland's first State Forester (1906-1942). He was a true forestry pioneer who brought scientific forest management to Maryland. He was a man of vision and courage who through determination, perseverance and action initiated in Maryland innovative forest conservation programs that other states later imitated, among them to name a few: the forest tree nursery, cooperative forest management program, outdoor recreation on public lands, forest fire prevention and suppression program, Big Tree Champion Program, and environmental education.

Over the past 100 years the Maryland Forest Service has continued to be blessed with great conservation leaders like Besley and dedicated employees who have made great strides in forest conservation. It didn't happen by accident. Just think of it, a little barely more than 100 years ago, there were no state forests, no state parks. Today, 100 years later, Marylanders can enjoy almost

500,000 acres of public lands, making up about 10 percent of Maryland's total land base. More than eleven million people visit the state public lands annually to enjoy the great outdoors.

A little more than 100 years ago, only 20 percent of the forest cover remained east of the Mississippi River. In Maryland, only 30 percent of the original pre-colonial forest cover remained. Conservationists of the time described the Maryland forests as "devastated", the landscape was cut over and ravaged by fire, consisting primarily of seedling and sapling sized trees as far as the eye could see.

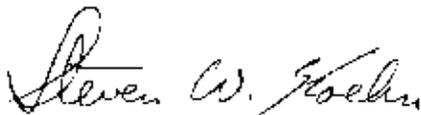
Today, Maryland's Forest land base has increased to 41 percent, an incredible conservation achievement when you consider that during the past 100 years, Maryland's population tripled in size from 1.3 million to 5.6 million. The Maryland Forest Service has a long, proven track record of restoring, managing and protecting the forested landscape and demonstrating it is possible to have economic growth, increase the forest land base, and improve quality of life all at the same time.

The Maryland Forest Service's adopted Centennial slogan is "**Celebrating Our Past, Creating Our Future.**" The slogan invites us to celebrate our conservation accomplishments together, and to create a future that guarantees a quality of life for our children and future generations.

Conservation leaders of the past worked hard to restore the cut-over landscape. One of the environmental challenges of our time is answering the ever present question of how to balance economic growth with the conservation of the forest land base at a time when Maryland is being developed at the rate of 8,600 acres a year. Maryland has a 100-year proven track record of conservation leadership to celebrate; it is now up to us together to create a future that will be celebrated 100 years from now during the bicentennial.

Don't forget to visit the DNR Centennial Web page at http://dnr.maryland.gov/centennial/gallery_intro.asp

What a Day to Celebrate - Happy Arbor Day and Founder's Day!



Steven W. Koehn
Director/State Forester

