



Indiana Department of Natural Resources
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In 2001, the Indiana Division of Forestry celebrated its 100th anniversary. They've come a long way in such a short time-proving that dedication, excellence and teamwork can change the course of history.

When nostalgic, most people talk about their humble beginnings. What makes this centennial so special is that the Division of Forestry had almost nothing with which to begin.

In the 1700 and 1800s, Indiana's lush forestland drew tens of thousands of settlers. As the state's population grew, more forestland was cleared to make way for fields and pastures. The nation's want for quality wood products made timber an early and successful commodity - almost too successful.



By 1900, Indiana was the leading hardwood producer in the nation. However, this honor came with a price no one wanted to pay. By 1901, forests in Indiana were at their lowest point. Thousands of acres of hardwood forests had been converted to fields and pastures to keep up with the growing demand for timber and farmland. Many of these new fields were on soil types and slopes that were unsuited for agriculture and resulted in almost immediate erosion. As a result, Indiana's original 20 million acres of forests dwindled to less than two million acres in less than 100 years. At that rate, experts predicted there would be little to no forestland remaining by the 1930s.

Scholars and concerned citizens knew that forested lands were the least susceptible to erosion and that reestablishing healthy forests would mend the soil erosion problem while maintaining the booming timber economy. They worked during the latter part of the 19th century to convince lawmakers to take swift action.

In March 1901, Governor Durbin signed the statute establishing the Indiana Board of Forestry. This act is considered the birth of the Division of Forestry. The law created one of the first natural resource agencies in the state and in the country.

Since the Division's creation, those initial efforts and the work of a growing number of forest stewards have carried it through a century of success:

- In 1903, the state established the Forest Reservation (now called Clark State Forest) and began conducting tree planting research and trials.
- The next year came the first state statutes protecting city and roadside trees and addressing wildfire problems.
- A big boost to Indiana forests came with the 1921 Classified Forest Act. Just as it is now, most forestland in Indiana was privately owned. The act provided incentives for landowners to conserve their forestland and established a free forest management assistance program available upon request.



- In the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) worked to expand the state forest system.
- The baby boom of the 1950s led to the massive growth of cities and towns in the 1970s. New scientific theories, discoveries and innovations furthered the practice of forestry as a science. As a result, Community and Urban Forestry, Forest Health and Tree Improvement programs were created. In addition, the Division of Forestry significantly increased the number of professional foresters involved in public and private forestry programs.
- By the 1990s, Indiana forests were growing and thriving. Ninety years of good forestry in Indiana had done its job. Increased interest by lay citizens, landowners and scientists led to expanded efforts to balance profits with non-timber resources and education.

Today, Indiana has over three million more acres of forestland than it did when the Division of Forestry was created. According to the USFS's most recent Forest Inventory Analysis report, Forests of Indiana: A 1998 Overview, the state's forestland (public and private) has never been stronger or healthier. Hoosiers are able to use much of Indiana's forestland for a variety of purposes, including recreation, wildlife management, and timber production while sustaining it for the future. It's taken more than just time--forest and forestry in Indiana owes its existence to the foresight and dedication of eleven state foresters; thousands of Division of Forestry employees; the cooperation of professional foresters; private landowners and the support of concerned citizens.

If past success is any indication of the future, the words of Charles Deam, Indiana's first State Forester, will still ring true a century from now, "We should be proud that the work of forestry is growing in Indiana."

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