

Morgan-Monroe State Forest

- **Native Americans occupied the area for thousands of years before settlement.**
- **Circa 1800:** Entire area was most likely older growth forest, featuring predominantly oak-hickory with some beech-maple forest areas in stream valleys
- **Early 1800s:** Steppe Cemetery is established
- **1830-1894:** Sharpstown, now in the area of the Scout Ridge Nature Preserve, MM office and FHQ compound, is formed
 - Joseph K. Sharpe
 - Tannery; use of oak to tan hides
- **Late 1800s – early 1900s:** Settlers did not find forests an advantage. Cleared the land for farming and used lumber extensively for building homes and structures.
 - 10-Year Lands: Wooded land flat enough to farm or use as pasture was converted to new fields as older ones became too eroded or depleted to be productive
 - Remnant forests growing on land too steep or wet to farm were often grazed, burned and heavily logged
- **1929:** First land acquisition that was to become MMSF
 - Fire suppression efforts begin at MMSF
- **1930s:** Very little forest cover existed in the region
 - Reforestation efforts by CCC – planted hundreds of acres of pine to replace worn-out farmland; hardwoods would not grow in the depleted soils
- **1931:** First fire tower erected, Mason Ridge T10
- **1932:** MMSF expanded to 11,372 acres
- **1933:** Civilian Conservation Corps established two camps at MMSF - #515 and #516
 - Camp 516 moved to Mammoth Cave NP in 1934
 - Projects of the CCC at MMSF included the Central States Forest Experiment Station (1934) (Poling Cabin, now Cherry Lake Lodge); Bean Blossom Lake, Bryant Creek Lake, and Cherry Lake; Bean Blossom, Bryant Creek, Cherry Lake, Forest Oven, and Scout Ridge Shelters; the Forest Barn (1934); the Assistant Property Manager's house (1940)
- **1941:** CCC Camp #515 was removed and the land returned to its previous appearance.
- **1954:** Businesses in Martinsville organized effort to have State Forest become a State Park; declined
- **1950s-60s:** Professional foresters were few and far between on State Forest properties. As a result, scientific management languished for years.
- **1958:** Tulip Tree Trace trail developed. Based on old Native American and pioneer stagecoach trails. Trail was 22 miles, between Yellowwood and MM. Established for Boy Scouts to complete a badge.
- **1960s:** Continuous forest inventory (CFI) plots established on State Forests. Plots are located randomly across all State Forest properties, approximately one plot for every 40 acres. Plots re-measured in the 1980s. All data from plots was stored at MMSF. IN DoF took over plot measurement in 2002. CFI plots are now re-measured every five years. Data taken at plots include measurements that describe forest site attributes; stand characteristics; tree measurements on live and dead stems such as species, diameter, height, damage, tree quality; counts of regeneration; and estimates of growth, mortality, and removals.
 - Division of Forestry was able to hire a few foresters to perform management work on properties.



Morgan-Monroe State Forest today



Morgan County circa 1930s

- **1969:** Scout Ridge Nature Preserve dedicated. It is 15 acres, the second NP in the state. No timber has been harvested in the area.
- **1970s:** Management units (tracts) were designated within MMSF and management plans written on how best to treat each unit or tract. Harvest program established under philosophy that required that no more timber be removed than what the land was growing.
- **1981:** Backcountry Area (BCA) established in MM and YW.
 - Backcountry areas represent another designation based upon approved uses, primarily for recreation in nature. These were the first designated State Forest areas to allow backpack-type camping in areas other than campgrounds. In order to provide an improved backpacking experience, Backcountry areas have designated management guidelines designed to provide a more primitive experience. This includes limits on timber management intensity, wildlife management intensity, and the maintenance of access roads.
- **1987:** 1,000 acre wildland fire on MM/YW; suspected arson
- **1998:** Ameriflux/FLUX Tower established (IU)
 - Measures comparative humidity and weather to gain a further understanding of carbon dioxide exchange between forest ecosystems and the atmosphere
- **1995-96:** MMSF and YWSF combined under one manager
- **1999:** Arsonist was active at MM/YW starting 35 fires between the two properties; this was an extremely dry, drought year
- **2002:** Tecumseh Trail opened
- **2004:** Ravinia Woods became part of MMSF and Morgan County Parks
- **2006:** Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment established; 100-year research project that is investigating the effects of forest management practices on plants, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects of MM/YW
 - Three years of pre-practice data collection
 - 2008-09: first harvesting practices put into place
 - Single tree selection
 - Group selection
 - Clearcut
- **2009-10:** Mason Ridge Fire Tower reconstructed by Young Hoosier Conservation Corps
- **2011-12:** Poling Cabin (formerly the Central States Forest Experiment Station) was reconstructed and is now Cherry Lake Lodge

Sources

CCC at Morgan-Monroe:

<https://livingnewdeal.org/us/in/martinsville-in/>

Backcountry Areas:

https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/files/fo-Conserving_special_places.pdf

Region History:

<https://foresthistor.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Looking-at-History-Indiana-Hoosier-National-Forest-1996.pdf>

Mason Ridge Fire Tower:

https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5447821.pdf

Reece, Gabrielle. 2015. A History of Morgan-Monroe State Forest, Ball State University.

[file:///C:/Users/DRogler/Downloads/R438_2015ReeceGabrielle%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/DRogler/Downloads/R438_2015ReeceGabrielle%20(1).pdf)

The Division of Forestry: Our First 100 Years, 1901-2001.