

A Partial

History of Massachusetts Forestry

1. Massachusetts people concerned about forests in 1626 with passing of ordinance prohibiting cutting of timber within Plymouth Colony without official consent.

In 1631, Massachusetts Bay Colony prohibited setting of fires except at certain times of year, under pain of paying damages.

2. In 1837 Massachusetts people so concerned with loss of forests that they established a Legislative Commission to report on the forest resources of Massachusetts which was published in 1846 by George B. Emerson. It showed only 1/5th of Massachusetts covered by forests at that time due to heavy clearing for farms. At this time the beginning railroads were burning wood at the rate of 54,000 cords a year and everyone was burning wood for heating and cooking using over 1½ million cords of wood annually.

3. Massachusetts people have been some of the leading Conservationists of this Country.

a) Frederick Law Olmstead (great landscape architect) was the leader in getting President Abraham Lincoln to set aside Yosemite Park in 1864 (1st National Park).

b) Charles W. Elliot, son of early President of Harvard and a landscape architect, was instrumental in setting aside public reservations 1st thru him Legislature created Trustees of Reservations in 1892 2nd by 1900 creation of the beginning of the Metropolitan Park system around Boston (now MDC) of more than 10,000 acres of parks, parkways and beaches.

c) Charles S. Sargent one of greatest leaders of Forestry in U.S. was Chairman of the Commission on National Forests with Gifford Pinchot in 1897.

4. Olmstead, Sargent and Allen Chamberlain, a feature writer for Boston Transcript newspaper and President of Appalachian Mountain Club with others including Hon. William C. Whitney former Secretary of Navy under President Cleveland ^{formed the} Massachusetts Forestry Association in 1899. Whitney was owner of 10,000 acres of forest in Lenox which later became the October Mt. State Forest in 1922. This organization got the Legislature to appropriate money to buy Mt. Greylock Reservation in 1899.
5. Not until 1904 was the first state forestry agency established in Massachusetts by the Legislature. In 1904 the office of State Forester was established with Alfred Ackerman as first State Forester, with two assistants Ralph C. Hawley and Leverett Bradley. Ackerman resigned in 1906 and was replaced by Frank W. Rane. In 1907 Rane hired two recent Harvard Forestry School graduates J.J. Dearborn and Harold O. Cook. Harold O. Cook later became Massachusetts 1st Chief Forester (1919 - 1962).
6. Reforestation Law of 1908 allowed State to take and reforest private lands which could be redeemed by the landowner within 10 years by paying costs of reforestation. Of 200 lots, 100 were never redeemed and became the nucleus of some of our State Forests. The outstanding one is the Colrain or H.O. Cook State Forest.
7. Congressman John Weeks from Massachusetts was able in 1911 to get Congress to enact the Weeks bill which established first National Forests in the East and the beginning of organized Forest Fire Protection. Massachusetts acquired its first Chief Fire Warden at this time, M.C. Hutchins.
8. In 1914 the State Forester and staff were put under a newly created State Forest Commission, Chaired by Harold Parker a distinguished Civil Engineer

and former Chairman of the State Highway Commission. Otter River Forest, the first State Forest was acquired by purchase in 1915, a tract of over 1800 acres. The Commission also recommended the immediate purchase of the areas now known as Myles Standish State Forest and Harold Parker State Forest. Another recommendation was followed by the purchase of the Mohawk Trail State Forest.

9. With the entry of this Country into World War I, the Massachusetts Foresters organized 10 sawmill units within 30 days to be shipped to Europe. Charles R. Atwood, a forester in western Massachusetts became the foreman of the first sawmill unit which was shipped to England. Other units went to Scotland and France.

The first Cut-A-Cord Program was organized at this time.

10. At the end of the war in 1919, the Legislature reorganized state departments and we now became the Massachusetts Department of Conservation with William Bazeley its first Commissioner. This lasted until 1953 when it became the present Department of Natural Resources.

There was no organized recreation until in the late 1930's with exception of small picnic and camping areas on Mohawk Trail, Myles Standish and Otter River Forests. The principal divisions of work were forest fire protection, Gypsy Moth control and forest development through acquisition, tree planting and forest improvement work.

11. In 1933 the great depression brought on the national Civilian Conservation Corp with 50 200-man CCC camps in Massachusetts located on State Forests and Park acres.

These CCC camp crews built many miles of forest roads, planted thousands of tree seedlings, improved thousands of acres of our state forests, built numerous ponds for recreation use together with many facilities for swimming, picnicking and camping. It was the greatest multiple use develop-

ment these areas have ever had.

12. Toward the end of the C.C.C. era on September 21, 1938, Massachusetts together with all of central New England received the worst hurricane in modern history. The center of the storm went up the Connecticut Valley, with extreme rainfall and its destructive washouts on the West half and terrible forest destruction in Eastern Massachusetts where two (2) billion board feet of timber was blown down.
13. In 1951 under Commissioner Arthur T. Lyman the first Forestry work Camp was established on the Myles Standish State Forest under the supervision of this Department and the Massachusetts Department of Corrections.
14. In 1953 the present Department of Natural Resources was legislated and the programs under the old Department of Conservation became the programs of the Division of Forests and Parks.
Its first Director was Raymond J. Kenney.

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