

The Shirley Schweizer Winter Walk
scheduled for Saturday, January 23
HAS BEEN CANCELLED DUE TO SEVERE WINTER WEATHER

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Winter 2016



"Even in winter an isolated patch of snow has a special quality."

Andy Goldsworthy

Happy New Year to all, and welcome to our first issue of 2016!

This is a special edition, including a full-length [interview](#) with retired District Administrator, Bob Beanblossom. Also, you will find a tribute to charter Foundation member, [Flossie Kourey](#).

There is an update on the [Keystone mining site](#) as well as informational articles from volunteer contributors. Of course, look for regular features such as our [Superintendent's report](#) and the [Nature Quiz](#).



Events Calendar

Monday, February 8

5:30 pm - Dinner (if interested)

6:30 pm - Meetings Convene

Board Meeting of the KSF Foundation

**Harding's Restaurant
(located at 2772 Pennsylvania Avenue, Charleston)**

There will be two separate meetings. First the Annual meeting of the general membership (everyone welcome), including nominations for new Board members. Followed by the quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors including election of officers.

**Members Welcome
Please Join Us!**

Saturday, April 16
9:00 am

Osbra Eye Memorial Wildflower Walks

Register at 8:30 am at swimming pool area. Adults \$5; Students under 16, \$2. Hot dogs, soft drinks, and cookies for sale. Door prizes, raffle. For additional information, contact: Forest Office, 304-558-3500

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Kanawha State Forest Foundation Presents

**2016 Osbra Eye Memorial
Wildflower Walks**



Saturday, April 16

**Register 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. at swimming pool area
of Kanawha State Forest**

Adults: \$5.00 * Under age 16: \$2.00

Walks 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

***A Variety of Walks, including
Wildflowers, Medicinal/Edible Plants,
Trees, Beginning and Advanced Birding,
Photography, etc.
(Be sure to bring a camera & binoculars!)***



*Come Join Us For the Sights
and Sounds of the Natural World!*

Walks assisted by

Department of Natural Resources
Handlan Chapter Brooks Bird Club
Mary Ingles Trail Blazers
West Virginia Native Plant Society



Door Prizes

Raffle

Hot Dog Sale

For More Information, Call 304-558-3500

From the Superintendent's Desk

by Kevin Dials



In recent days, we said goodbye to 2015 and welcomed a new year at Kanawha State Forest. As has become our custom, we welcomed the new year with a First Day Hike. An estimated 150 hikers joined us at the pool parking lot at 2:00 p.m. Roughly half of the hikers took the five mile option, led by Scott Fields and Nancy Bricker. The other half joined me and Taylor Giles for the two mile option. Those who completed the hike earned a snowflake patch, just like last year. We managed to get everyone back to the pool lot without anyone getting lost or injured, which is a feat in itself when leading such a large hike. There was news coverage from WCHS and WOWK television stations, as well as photographs featured in the Charleston paper and the WVDNR Employee Newsletter.

For 2016, many of the rates have been changed at Kanawha State Forest, in keeping with changes throughout the WV State Park System. Only the rental rates of our campsites have remained the same as they were last year. The most drastic changes occurred to our picnic shelters, which are now \$100.00 to rent on the weekends. My plan is to upgrade the amenities at the shelters, hopefully to offset the negative perception of the rate increase. We have already begun replacing existing water supplies with frost-free hydrants, which should provide usable water at each shelter. We have also begun replacing the stand grills at each shelter, many of which were badly rusted, broken or missing. The acquisition of grills was made possible by a \$6,168 donation from Bayer CropScience.

Outdoors reporter John McCoy brought to light our needs last year, when he included an article with photos in the *Charleston Gazette*. Other repairs and improvements to the shelters will occur this year as time and money allow. Shelter 5 will get some new logs on some of its railings, as a few were removed and burned by vandals. All the shelters will receive a coat of stain as the weather allows. Most all of the shelters have received new roofs in the last 10 years.

Kanawha State Forest staff, all of whom stay busy with the daunting task of maintaining our facilities, will be even busier this year. We have been asked to assist WVDNR in the development of a newly donated property in the area. Forks of Coal Natural Area, a 102 acre property at the confluence of the Big and Little Coal Rivers, was donated by Mr. Jack Workman. Mr. Workman's vision for the area includes hiking trails and an interpretive and wildlife center, which will be managed by the Parks and Recreation section of WVDNR. Existing commercial buildings on the property will serve as DNR's

District 5 offices for Wildlife and Law Enforcement. Those entities currently rent office and storage space elsewhere. The move to these buildings will save the DNR many thousands of dollars in rent and storage fees. The assignment of Kanawha State Forest staff to Forks of Coal is temporary in nature; we have pledged to lend a hand until the property is developed and permanent staff is assigned.

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IN MEMORIUM

by Bill Hall

Our Kanawha State Forest family lost a devout friend and supporter with the passing of Flossie Kourey on December 14, 2015. Flossie was a charter member and first secretary of the KSFF when it was founded in 1989. She was instrumental in pursuing a listing in the National Register of Historic Places for several of our original Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) structures. She continued to serve in various volunteer roles and was a reliable participant and assistant at Foundation events until no longer able to carry on for health reasons.

Flossie recently revived the plan to create an historic plaque for a prominent location in the Forest to commemorate the men of the CCC. She collaborated with Board member Rita Dale on this project which is nearing completion. The marker will soon be mounted in stone. She also led the design of an informational brochure honoring the CCC which will be made available in the Forest office.

We owe much to Flossie for helping develop the potential of Kanawha State Forest and every step forward will represent a part of her legacy.

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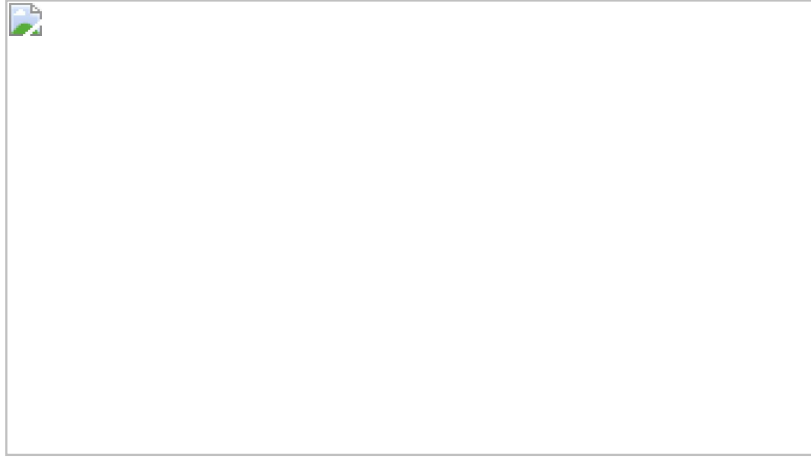
UPDATE ON KD#2

by Bill Hall and Chad Cordell (Kanawha Forest Coalition)

The Kanawha Forest Coalition (KFC) closed 2015 by submitting a citizen's complaint to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on December 26, based on results of their monitoring of the KD#2 mining site. They identified two separate incidents of illegal toxic discharges into headwaters of Davis Creek leading to formal Notices of Violation (NOV) filed with DEP. They also discovered another failure of a sediment/drainage control structure. Faulty reclamation work led to a landslide which blocked one of the primary outlets from the mine. Left unchecked, this could have potentially led to a much larger blowout of the drainage control structure allowing even more sediment and toxic runoff into our streams.

The KD#2 is still under a cessation order with only reclamation and maintenance work permitted. However, intermittent blasting on higher locations is ongoing to create fill material for reshaping the contour of the mountainside. According to the DEP, reclamation work is being managed by the assigned operator, Revelation Energy, which seems to be contracting out much of the work. While the cessation order is in effect, Keystone and DEP are negotiating the terms of a consent decree

which could allow mining to resume under specified verifiable conditions. The consent order would be issued as part of the Show-Cause process, but it remains unclear what the terms of that agreement will be or whether it



will specifically prohibit further mining on the permit, as already verbally promised by Harold Ward, Director of Mining and Reclamation. This would protect the remaining three-quarters of the permit area which has not been disturbed. In the meantime, volunteers will continue to regularly conduct water quality tests and other inspections to help ensure compliance with DEP regulations.

On another front, you may recall the KFC appealed the DEP's approval of the original mining permit for KD#2 to the WV Surface Mine Board (SMB). The SMB held a hearing in August 2014 on the issue and then took five months before ruling to uphold the permit. One of their main contentions was there was "no evidence demonstrating that mining operations would be seen from any portion of the park," which has been shown to be clearly false by observation from established trails in KSF. The SMB also essentially dismissed the public health concerns related to mountaintop removal mining in their statement "there has been no evidence that any of the (public) health concerns will transpire as a result of the mining operation."

The KFC subsequently appealed the SMB ruling to the Kanawha County Circuit Court and DEP responded with a motion to dismiss the appeal. A hearing was held in the courtroom of Judge Joanna Tabit on January 8 with attorney William DePaulo serving as counsel for the KFC. There were eleven spectators in support of the administrative appeal as well. Following nearly an hour of arguments by lawyers from both sides, the appeal was dismissed without prejudice. This will allow the KFC an opportunity to resubmit the appeal if and when active mining is about to resume. The request by Mr. DePaulo for the court to issue a stay on the original permit was denied.

The KSF Foundation will continue collaborating with the KFC in their mission to protect and preserve KSF from the ravages of MTR. We owe many thanks to Doug Wood and Jim Waggy who have led our effort in this cause.

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Thorny Mt. Fire Tower Birthday Weekend August 21, 2015

by Barb Koster

Christy Carr, Karen Bess, and I had a wonderful adventure in Seneca State Forest with an overnight stay at the Thorny Mt. Fire Tower.

The tower, built in 1935, includes a platform 53 feet above the top of a 3,445-foot mountain peak, providing a panoramic view of much of Pocahontas County and the Greenbrier River Valley. After the West Virginia Division of Forestry transferred the inactive fire tower to the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources a few years ago, state parks staff began refurbishing it to turn it into an out-of-the-way rustic retreat.



The Thorny Mountain Fire Tower was constructed in 1935 by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to provide better coverage of the Greenbrier River Valley. It is

a steel tower standing at 53 feet with a 14' x 14' living quarters. It is a unique tower for West Virginia in that it is the only one patterned after western types that utilize the living quarters and catwalk on the platform. At 3,445 feet above sea level, the Thorny Mountain tower is one of the highest-standing towers in West Virginia today. There are 69 steps from the base up to the overnight quarters.

The view from the tower was spectacular. The 360-degree view now is possible due to the clearing of mature trees that over the years had blocked the view.

Combustibles of any type are not permitted in the tower cabin. The steps from the ground to the cabin were replaced with treated oak in the same size as the original wooden steps. The decking at the cabin was replaced with treated pine to lighten the weight of the structure. The cabin floor and structures inside the cabin are original, a tribute to the craftsmanship of the men who constructed the tower in the mid-1930s.

The Thorny Mountain Fire Tower is reservable for overnight stays during the summer season. Accommodations in the tower cabin include two cots, firewood, a picnic table, grill, fire ring, and pit toilet at the tower base. The cabin features lighting powered by a solar battery storage.

The night was foggy after some evening rain but when I awakened during the night it had cleared and the stars were absolutely beautiful. The sunrise in the morning rising among the fog was also quite stunning to see. It was a wonderful overnight stay!

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Welcome New Members!

Melissa Rominske, Charleston

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Nature Quiz

Question:

This is an evergreen flowering plant with a wooly stem and leaves with silver veins and a broad stripe down the middle. The individual leaves are in a rosette and last for four years. This species may be found in hardwood or coniferous forest and often are growing on moss.

Answer:

(Answer will appear in the Spring issue of this Newsletter.)

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Log Ornaments

by Martha Hopper

Winter is a wonderful time to walk in the woods. With leaves lying dead on the ground and no wildflowers in sight, other wonders of nature become showier. This is when I especially notice what's growing on logs and dead trees: the decomposers, most common of which in KSF are turkey tails (*Trametes versicolor*) and false turkey tails (*Sternum ostrea*). These mushrooms are everywhere along our trails decorating fallen logs as though flocks of miniature turkeys are stuck in the wood. They are usually semicircular with multicolored bands.



There may be hundreds on a log; some two or three years old and some newly formed and thus brighter in color. False turkey tails have very smooth, white lumpy undersides while turkey tails have undersides with pores, so are finely textured and often yellow or beige.

Two other very showy winter mushrooms that I have found in KSF are the hemlock varnish shelf polypore (*Ganoderma tsugae*) and cinnabar-red polypore (*Pycnoporus cinnabarinus*). Both are bright orange but are found on different kinds of wood. The hemlock varnish shelf, which grows up to 15 inches wide, is found on dead or dying hemlocks and it looks as though it has been

varnished. When young, it is shiny bright yellowish-orange bordered in white, but as it ages its top and bottom turn deep red. The cinnabar-red polypore is a semicircular bright orange (but not shiny) bracket fungus that can grow up to 4 inches wide on dead broadleaf trees. It has a rough sandpaper-like top and turns pale as it ages. These are especially common in open areas where logging slash and brush are piled.

I hope that you will get a chance to find some of these log ornaments that nature has provided. A close inspection will prove that they are just as colorful and intriguing as any flower or leaf found in our woods.

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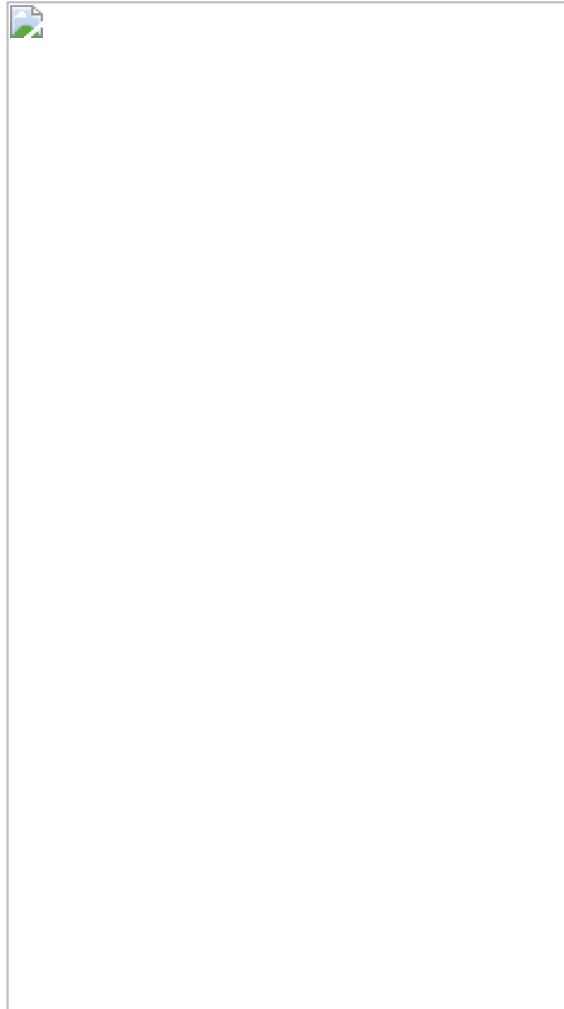
District Administrator for KSF Retires

by Bill Hall

On November 20, 2015, I met with Bob Beanblossom, retiring District Administrator for the State Parks section of the Division of Natural Resources. Bob supervised and served as legislative liaison for 25 separate state parks, forests (including KSF), and wildlife management areas from 1989 until his official retirement on December 1, 2015. We discussed his career with DNR, priorities and potential for KSF, special interest in forest fire control, and post-retirement plans. The following is a transcript of that interview:

My official title is District Administrator. I came to Charleston on December 1, 1989, so I have been in this job awhile. Actually at one time or another, I have directly supervised every state park and/or forest/WMA system in the state except for North Bend, Stonewall, Resort, and Blackwater Falls/Canaan Valley. Everything else I have supervised, from Cacapon to Cabwaylingo to Pipestem to Tomlinson Run. Currently my main job is to supervise 25 of 49 areas, including KSF. Most of my areas are in the central part of the state. I am official legislative liaison for the State park system and actually I coordinate all natural resource management activities for the Parks and Recreation section. For example, sending superintendents and key supervisory staff to fire school, coordinating insect and disease work, or planning meetings with the Corps of Engineers or Wildlife Resources. I generally take the lead on all natural resource programs.

I'm retiring on Nov 30, 2015, and there is a reason for selecting that date. It represents 42 years to the day with DNR. I started Dec 1, 1973. I was assigned to the position of county forest ranger in Mingo county. In that position, I was responsible for all forest fire control activities within an assigned unit. After about six years with the Division of Forestry, I saw an opportunity to move over to State Parks. It was a good opportunity, more money plus housing. So I transferred over to State Parks and became the superintend of Panther State Forest in McDowell county. I was there for about six years and then moved to the position of superintendent of Watters Smith Memorial State Park in Harrison county in 1986. This is a historical state park that I dearly loved; it is a beautiful area. And then the opportunity came to move into the state office in 1989 and I have been here ever since.



First and foremost, as I mentioned, my primary job is to supervise the field. I have always concentrated on that. I've tried to get out and meet the superintendents periodically, and really I never went out with a notebook or a pad and wrote up, "you need to do this or that." My approach is and has been to support the field. I go out and meet with the superintendents to see what they have accomplished, see what their needs are, see how I can help them in matters pertaining to budgeting, personnel management, or you name it.

The way I approach my duties, as far as supporting the field, I picked up from Osbra Eye; he was my regional administrator for the longest amount of time and influenced me longer than anyone. I always appreciated the way he treated me and I have always tried to treat the superintendents I work with the same way.

There are a couple of salient needs in the state parks system now, like every other state department. We have a backlog of repairs, alterations and equipment and maintenance needs. You can see that over at KSF, certainly. There are a number of things we need to do. First and foremost what I see for the future is a dedicated funding source to meet the needs of the Parks system. I have looked at it; there are no easy choices. We've researched it and two things come to mind that we could consider. In 1951 a tax was placed on soda in this state to fund the WVU School of Medicine, and to my knowledge that tax is still in place. If it were increased slightly, say another penny, maybe the parks system could share in the proceeds and that would be a funding source. That would be a possibility, but I haven't run the numbers. I wish it was my idea but it's not. I'll say that up front. Another source I have thought about is a bag tax. Put a penny on every plastic bag or paper bag that Walmart or Kroger uses and that would be a funding source, but I haven't run the numbers on that either.

Also from 1948 to 1977 West Virginia was adding a new state park every 23 months. Our last new facility was in 1990. So it's been 25 years since a facility was added to the state parks system, the North Bend Rail Trail. Before that, on July 1, 1999, Blennerhassett Island was brought into the parks system.

What I see in the future is the acquisition of more public land, but maybe not as developed as the current park system, perhaps green space with basic facilities, hiking trails, and so forth rather than going into large resorts and cabins. I think there is a scarcity of public land in the eastern panhandle as well as north, central and southwest West Virginia. All of these areas would benefit from acquisition of additional public lands. Growing up in Mingo County, in Gilbert, back then there was no internet at all, so I developed an interest in forestry and I knew by the time I had reached the sixth grade that I was going into forestry, and I wanted to learn something about that field. The most obvious part of the resource program in southern WV was fire control. Southern WV always had a tremendous fire history so that's what I wanted to do.

I believe my interest in fire control, even after I transferred into Parks, did not diminish and so I would go back and assist the Division of Forestry in their bad fire years in 1991, 1999, and 2001. I was proud to be part of a Fire Mobilization Advisory Committee that was established in the early 1990s. In 1993 I headed a subcommittee at a statewide fire conference, in conjunction with the Division of Forestry, the second in the state's history. The first was held at The Greenbrier in 1958. The one we did in 1993 was in Charleston and we had some facilitated discussions. I think that the most important idea that come out of that conference, although it wasn't totally a result of the conference, was the Division of Forestry acquired a bloodhound, and that really has reduced arson fires in the state. Yes, bloodhounds. They actually have two now and they can sniff out the scent of articles left behind. Historically, arson had been the leading cause of forest fires in this state; now it's secondary.

Now I don't take credit for that but I think that conference helped facilitate that idea. The bottom line is one of the things I'm kind of proud of, and that's my involvement in that aspect of resource management, educating the public and working to address a problem, and it is a problem still in this state.

The Division of Forestry closed all their fire towers in 1990. The U.S. Forest Service closed all of theirs in 1970 at the height of fire towers in this state. At that time, the State Division of Forestry operated about 62 and the U.S. Forest Service had started about 15. There are only about a dozen left standing today.

But that leads to another thing I'm kind of proud to have had a hand in. This summer

we restored Thorny Mountain fire tower and turned it into a rental unit. It has proven quite popular. Another thing that I am proud of, and which may be somewhat of a legacy, is I have either hired, or been involved in an interview that moved them down their career path, over 60% of superintendents working in West Virginia today. So I believe the park system is in good hands.

I have supervised Kanawha State Forest on two occasions. I was actually involved in Kanawha State Forest in 1992 and 1999 and then more recently I picked it back up again from January 1, 2013. I think that the current focus of management over there is serving well in meeting the needs of what most people want because the feedback I've gotten in the past is that we want to keep it a natural area. We want to concentrate on the development of hiking and biking trails as well as road maintenance. We don't want to see it turned into a megapark with cabins and all that stuff. Now that's the feedback I've generally gotten and I think it's important to keep it that way. The biggest need for Kanawha State Forest is one that I have supported and continue to support. It is a tremendous asset to have an office/visitor center with exhibits, auditorium space and modern technology for environmental education. That would be my dream for Kanawha State Forest and that is my number one priority.

Also, I would like to think I played somewhat of a role behind the scenes in working with the legislature and staff facilitating total transfer to the Parks and Recreation section in 1992. I attended the public meetings and, believe me, John Mitchell (former state senator) and I had a lot of late night phone calls that were not known at the time. I think that was a good move.

I will still be available to help in the park system when I can. As a matter of fact, I plan to sign a volunteer agreement to be placed on file here in case I'm needed for hikes or other activities. Because of my training in the state of WV, I finally had the opportunity to go out west as a member of a fire crew in 2000. I was assigned to three fires during that tour of duty. I was especially interested in the component of public information and I had always done a lot of that anyway, so I went through the training for public information officer. I've worked in I don't know how many states now. I'll take annual leave from DNR if I have the opportunity, then put my name in a federal computer bank and then you just never know when you will have to go.

I'm always on call. For example, I got a call back in June and I was in a remote area where I had to drive to a phone, and I'm thinking the whole time I'm going to California, but when I made the call, they said we need someone in Alaska. So I spent 21 days in Alaska and then later went to Washington and Idaho on a fire. I even had one assignment in Washington, DC.

It seems odd to say it was a fire assignment because technically I wasn't being paid by a fire program. Instead I worked at the National Incident Information Center chief's office with US Forest Service. They were preparing reports containing information on fire and fire activity for members of the Cabinet, members of Congress, and other government officials. I plan to do this as long as my health holds up.

This may be a good time to talk a bit about where I'm going. I had been contemplating a volunteer experience. My wife and I even looked at the possibility of the Peace Corps but because of health issues that didn't work out. So we were looking around one day and I found this opportunity. The U.S. Forest Service has an interpretive center in the Pisgah National Forest Cradle of Forestry and they were recruiting a volunteer on-site caretaker. In exchange for a one year commitment, they offered a house with utilities, much like being a park or forest superintendent. So I applied and we are going there. We will live eleven miles outside of Brevard, North Carolina.

The Cradle of Forestry itself is an interesting spot. I was down there the first time in 2005. Most people know about the Biltmore House. George Washington Vanderbilt built this palatial home in western North Carolina while also acquiring land for a hunting preserve and a hunting lodge. As he constructed this 250 room mansion, he

hired a very famous architect, Frederick Olmsted, who designed Central Park, to landscape the grounds. Olmsted suggested he hire a forester to manage this property, which was a totally new concept in this country at the time. There were really no American trained foresters except one gentleman named Gifford Pinchot. Pinchot went down there in February 1892. He had recently finished 18 months of forestry training in France and set about developing a management plan, harvesting trees on a sustained yield basis and planting trees on abandoned or cut-over lands. After about three years he left for bigger and better things and was replaced by a German forester, Dr. Carl Schenck.

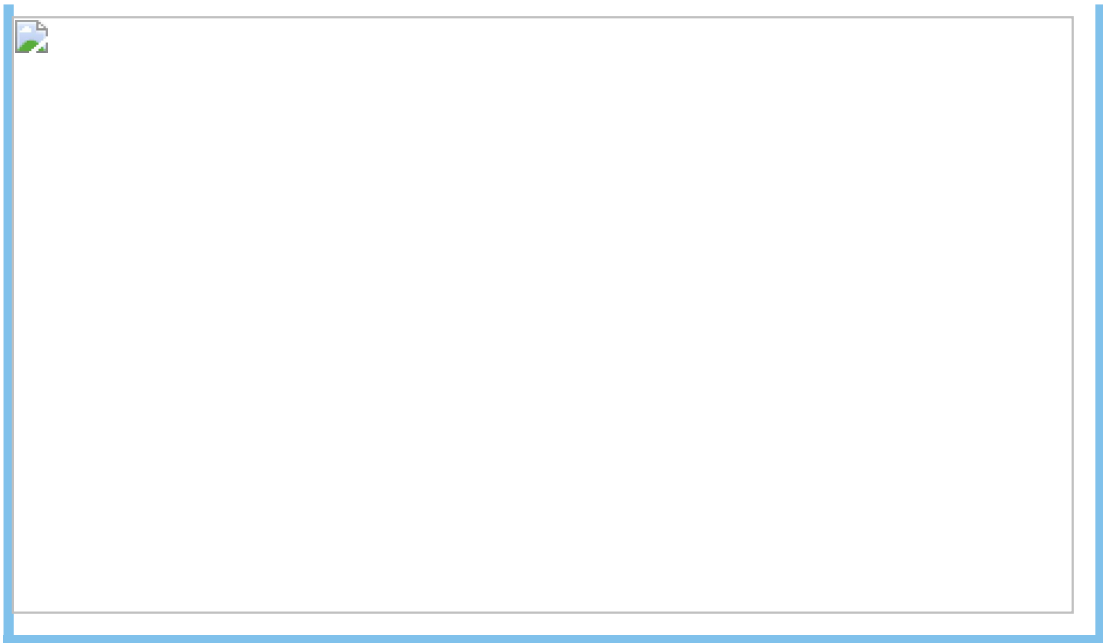
Schenck continued some of Pinchot's work and, to make himself more valuable to his employer, started a forestry school. This was the first forestry school in the nation. They held classes in the winter at Biltmore and during the summer they did classes and field work on the mountainous property that Vanderbilt had acquired. Later on, Congress passed what was called the Weeks Act on March 1, 1911. John Weeks of Massachusetts was the leading sponsor of the bill. All national forests prior to the Weeks Act had been carved out of the public domain out west, but the Weeks Act permitted the federal government to actually acquire private lands in the east for the protection of watersheds and timber production. Subsequently, Pisgah National Forest became the first national forest acquired under the Weeks Act. So you have four firsts there on that little bit of property: the first American trained forester, the first management plan ever written, the first forestry school in the nation (predated Cornell by a few weeks and the other one after that was Yale), and the first national forest under the Weeks Act.

I retire November 30, which will officially be my last day. My wife and I are debating how we are going to work this out. We will either drive down Thanksgiving Day or we will drive down December 1, at the latest, so I'll start the day after I retire. We are ready to move in. It's a cedar log home and we will live right on site, eleven miles from town, with national forest all around us. My wife has been saying she will have a 5,000 acre front yard.

Well, the thing I have really enjoyed, and made a conscientious effort at since I've been in this job, is trying to work with the Foundations. They are a very important part of the parks system. I've enjoyed it, and as you can see, it's you and other volunteers who have inspired me to do some volunteer work, too. So, I think it's a very important component and I want to encourage the continued involvement.

I do see a problem the next couple years. I must confess, part of the decision to retire, of course, primarily because of this great opportunity, but I do see a couple of real lean budget years coming. There are going to be some difficult choices that have to be made, and so I see a role for individuals being involved in the political process and making the needs of the parks system known; that's what it's all about. I don't know all the times we have had an issue at the state legislature when I called the Kanawha State Forest Foundation and they were there and supported us. I had one issue when we made some phone calls and Julian Martin (former Board member) and several others showed up at the committee meeting that day, which is what we wanted. So I just can't overstate the importance of the Foundation.

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