

# INDIANA STATE FORESTS:

## HISTORY, CERTIFICATION, IMPACT

**DIVISION OF FORESTRY HISTORY:** The state legislature created the Division of Forestry in 1901 and tasked it with restoring Indiana’s depleted woodlands.

Back then it wouldn’t have taken long to count trees in large swaths of southern Indiana. There weren’t many left after pioneer settlers abandoned the cut-over, eroding hillsides they had stripped clear of trees to establish small farms that eventually failed.

Today, those same areas are tree-covered testaments to the “employment of good husbandry” called for in state law.

It started at Clark State Forest, established in 1903 on 2,000 acres. It was an experimental forest for many years during early development of forestry into a science and profession. More than 150 experimental trees planted in the early 1900s can still be seen in many areas of Clark State Forest today.

Clark State Forest has grown to more than 24,000 acres, and the 15 properties under management of DNR Forestry encompass more than 156,000 acres with an estimated 58.4 million trees.

DNR Forestry has diverse responsibilities that go well beyond managing State Forests. They include:

**Classified Forests & Wildlands Program:** Private landowners have enrolled nearly 750,000 acres of their forest lands in the program that encourages timber production, watershed protection, and wildlife habitat management. Participating landowners receive a property tax reduction in return for following a professionally written management plan.

**Community Urban Forestry Program:** Guidance and grants are provided to communities for development and caretaking of urban forests, which create valuable environmental, economic, and social benefits. Well-managed urban forests have a nearly 3:1 return on investment. Indiana Tree Stewards and Tree City USA are functions of this program.

### Indiana Code 14-23-4-1 (Enacted 1901)

*“It is the declared public policy of this state to protect and conserve the timber, water resources, wildlife and top soil in the state forests for the equal enjoyment and guarantee of future generations. It is recognized, however, that by the employment of good husbandry, timber which has a substantial commercial value may be removed in such a manner as to benefit the growth of saplings and other trees by thinnings, improvement cuttings, and harvest process and at the same time provide a source of revenue to the state and local counties and provide local markets with a further source of building material.”*

**Fire Management:** DNR Forestry provides organizational, operational and technical support for woodland and prescribed fire management. These services include all DNR Forestry lands and may be extended to other DNR-managed lands and all lands outside incorporated cities and towns. DNR Forestry allocates 15 percent of its annual timber harvest revenue to county governments where harvests have occurred. A portion of those funds are distributed to township and volunteer fire departments for the purposes of fighting wildland fires.

**Education:** Project Learning Tree is an award-winning environmental education program designed for teachers and other educators who work with students from pre-K through grade 12. Sponsored by the American Forest Foundation and used in 50 states and several foreign countries, PLT provides instructional activities and lesson plans that can be infused into existing curricula. Other educational programs include Arbor Day, Forest of Indiana curriculum supplement, and an award-winning PBS special, “Indiana Expeditions: Forests At Work.”

Historic documents as far back as the 1930s firmly establish four objectives for state forests:

- Production of timber
- Protection of wildlife
- Recreational areas for people who cannot or do not use state park facilities
- Demonstration areas that illustrate the forest practices and forest programs as well as the entire conservation program of the state, especially demonstrating the conservation of soil, prevention of soil erosion, water conservation, and different methods and practices used by private landowners to carry out forest conservation on their own land.

In that capacity, DNR Forestry’s management approach to State Forests differs from the conservation missions of other DNR landholding divisions – Fish & Wildlife, Nature Preserves, and State Parks. Fish & Wildlife is geared to wildlife habitat and compatible recreational activities. Nature Preserves permanently protect significant natural areas from development. State Parks focus on a balance between recreation with protection of natural, cultural, and historical resources.

With all three divisions, the resource management formula does not include active timber harvests as practiced in State Forests.

Environmental activists accuse DNR Forestry of using “clear cuts” to increase timber harvests 400 percent.

Truth be told, logging has increased 300 percent over the last few years, rising from 0.3 percent of market-ready trees to 1.2 percent. In other words almost 99 percent of trees in State Forests are left standing to continue growing. Also, clear cuts account for less than 1 percent of timber harvests in State Forests. They are limited to 30 acres or less and almost always in plantations of non-native pines that are dead or dying.

The result is a healthy State Forest system that can sustain timber harvests and keep growing. **CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY:** The unsubstantiated claim from environmental activists is that at the current pace of timber harvests, State Forests will be devoid of trees in another 10-12 years.

If their claim were remotely true, why would independent audits by the Forest Stewardship Council® ([www.ic.fsc.org/en](http://www.ic.fsc.org/en)) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® ([www.sfiprogram.org](http://www.sfiprogram.org)) certify that DNR Forestry meets their internationally recognized standards for sound forestry management?

Not just once, not twice, but for nine consecutive years!

SFI® and FSC® certification ensures wood products from State Forests are grown in a sustainable and well-managed manner. The ability to offer “green-certified” wood products is becoming increasingly important, especially to overseas markets.

In renewing Indiana’s certification, the FSC® auditors noted that DNR Forestry “has demonstrated continued overall conformance to the applicable Forest Stewardship Council® standards” and cited other strengths:

- A “strong” best management practice monitoring program, with post-harvest reviews by DNR Forestry resource foresters and a comprehensive second-party process.
- Employment of a full-time wildlife biologist who focuses on special situations (e.g., the Habitat Conservation Plan to protect bat habitat) but provides support for regular work activities. The audit also notes, “The Indiana Division of Forestry has dedicated considerable resources to developing state-of-the-art bat conservation practices.”
- Employment of a full-time archeologist who has developed an “exceptional” program for identifying and managing culturally important sites.
- An “exceptional” program to retain stand-level wildlife habitat elements in accordance with scientific information.
- “Excellent” recreational opportunities for the public, including walking and horse trails, camping, and access to lakes and ponds.
- Annual State Forest open houses and a comprehensive web site that contribute to public involvement in public land management and planning.
- Significant improvements to haul roads for handling wet-weather traffic and larger logging trucks.
- Restoration and maintenance of State Forest offices, shops and recreational facilities, many that have historical significance.

Furthermore, DNR Forestry appears to have public support for its management of State Forests. In a public opinion survey, Purdue University researchers found 95 percent of Hoosiers approve

of removing trees to protect woodlands from disease and fire, 85 percent approve if overseen by professional foresters, and 82 percent approve if it leads to improved wildlife habitat.

**FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY:** Indiana’s forest and hardwood industry had a total economic impact of \$16.6 billion in 2015, and DNR Forestry played an integral role in that success.

By setting and meeting high standards (i.e., SFI® and FSC® certification referenced above), DNR-managed State Forests provide an example to private forestland owners and the forest industry on how to manage forests for sustained growth and yield.

Indiana has nearly 4.9 million acres of forestland, with 4.1 million acres in private ownership. State and local governments own 8 percent and the federal government 7.4 percent.

The forestland base has grown by 3.5 percent since 2009.

Almost all forestland – 98 percent – is available for timber production and comprised primarily of highly desirable hardwoods like red oak, white oak, and hickory.

Timber in managed forests is about 34 percent higher in value than that of unmanaged forests.

Indiana is a leading producer of office furniture, manufactured homes, kitchen cabinets, caskets, and coffins – all made from wood – as well as plywood-based products.

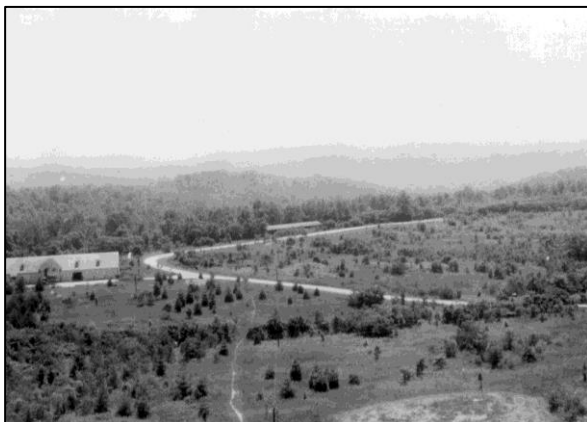
The hardwood industry accounts for 2.8 percent of Indiana’s gross domestic product. It employs more than 35,600 people, with an additional 86,139 jobs generated in related economic sectors.

In terms of dollars, the hardwood industry accounted for:

- \$1.2 billion in wages paid to employees
- \$41 million in state payroll taxes
- \$12 million in local payroll taxes

Landowners who sold timber to supply the industry were paid \$164 million. For every dollar they received, \$48 in value was added in the production of final products.

### State Forests – Then and Now



Views from Harrison-Crawford SF fire tower in 1930s (left) and in 2015