

# PRESERVING NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE TIMBER INDUSTRY

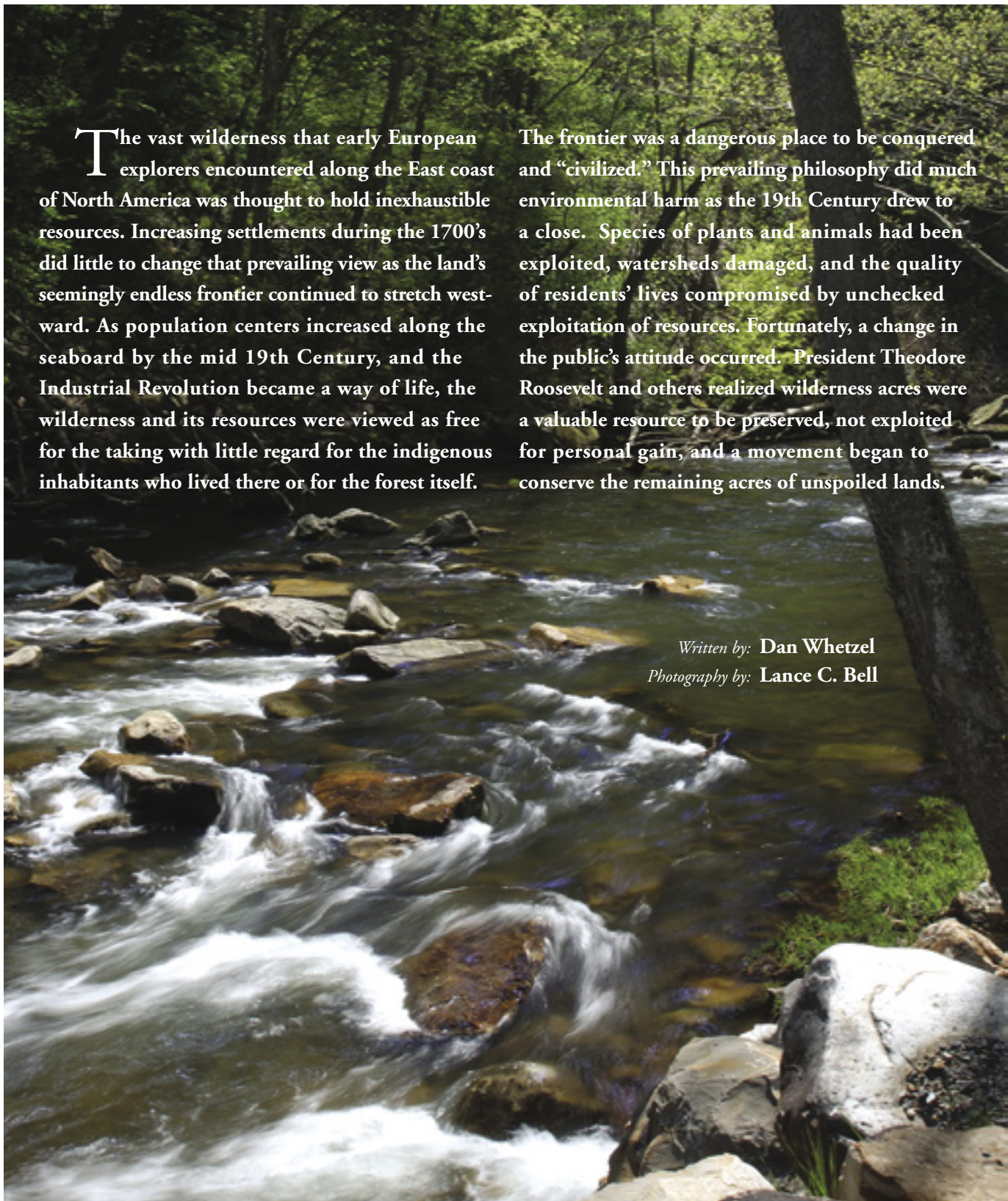
## ONE HUNDRED YEARS - MARYLAND FOREST SERVICE

The vast wilderness that early European explorers encountered along the East coast of North America was thought to hold inexhaustible resources. Increasing settlements during the 1700's did little to change that prevailing view as the land's seemingly endless frontier continued to stretch westward. As population centers increased along the seaboard by the mid 19th Century, and the Industrial Revolution became a way of life, the wilderness and its resources were viewed as free for the taking with little regard for the indigenous inhabitants who lived there or for the forest itself.

The frontier was a dangerous place to be conquered and "civilized." This prevailing philosophy did much environmental harm as the 19th Century drew to a close. Species of plants and animals had been exploited, watersheds damaged, and the quality of residents' lives compromised by unchecked exploitation of resources. Fortunately, a change in the public's attitude occurred. President Theodore Roosevelt and others realized wilderness acres were a valuable resource to be preserved, not exploited for personal gain, and a movement began to conserve the remaining acres of unspoiled lands.

*Written by:* Dan Whetzel

*Photography by:* Lance C. Bell



Maryland blended with the change in attitude as concerned individuals realized that some government control was necessary if natural resources were to be managed and protected for the common good. The need to preserve Maryland's forest resources was evident by the early 1900's because only 35 percent of the state was covered by woodlands as compared to 90 percent when European settlers arrived.

Philanthropists and political figures formed an alliance in 1906 to create the Maryland State Board of Forestry and the first state owned forest, known as Potomac Garrett State Forest of Garrett County. According to John Denning, of Maryland's Forest Service in Garrett County, the initial philanthropic offering was by John and Robert Garrett who provided 2,000 acres of woodlands in Western Maryland contingent upon the organization of a state forestry service, hence the board's creation by the state legislature in 1906. The early goals of the board focused on restoring the state's timber supply, curtailing erosion, enhancing wildlife habitats, and creating outdoor recreational opportunities. Maryland had moved from the exploitation phase of natural resources to one of conservation.

Maryland's first State Forester, Fred W. Besley, played a key role in the success and expansion of the state's programs. During his tenure from 1906 to 1942, Maryland's public forest and park land increased from 1,917 acres to 117,000 acres. Included in the land purchases were Swallow Falls State Park, Savage River State Forest, and Green Ridge State Forest, all well-known resources in Western Maryland. With the implementation of President Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps program in the 1930s, the federal government boosted the state's ability to expand its own purchases and programs including those at New Germany and Herrington Manor in Garrett County. With expansion of land and programs, the Forestry Department decided to divide forests and parks into separate programs under the administration of the Department of Natural Resources.



Today, the Maryland Forest Service manages nearly 200,000 acres of public forest lands, and the Maryland Park Service administers 131,000 acres of public parklands. Maryland forests, both private and public, contribute significantly to the state's economy. According to the Department of Natural Resources, Maryland households spend nearly 450 million dollars on the many products produced from trees. The pulpwood industry alone employs over 9,300 workers across the state. As Maryland's Forest Service marks its 100th anniversary in 2006, challenges are

ongoing because recreational, environmental, industrial, and various economic interests continue to compete for natural resources that are found within the woodlands.

In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of forest conservation in Maryland, a number of special events were planned. Arbor Day and the 100th anniversary of the state's forestry program occurred on the same day in 2006, providing an opportunity to highlight Maryland's Big Tree Program. Initiated in 1925, Department of Natural Resources officials have annually recorded the largest tree within

each species found within Maryland. In 2006 the Largest Tree Award went to a silver maple located in Edger Park, a community in Cecil County. The tree measures 27.0 feet in circumference, 4.5 feet from the ground. The Forest Service also distributed seedlings to third grade students throughout the state on Arbor Day while a cenTREEennial program was announced for all students to participate in throughout the academic year. A Forest Service "Centennial Calendar" is available that identifies special activities at each state forest location throughout the year.

During the next 10 years, a large amount of Maryland sawtimber will be sold, so proper management of the forests is crucial to reforesting the land. The Department of Natural Resources notes, "The future of our trees and forests depends on sound forest management."

