

Significant Milestones in Pennsylvania Forest History

- 1662 First sawmill established by Swedish settlers in Philadelphia
- 1681 Pennsylvania is given to William Penn by King Charles II of England. Nine out of 10 acres – 27 million to 28 million – are forested. Penn recommends “care be taken to leave one acre of trees for every five acres cleared.”
- 1851 The first log boom (a crib to hold logs in the river) is built on the Susquehanna River.
- 1870 First logging railroad is built outside of Corry. Williamsport is known as the lumber capital of the world.
- 1880s Band saw is introduced.
- Late 1800s Pennsylvania hits peak annual lumber production of 2.3 billion board feet (1899). The forest begins to be viewed as a renewable resource.
- 1895 Joseph Trimbel Rothrock is the first PA Commissioner of Forestry. The state’s “father of forestry,” he helped to acquire nearly half of today’s state forests, many of which were burned over tracts used as iron furnace sites.
- 1900 An estimated 9 to 13 million acres of PA forestland remain. Deer densities are near zero.
- 1913-1924 More than 3 million acres of Pennsylvania forestland burn.
- 1920-1922 Gifford Pinchot, the 1st American-born -trained forester is named PA Forestry Commissioner. He saw himself as a conservationist, not a preservationist, and promoted utilization and renewal. Pinchot served two terms as Governor, 1923-26 and 1930-33, saying “I have been ... a governor now and then, but I am a forester all the time...”
- 1930 Deer densities reach 40 per square mile, twice the limit suggested by resource managers.
- 1933-1941 The Civilian Conservation Corps, a depression-era program, creates forest camps, fire towers and other forest amenities.
- 1940s Chestnut blight virtually destroys the American Chestnut.
- 1941-1945 During WWII, PA forests are heavily relied upon to supply wood, as European resources were nearly exhausted during WWI.
- 1955-1979 Maurice Goddard is Secretary of Forests & Waters, promoting a period of multiple use management of forests, including recreation and timber production. His goal is to have a park within 25 miles of every Pennsylvanian.
- 1962 Goddard creates the Bureau of State Parks.
- 1968 Gypsy moth reaches PA.
- 1976 21% of residue from tree is not utilized in processing.
- 1988 Increased efficiency reduces processing waste to only 7%.
- 1993 Major PA forest defoliation results from a variety of insects, such as the forest tent caterpillar and gypsy moth
- 1998 All 2.1 million acres of the state forest system is certified as sustainable. PA leads nation in hardwood production, which equals 1 billion board feet¹ a year. Modern technology virtually eliminates waste in processing. Industry is one of the state’s largest, with revenues exceeding \$5 billion a year, and is the seventh largest employer, representing one in every 10 manufacturing jobs in 2,600 businesses.
- 1999 PA has 17 million acres of forestland, covering nearly 60 percent of the state, more acres of continually re-growing hardwood forestland than in 1900.

¹ A board foot is a board one-foot wide, one-foot long and one-inch thick.