

Fred J. Schmeeckle

1893 - 1967

"Conservation is not a term that is understood well enough by most people. It should be called resource education....Development of the right attitude is more important than laws and law enforcement in the promotion of conservation of our natural resources."

- Fred Schmeeckle

Fred Schmeeckle's intent in conservation was to not only train professionals in their discipline, but to inform these future lawyers, farmers, teachers, and tradesmen of problems created by depleting resources. Conservation education was his dream and he knew it required both vision and effort to help that dream materialize. He did something few people ever do. He worked at his dreams and made them a reality.



The work Fred started at the Central Wisconsin University (now the College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point) gave him a reputation in the field of resource management that is known not only statewide, but nationwide. This was attested to in the assignments and invitations in connection with national meetings of organizations in the field of conservation.

Schmeeckle wanted his students to be able to go out into the world and experience resource management firsthand. To accomplish this, he and another professor floated a loan to enable the university to purchase its first bus for field trips. Fred was more than just a teacher. He taught by leading an exemplary life of practicing what he preached.

"...a great man to see far ahead of his time. He foresaw depletion of our natural resources and warned his students about it." His work in conservation involved not only the training of professionals, but also making people aware of the problems created by eroding resources." Professor Mildred Davis

Birth: April 5, 1893 in Eustis, Nebraska

Family: Wife, Beatrice; son, Donald; daughter, Wilma

Education:

1911 Diploma, State Teachers College, Kearney, Nebraska

1923 M.S., University of Minnesota

Known to many as the "father of Stevens Point State University Conservation Program," Fred J. Schmeeckle had a knack for being able to sell sound conservation attitudes to a public with little concern or awareness of an impending ecological crisis.

Born of German ancestry, this Nebraskan farm boy grew to manhood as an outdoor enthusiast. Active very early in his life in the Izaak Walton League, he enjoyed fishing, hunting, canoeing, and a variety of other outdoor sports. His later training as an agriculture and science teacher directed him to the problem of forest and soil depletion on a professional basis.

He had long been advocating the broad emphasis approach to conservation. Fred argued that the problems of soil, water, wildlife, and trees were inseparable concepts that had to be dealt with together to preserve an environmental balance. But he realized that conservation education had to start with youth. He expended a majority of his energies developing educational curriculum for people of all ages. For example, the Trout Stream Improvement Program of 1956 enabled freshmen and sophomores to earn one semester credit for four weeks in a conservation oriented program. Schmeackle believed it would be a boost to the environment, instilling values in youth and provide a way to "keep them off the streets." Schmeackle's efforts in conservation opened many a career for students, serving as a training base for resident and out-of-state students in need of good facilities.

After retiring from teaching, Schmeackle spent much of his retirement working for the advancement of conservation. His efforts still manifest themselves today in the College of Natural Resources (UW-SP) which ranks among the largest and finest programs in the world.

Career:

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| 1923-1945 | Instructor at Central Wisconsin State College (UW-SP) in agriculture and science which led to development of curriculum in forest and soil depletion. |
| 1923-1959 | Member of the faculty of the Science Dept., Chemistry Dept., and developing courses that would develop into the Conservation Education Dept. |
| 1937-1938 | Boston School Forest, Town of Plover, initiated and supervised its establishment. |
| 1946-1959 | Originator and head of the Department of Conservation Education at UW-SP. First such program in the United States. |
| 1950-1959 | Director of Eagle River Workshop for Teachers' Summer Sessions. |
| 1955-1959 | Professor of Conservation Education. |
| 1959 | Retired with emeritus <u>title</u> , September 1. Worked with Trees for Tomorrow Program. |

Awards and Recognitions:

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| 1945 | Izaak Walton League, long-time member and leader. Appointed member of its special committee on Conservation Education. |
| 1945 | Chosen a member of the National Education Committee on Conservation to formulate national policy on making conservation a vital part of school programs. |
| 1947 | C.E. Broughton Award for Outstanding Work in Conservation Education in Wisconsin. Presentation made at the state meeting in Fond du Lac by Gov. Rennebohm. |
| 1950 | Portage County Parks Board, first Chairman and long-time member, chief initiator developing county park systems of DuBay, Lake Emily, and Collins Lake. |
| 1956 | Awarded the Lions International Distinguished Service Award. Charter member since 1926. |

1959 National award from the Conservation Education Association. Presented jointly to President Hanson and Fred Schmeeckle.

1960 Fred Schmeeckle Memorial Library established at Trees for Tomorrow.

One of the founders and long time chairman of the National Committee on Politics in Conservation Education, a continuing policy making group, created by the joint action of the U.S. Forest Service, the Wisconsin Conservation Department, and Trees for Tomorrow, Inc. Proponent of a bill in the Wisconsin Legislature requiring public schools to establish courses in conservation in 1935.

In constant demand as a lecturer and speaker in the interests of conservation. At the height of his career in 1952 Schmeeckle accepted over 65 speaking engagements.

He was also among the American scientists invited to the annual convention of the American Institute of Biological Sciences at Madison. American researchers from around the country as well as scientists from 20 nations were on hand to present papers and findings of current status.

Chairman of the Wisconsin State Curriculum coordinating Committee's Conservation Education Sub-Committee in 1947-49, which was responsible for developing the important series of publications, "Guide to Conservation Teaching."

He helped organize the Boston Forest in Plover, belonged to the Portage county Park Commission, and actively participated in the Trees for Tomorrow camp at Eagle River. In the 1930's Schmeeckle even gave politics a whirl and succeeded in becoming 8th ward alderman in Stevens Point.

Nash Motors Corporation National Conservation Award, 1954. This was the occasion for Walter Sylvester to write an appraisal of Mr. Schmeeckle in which he stated:

At the time after 23 years of teaching at this college (1923-46), the professor could have rested on his laurels, continuing teaching as he had, and waited for retirement. He had every reason to do so. As you who have taught at a small college know of the heavy teaching loads, the diversified subjects, and the added administrative responsibilities which must be borne... Even his doctors told him to take it easy after he had suffered a heart attack. Yet this professor saw a need and pioneered a new profession.