

Biographical Data
Frederick G. Wilson

Twelve men reported for a civil service exam in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, on Friday, March 10, 1911 for positions as Forest Ranger for the State Board of Forestry. One of the twelve was F. G. Wilson.

The candidates were expected to be expert woodsmen, know how to handle an axe, construct roads, trails, fire lines and estimate timber. The wages were \$60.00 per month.

On May 1, 1911, Wilson, who placed first on the exam, was hired as a Forest Ranger and reported for work at the Trout Lake Forestry Headquarters in Vilas County.

So started the Wisconsin Forestry career of Fred Wilson spanning a period from 1911 until 1952 with the exception of the period 1916-1922 when Forestry was declared unconstitutional in Wisconsin.

Spending his early years in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, Fred received his formal forestry training at the then Michigan Agricultural College in East Lansing, Michigan. He graduated in 1911 and returned to his home state to begin his professional career as a disciple of E. M. Griffith.

During the Griffith era, Wilson worked on programs of fire protection, establishment of the forest reserves, development of the first tree nursery at Trout Lake and the establishment of the Star Lake Plantation which is the oldest managed plantation in Wisconsin.

Wilson moved to British Columbia after the forestry program ceased in Wisconsin in 1915 because of the State Supreme Court ruling against works of internal improvement. He became the first registered forest engineer in the province.

Returning to Wisconsin in 1922, Wilson added another first to his list of forestry achievements. He became the first extension forester at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and served in this capacity until 1930. An early experiment of the need for land use zoning found Wilson crusading for zoning in 25 rural northern counties, resulting in the first rural zoning ordinance in the United States restricting land use to forestry in 1933. The zoning movement spread rapidly from the initial Oneida County ordinance until 5,000,000 acres of lands were closed to agricultural use by the end of the decade.

One of the most significant steps in the development of Wisconsin's forest policy was the 1929 Legislative Interim Committee report on Forestry and public lands. The report drafted by Wilson led to legislation enabling counties to take title to delinquent land, to establish county forests and to zone for forestry. The existing 2½ million acres of county forest, comprising the largest ownership of public lands in the state, was acquired without a Legislative fiscal appropriation and exemplifies the success of his legislative proposals in carrying out the Griffith programs of a decade earlier.

Fred Wilson served the Wisconsin Conservation Department in various capacities during the period of 1930-1952. He was appointed to first Chief Ranger for Fire Control in 1930. He was instrumental in establishing a cooperative forestry research program between the department and the University of Wisconsin which is today recognized as one of the most productive forestry research efforts in the country. He served as the Superintendent of the Cooperative Forestry Division from 1932 until his retirement with program responsibility for the forestry program on county lands, forest land

Wilson accepted assignments on numerous forestry committees at both the state and national level. He is a fifty-year member in the Society of American Foresters and was awarded the Distinguished Service Award of the Wisconsin-Michigan Section in 1968 and recognized with the prestigious rank of Fellow in the Society in 1979.

The Natural Resources Board honored Wilson in 1973 by naming the forest nursery at Boscobel, Wisconsin, the F. G. Wilson Nursery, the first Department property named after a living person.

Wilson has published numerous forestry articles during his career, shared his forestry expertise with faculty and students at several forestry schools as a visiting professor and served as a consulting forester in his retirement.

Wisconsin has been fortunate that F. G. Wilson spent his professional forestry career in the state. His skills, courage and dedication to the advancement of Wisconsin forestry make him one of the state's distinguished foresters and citizens. Present and future generations will be in his debt for his role in carrying out the Griffith ideal for Wisconsin Forestry.