

Save



A UW-SP tradition

Fred Schmeeckle started it, and the new Natural Resources Building at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point is the culmination of his efforts and those of many others.

The building, which also houses biology, will be dedicated Saturday.

Schmeeckle, founder of the university's natural resources program, won't be here to see it. He died in 1967. But the tradition is carried on by UW-SP graduates in schools, conservation agencies and private industry across the country.

The new building will enhance that tradition, believes Daniel Trainer, dean of the College of Natural Resources.

For one thing, it should help bring accreditation of the forestry program. Without the building, accreditation would be out of the question, said Trainer.

And it is making a big difference in other natural resource programs, especially soil science and water science.

"Facilities don't make the program, but they help," said Trainer.

The Natural Resources Building is primarily a laboratory facility, and labs are something the campus has been short of.

Opening the building has permitted the university to enter into research agreements with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, the state Department of Natural Resources and private industry.

The College of Natural Resources had the people to do this before, said Trainer, but not the analytical equipment.

The college is also doing research

for the American Potato Co., which is building a big processing plant at Plover. The university is testing the groundwater quality at the plant site. With this as a base, it will be possible to measure whether wastes from the plant are affecting the water.

Schmeeckle, the founder of the natural resources program at UW-SP, was a conservation missionary who warned that the nation was running its resources through a wringer long before most people knew how to spell ecology.

He began teaching conservation here in the 1930s. In 1946, President William C. Hansen got the Board of Regents to approve a conservation education major, and the program was on its way.

Until this school year, the program was in sub-standard facilities in Old Main and other campus buildings, with headquarters in Nelson Hall. But natural resources never lacked enrollment, and now it stands at 1,400.

And the job outlook for graduates, despite soft spots in a few areas such as wildlife management, is improving.

Trainer, who came here in 1971 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said the program is better known than he had thought. Its reputation is growing, he said, as more graduates take jobs across the country.

The new building will help that reputation, Trainer believes. "The facilities are as good as I've ever seen for this type of program," he said.