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Why

Steven E. Jungst
Iowa State University

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Why

Since 1965 when I started in forestry, I have had to answer the question "Why is there a forestry school in Iowa?". Initially, it was preceded by the question "Why do you want to be a forester?", but once I became one, people seemed content to assume the die was cast as far as my career choice was concerned, and they settled into a fairly predictable pattern, tongue in cheek, twinkle in eye, of asking "Why in Iowa?" in one form or another.

As a student, and later as a faculty member, I usually welcomed these friendly inquisitions as a chance to defend the honor of ISU forestry, all the while thinking, with a twinkle in my own eye, how uninformed the questioner was. As the new department chairman, I still welcome the question, and I have found a whole new group of people who delight in asking it. Other department heads and chairmen (a decidedly friendly group) at Iowa State also can't seem to resist indulging in the "scholarly" activity of

pondering why there is a forestry department at Iowa State.

While there is only good natured fun or genuine curiosity in such questioning, and while I too enjoy the exchange generated by such questioning, one must also be on the lookout for people who might ask, or think, the same question, but without tongue in cheek and twinkle in eye. People may assume that there is no valid reason for forestry in the midst of corn and beans. So it is appropriate, periodically, to remind ourselves and others why there is a department of forestry at ISU.

There is the obvious answer. Section 1621 of the Code of Iowa for the Ninth General Assembly stated "State law requires that — The following branches shall be taught: Natural philosophy, chemistry, botany, horticulture, fruit growing, forestry, —." While such reasoning does address the question of why is forestry here, it does not address the related, and perhaps more important

question of why it should stay.

Since its beginnings as a department in 1904, 2236 men and women have received Bachelors degrees in forestry at ISU. Another 167 have received their Master of Science degree, and 54 have become Doctors of Philosophy. These people have played a major role in shaping the face of forestry in the state, in the nation, and in the world. ISU foresters have at one time or another served in every line position in the Forest Service, from assistant ranger to Chief. They have helped advance the mission of Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and countless other forestry agencies. They have been and are executives, researchers, and field foresters for Weyerhaeuser, Crown Zellerback, Champion International, Georgia Pacific, St. Regis, Union Camp, and many many more smaller but no less productive forest industries. They have been and are deans, department heads, chairmen, or faculty members at 38 of the 56 accredited forestry schools in the nation helping to shape forestry education in the United States. They have served and are serving in federal, state, and county forestry agencies, and forest industry in virtually every state in the Union, as well as 22 foreign countries. They have been and are involved in vast arrays of research in all areas of forestry, and their knowledge and dedication have helped to shed new light on forestry around the world.

Aside from the people it educates, the department also plays an increasingly important role in forestry in the state of Iowa. With the advent of the state Forestry Section's Forest Resources Plan calling for a doubling of the forest acreage in the state, with the coming of the Conservation Reserve, increased interest in agricultural diversification, and increased interest in trees as demonstrated by the Governor's proclamation of 1986 as the year of the tree in Iowa, forestry research

and extension activities at Iowa State are perhaps more important to the state than at any other time in our previous 82 year history. The department has a unique opportunity to help update foresters already in the field, to educate land owners in the benefits of trees as a crop, and to continue to research problems as they relate to forestry in Iowa. Forestry has the potential to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, aid in agricultural diversification, and enhance the quality of life in the state. In order for state foresters and other natural resource managers to do an effective job, they need to rely on the continued availability of quality forestry education, research, and extension at Iowa State.

There is no short answer as to why there should be a forestry department at ISU, but there is also no shortage of good answers. The articles you will read in the pages that follow are further example of the continuing accomplishments of one of the oldest (and, in my opinion, best) forestry schools in the nation. By the time you read this, I will be approaching the end of my first year as chairman of the department. I realize how fortunate I am to work not only with a group of faculty and staff who are dedicated to the mission of the department, but also with a group of higher administrators who realize the importance of the department and who are supportive of its efforts. The first year has been exciting and challenging, and I look forward to continued years of challenge and excitement as ISU foresters continue to fill the needs of forestry in Iowa and around the world.

Steven E. Jungst