momentum

SUMMER 2021

Department of Forestry

MSU FORESTER

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Department of Forestry

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Dear MSU Forestry Alumni and Friends,

Despite the tenacious COVID-19 pandemic, MSU Forestry is moving forward in important ways, which should be evident in this issue of the MSU Forester. I am very excited about two major educational initiatives. Students will begin enrolling in courses for our largely online M.S. degree in Forestry (see page 10) in January 2022, with intro field courses offered in August 2022. This first of its kind program in the U.S. is targeted towards working professionals who can’t relocate to pursue educational goals. The program has strong field components (both in Michigan and advised remotely) and will seek SAF accreditation.

Our developing collaborations with community colleges and MSU’s Institute of Agricultural Technology (IAT), a project led by Dr. Justin Kunkle (Director of Undergraduate Studies), will provide access to quality higher education in forestry for rural and urban students alike (see page 8). Students will be able to pursue credentials in forestry or urban forestry / arboriculture with an IAT certificate or an Associate’s degree from Bay or Muskegon Community Colleges and can then choose to continue with a B.S. in Forestry from MSU.

We are moving forward by continuing to become a more diverse department. Some recent incoming undergraduate classes are about equally split between men and women; students of color now make up 18%, 24%, and 54% of our B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. programs. Three members of the MSU Forestry community are on the steering committee for the Women’s Forest Congress (see page 6). In part, we made progress on diversity, a goal that has long eluded the forestry profession, through deliberate efforts to be more welcoming and inclusive – which has benefited everyone.

Generous support from our alumni and donors provides important forward momentum. Many of you will remember Dr. Donald Dickmann, who taught silviculture for 40 years. Through a generous donation, he established an endowment with annual proceeds going to support research and engagement in professional meetings of early career faculty. We really appreciate everything that Don has done for MSU Forestry (see page 11).

Alumni often ask me, ‘how can I help?’ During this critical time for the forestry profession, forestry academic programs, and higher education, here are some tangible suggestions for how you can help sustain MSU Forestry’s momentum.

• Become an alumni ambassador and send talented students our way, especially for our B.S. and online M.S. programs
• Mentor current students (see page 7)
• Make a donation to support department programs or to help with the purchase of compasses for our current students (see page 5).
• Get involved in the Forestry Alumni Association.
• For more information, visit our alumni contact form at for.msu.edu/contact.

Our current momentum positions MSU Forestry as one of the most innovative and best forestry programs globally. Thanks for your support in continuing this momentum. Go Green!

My best,

Rich

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KEN GUENTHER | BS/MS ‘50
My daughter and I are developing a 5 acre tract in Portland, Oregon. The site has been in the family for 55 years. It is a south-facing 50% sloped property that was partially logged in the late 1800s. There are about a dozen up to 60 inch DBH doug fir. The balance of the forest cover is volunteer big leaf maple and lots of invasive English hawthorn. The approved plan is 1 acre for a 20-unit condo development balanced with 4 acres for establishing a climax forest of doug fir. We will be planting 500 doug fir seedlings and 400 Oregon grape shrubs. There is a lot of ivy and hawthorn to deal with prior to planting, which will hopefully be this winter. It’s an opportunity to convert mixed hardwoods to a climax stand of doug fir. I planted two sequoia seedlings on this site 50 years ago that are now 30 inch DBH. The future forest will be a tribute to the land.

BILL SIEGEL, BS ’54, MS ’57
I graduated in June 1954 and had an Air Force ROTC commission. Since the Korean War was over, there was a delay before going on active duty. I returned to MSU in Sept. 1954 with a graduate teaching assistantship and began work under Lee James for a masters in forest economics. I went on active duty with the Air Force in June 1955, serving until September 1957. I returned to MSU in that month to finish my thesis, receiving my M.S. in December 1957. I immediately went to work for the U.S. Forest Service as timber management assistant on the Raven District of the Sam Houston National Forest in Texas. Toward the end of 1958 I transferred to the Southern Forest Experiment Station in New Orleans as a forest economist where I stayed, retiring in 1993. I received a law degree at night and served for many years as Project Leader for the Forest Service’s National Law and Economics Research Unit. After retiring I began work as a consultant/attorney specializing in timber and forest products law, taxation and estate planning. I still work on a limited basis. I was privileged to be elected and serve as President of the Society of American Foresters in 1995. My “significant other” Barbara and I enjoy outdoor activities and traveling (both in the U.S. and overseas). In the last few years we have been to Chile, Russia, Turkey and Israel among other places.

J. DAVID ESTOLA | BS ’60
When I attended MSU, the Department of Forestry curriculum choices were industrial forestry for managing private lands or multiple use forestry for managing public forest lands. I chose industrial forestry. However, as it turned out, I ended up working for a public agency the Federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

In 1962, I began my career at a district office in Eugene, Oregon which at that time was one of five Oregon and California (O&C) BLM offices. During the first half of my 29 ½ year career, I worked primarily in the field in the Eugene district on a variety of timber management assignments including timber sale layout, timber measurement and appraisal, contract preparation and contract administration. In the second half, I was stationed in Denver, CO, Washington, D.C., and Portland, OR. My duties mainly included providing timber management support for BLM district offices having commercial timber lands in eight western USA states. I retired in 1989.

TERRY READ | BS ’66, MS ’67
After doing our Forest Service career, we have been doing private consulting in Iron County and surrounding area for the last 25 years. I work pretty much seven days a week but of course take off most of November for deer hunting and lately the month of June we head out west to escape the famous bug month of the UP. We spend some time at our place at Perch Lake but usually to work.

CARL WORKING | BS ’72
Carl is now retired and a sub teacher in Owensboro, KY. He sold his lake properties in Santa Claus, IN and home in Louisville, KY where they raised two children and took care of parents until they passed away. He travels south in the winter and rents a cottage each July on Lake Huron. He still loves forests and tries to visit them – they traveled to New Zealand and Australia before the pandemic. He also went snorkeling on the Great Barrier Reef and stopped in Fiji for a visit.

Carl visited campus to see his old dorm but it was all under renovation so he did a self tour seeing so many changes! Thanks for the memories.

DEBRA EAST | BS ’76
I will be retiring on August 31, 2021, after 15 years in NOLS Wilderness Medicine Admissions, most of that time in a managerial role. Prior to Covid-19, in the academic year of 2019, Wilderness Medicine trained 25,000 people worldwide in wilderness medicine emergency care. I had the pleasure of connecting with MSU graduates from Natural Resources and the School of Osteopathic Medicine participating in the courses.

GREGORY REIGNARD | PHD ’84
After receiving my doctorate under Dr. James Hanover, I worked briefly for the Southern Tree Improvement Cooperative in Gainesville, Florida. From there I took a tenure track position at Clemson University in Horticulture and have been there for 36 years conducting research with peaches. In the past 3 years, I did a stint as Department Chair, then retired as Professor Emeritus, and now am back working off grants.

I have been able to work in more than 30 countries and see the diverse forest ecosystems across the planet during my business travels. I was elected a Fellow in both the American and International Societies for Horticultural Science so I can’t complain as I got to work with trees and get paid to do it too. I love the southern Appalachian Mountains and my children are M.D.s so I am content at Clemson and have a good football team to follow in my spare time. However, I do come to Michigan to fish for salmon and always enjoy seeing the many beautiful rivers, lakes and farms as well as visiting the MSU campus.

CHUCK NELSON | PHD ’88
I graduated with a Ph. D. in Forestry in 1988 with Dr. Lee James as my major professor. From 1979-2020, I was a faculty member at MSU in what is now the Department of Community Sustainability. My focus was on natural resource recreation management, policy and law enforcement. This included teaching over 5,000 students, directing the MSU Park Law Enforcement and Ranger Training Institute for 18 years, being the department internship coordinator since 2008 (still doing this in summers during retirement) and working on a wide variety of applied research projects for and with state and federal natural resource agencies.

Retirement was not the celebration it usually is due to COVID, but I am enjoying growing food, timber, wildlife and environmental quality on lands and waters in MI and ND, serving on a variety of governmental and non-profit boards and having fun with my wife Susan and sons Mike and Dan.

JAMES GRAY | MS ’08
James continues to expand Natural Capital Forestry, an East Lansing-based forestry consulting company serving clients throughout the southern lower peninsula. The consultancy is fulfilling increased demand for ecological silviculture, whereby ecosystem integrity, climate resilience and improvement of structural and compositional diversity for wildlife habitat are the clients’ primary objectives. Higher ed clients can obtain a combined greenhouse gas inventory, forest carbon inventory and forest management plan to reach the next level of campus sustainability. Recently, James joined the steering committee of the Forestry for Michigan Birds initiative and remains active as a Regional Chair on the Michigan Tree Farm Committee.

ALUMNI UPDATES

REQUEST FOR SUPPORT

After a disjointed year and a half for the Forestry community and especially our amazing students, it is more important than ever to make sure our students feel welcomed and supported – attributes that have long been part of the Forestry major. We would like to ensure that the pandemic’s disruption of these positive attributes are minimized and short-lived.

This September, as a gesture of welcome and support, each undergraduate student in the forestry program will receive a gift – a Suunto® MCZ2 Navigator Compass. This gift is generous and practical, and something they will continue to use in their careers and we hope throughout their careers. We also hope that the compass will come to symbolize how our program has provided the skills to navigate a rewarding career and life.

We will be drawing on donations to the department to cover the expense of the compasses. We would like to invite you to join our faculty and staff in making a generous donation to the department to help cover this expense. Anything you are willing to chip in goes a long way towards offsetting the cost of this gift and will be much appreciated, especially by our students. If there is sufficient support from faculty, staff, and alumni, we hope to establish this practice as an annual tradition.

Donations toward this department gift can be made at for.msu.edu/welcome.

Thank you for all of your efforts and your dedication to our students.
FORMING A PATH: WOMEN’S FOREST CONGRESS

WHAT IS THE WOMEN’S FOREST CONGRESS?

The Women’s Forest Congress (WFC) is a gathering of women throughout the forest space brought together by a shared desire to connect and collaborate. It is a forum to share experiences, discuss big ideas and potential innovations to make profound impacts on the future of forestry. According to its website, the WFC “is an open and inclusive group – trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming participants are welcome, as are women of all ages, perspectives, cultural backgrounds, professional levels, abilities, and education.”

Assistant Professor Asia Dowtin, Forest Carbon and Climate Program Director Lauren Cooper, and doctoral student Jasmine K. Brown all represent MSU Forestry on the WFC Steering Committee.

“It’s an honor to serve on the Women’s Forest Congress Steering Committee for many reasons. I have enjoyed being able to see this transform from an idea into a movement with global scale impact, and getting to know and learn from the myriad women that have joined the community as it expands,” said Dowtin.

“Standing on the shoulders of many people who have fought for equality, respect, and opportunity for women in the office and in the field, we see an opportunity to advance that ongoing transformation by building empowering and inclusive work environments in the near and further future,” said Cooper.

HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN?
The forestry sector, historically, has been a male-dominated profession. This has left women underrepresented, undervalued, and underappreciated. It has limited the growth of the field, lacking in perspectives and insights from women forestry professionals, landowners, and enthusiasts.

Recognizing a need for change, the Women’s Forest Congress began as a side discussion at a conference in 2019. Initially consisting of a handful of women, the small group quickly realized there was a need for something much bigger. With momentum building and clear interest from women across the forest community, a steering committee of nine forestry professionals, landowners, and enthusiasts was established, and later working groups were formed, recognizing a need for more people to guide and to continue the movement.

The WFC has already had three major events, despite the pandemic. Sixty-five women throughout the forest sector in the United States and Canada, crossing academia, industry, state, federal and municipal governments, and urban forestry participated in the first event – a planning summit held in July 2020. Select professionals were brought together to explore what the WFC should define as focal challenges, how to approach these challenges, and what it aims to accomplish.

This successful event led to a series of working groups, which meet monthly online. March 2021 marked the congress’ first open event, which was held online on International Women’s Day and drew more than 500 participants, including international attendees. The second event was held in June, during National Get Outdoors Month, and was also well attended, again drawing a U.S. and international audience, this time incorporating more accessible features.

“Being a part of this group represents the power of community, and the progress that can be made when diversity in culture, race, expertise, and perspective are welcomed, celebrated, and included in plans for advancement of a cause,” said Dowtin.

WHAT’S NEXT?

As far as hopes for the future of the Congress, Dowtin is striving for impactful action and community building that shift the culture within the forestry sector and create a space in which future generations of women forestry professionals and enthusiasts are encouraged to join and remain in this field.

“This Congress began as an attempt to create a space where women can come together and feel safe sharing their experiences and is morphing into something more; a place where women can enact change,” said Dowtin.

The Women’s Forest Congress will hold additional virtual meetings in the second half of 2021 and the early part of 2022 and hopes to hold the Inaugural Women’s Forest Congress both in-person and online during the second half of 2022.

To learn more about the WFC, visit www.womensforestcongress.org, follow WFC on social media: LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook, or email info@womensforestcongress.org.

GOOD DAY FELLOW FORESTERS! I HOPE YOU HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FIND TIME THIS SUMMER TO ENJOY THE WARM WEATHER AND SAFELY SEE SOME FAMILY AND FRIENDS!

As we approach the upcoming school year, I am excited to watch my oldest start kindergarten. She participated in preschool last year, but it was certainly a different experience for her. It is hard to believe that she is old enough already to start going to school! Time sure flies these days, and it seems to be going faster and faster.

I can’t help but think about all the people and coordination it takes to help my little one at school, and how much I appreciate their dedication and their guidance they provide all our kids. I’ve been overjoyed to see my daughter come home excited to show me what new art project she did at school, or that she learned to write her name. These seem like totally small and insignificant things when I reflect on all the chaos that is happening around us in the world today. But I find a gem of joy in the pleasant distraction of the goings on of a young school kid.

Sooner than I would like to admit, I will blink, and my girls will be all grown up and headed off to college. I think about all the folks returning to campus this year and the commitment it takes to work through college during these uncertain times. I remember the excitement of starting my first year at MSU. Hard to believe it was back in 2006 when I transferred to MSU from Lansing Community College and started my path to a Forestry degree.

Fast forward 15 years or so, from my first days at MSU, and I find myself running my own business and serving as the president of the Alumni Association. I continue to be grateful for my time at MSU, all the many lessons learned, the guidance, and the mentors I’ve had over the years.

During these challenging times, I would encourage you all to seek out opportunities to possibly help our current class of Forestry students. It takes a committed student, dedicated department staff, and a host of dedicated alumni to keep the Forestry Department thriving. One huge way you can help with this task is to visit the MSU Forestry Alumni website and become a mentor. We continue to develop our list of mentors and are excited for many more to volunteer their gifts with our students.

We are hoping to be able to connect juniors and seniors with a wide range of potential mentors. We would like to have as many mentors as possible so we can connect the right mentor with the student depending on what the student is interested in and where in the country they might want to end up.

If you get a chance, please visit the MSU Forestry Alumni page, update your contact information (for.msu.edu/contact) and become a mentor; you never know the difference you might make in a student’s life. Thank you so very much for taking the time to become a mentor. If you have any questions about becoming a mentor or how to get involved with the Alumni Association, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us!

Your friend,

Jason Darling
BS 2006
President, MSU Forestry Alumni Association
Owner – Darling Forestry, LLC
Jason@DarlingForestry.com
Providing new educational opportunities for prospective foresters is the goal of a new collaboration between Michigan State University (MSU) Department of Forestry, the Institute of Agricultural Technology (IAT), Bay College (BC) and Muskegon Community College (MCC).

Justin Kunkle, director of undergraduate studies in the MSU Department of Forestry and HEC project director, is leading the partnership to establish certificate programs. The programs will teach professional forestry at BC in Escanaba, and urban and community forestry at MCC in Muskegon.

The work is funded by a $749,000 Higher Education Challenge (HEC) grant from the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The first cohort of students is expected as early as fall 2021.

Organizers of the program will engage stakeholders in the forestry industry to assist with educational content and programming identified by industry and employers.

“One of the hallmarks of IAT is to provide educational programs for individuals who are place-bound, and that’s one of the keys behind this program— with the partnerships that we have with our community colleges around the state of Michigan,” said Randy Showerman, director emeritus of IAT and co-project director.

In addition to the community colleges, the partnership includes the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, local forestry businesses and groups such as the International Society of Arboriculture-Michigan and the Michigan Association of Timbermen.

“This program is a natural fit for our institution, as well as our community,” said Matthew Barron, vice president of academic affairs at Bay College. “Forestry is a very large industry in our region, with a large paper mill and a vast amount of natural resources. With MSU’s historical focus on natural resources, their extension offices, and the agriculture program in collaboration with Bay College, we are able to serve our local farming and logging communities. Between agriculture and forestry, most of our population is affected by these industries.”

Through these new educational offerings, MSU is hoping to broaden its reach to students across the state who might have an interest in natural resources fields.

The project team also includes:

- David Rothstein, professor of Forestry and Biogeochemistry, MSU Forestry;
- Asia Dowtin, assistant professor of Urban and Community Forestry, MSU Forestry;
- Jeno Rivera, associate professor of Community Education and Engagement in the Residental College in the Arts and Humanities and the Department of Community Sustainability at MSU;
- Daniel Rinsema-Sybenga, dean of Academic Affairs at MCC;
- Brian Black, instructor of Biology and Environmental Science at Bay College;
- Matthew Barron, vice president of academic affairs at Bay College;
- Jesse Randall, director at MSU U.P. Forestry Innovation Center

“Students will leave this program with a better understanding of forestry, forest systems and the implications of good and bad management regimens on the entire system.”

“Students will leave this program with a better understanding of forestry, forest systems and the implications of good and bad management regimens on the entire system,” said Jesse Randall, director at FBIC.

“They will understand the economic opportunities that exist across a broader range than just traditional forest harvesting, and the increasing adoption and use of advanced technology in forestry.”

Each program will begin with eight students. MSU and IAT are partnering with Community enCompass, Michigan FFA’s Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources Education Career Development program, as well as BC and MCC to recruit students once the programs complete curriculum review.

The program will also provide opportunities to attend professional meetings and provide internships.

“Students are going to travel all throughout the state of Michigan and possibly beyond to get exposure to different forest systems,” Kunkle said. “There’s also been commitment from the industry groups to develop hands-on experiences for the students to get exposure to the many diverse career pathways within the field.”

“The nice thing about this program is it offers what I would call multiple entry points and exit points from the program. Students would be able to exit the program after two years with a certificate and associate degree and be ready for employment, or they could decide they want to complete a bachelor’s program where there will be a path to MSU or other universities.”

INTRODUCING: ONLINE HYBRID MS DEGREE

MSU Forestry is excited to announce a new hybrid online master’s degree program. The program is uniquely tailored to learners that need flexibility, with the majority of the courses delivered in an online format.

The degree, available starting spring semester 2022, is intended for individuals with baccalaureate degrees in a field other than forestry who are interested in making a career change to forestry.

Students may join the program directly following a BS degree, however, the main focus of the program is on students with bachelor’s degrees in fields other than forestry who are interested in making a career change to forestry. The hybrid structure is designed to attract these students, keeping in mind many will have rigid schedules and existing personal and professional commitments.

MSU aims to be the first forestry program to offer a master’s degree in forestry in a hybrid, online format, opening up a much broader market for potential students. The hybrid online MS was designed to be consistent with accreditation requirements of the Society of American Foresters (SAF). Per SAF procedures, the hybrid online program will be considered for accreditation after the program is up and running. Other universities (e.g., Yale, Duke) offer in-person accredited master’s degrees aimed at students with bachelor’s degrees in fields other than forestry that have comparable curricula, but none offer a largely online option.

The structure of the new Hybrid-Online Plan B option will consist of:

- One nine-day intensive, field-based face-to-face short course
- A series of asynchronous, online courses
- A final, intensive, face-to-face capstone project and examination (nine days)

Students will need to travel to Michigan for the face-to-face short courses at the beginning and end of their programs. The remainder of the program will be delivered in an online format to allow students flexibility in scheduling their studies around work or family obligations.

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, forestry courses have been taught online, allowing instructors to develop techniques for delivering field-heavy education remotely. As part of this hybrid program, an entire semester block of field-based classes with be delivered online. Students will spend the bulk of their time that semester in forested areas where they live completing exercises in dendrology, mensuration, ecology and silviculture.

There is tremendous employer demand for professional foresters, as evidenced by near 100% placement rates of our graduates. At the same time, there are limited options, especially for working professionals in other fields, to obtain the education necessary to pursue a career in forestry. MSU Forestry is confident this new hybrid degree offering will open up options for potential forestry professionals who previously didn’t have a way of making the career change and meet the forestry sector’s growing demand for professional foresters.

DON DICKMANN ENDOWS SUPPORT FOR JUNIOR FACULTY

Emeritus Professor Don Dickmann worked for over 40 years in the Michigan State University Department of Forestry before retiring – not once, but twice – and even then, it didn’t quite stick. Emeritus Professor Donald Dickmann continued to teach part-time and serve on graduate committees and as acting Chairperson in 2010-11, reflecting, “That’s a good way to do it. Not just walk out the door and never look back. I couldn’t do it that way.”

When Dickmann decided he wanted to give back to the Forestry Department by way of endowment, he reflected on how his contribution could be best used. “I have a real attachment to this unit and the people in it,” he said.

Over time, circumstances have changed for junior non-tenure faculty members, and it can be a struggle to participate in professional meetings when travel and fees are involved. It can also be challenging to find funding for research. Dickmann would like to provide opportunities for those in the department wishing to experience networking opportunities or research possibilities when funds may be limited.

As in any profession, networking and collaboration are crucial in developing connections and potential partnerships. It’s at these meetings that faculty or graduate students are able to deliver papers, network and meet new people.

Dickmann’s endowment is also intended to create possibilities for research opportunities.

“Of course, forestry involves field work. You have to travel to research sites and that can be any place in the state, country, or world, and you need money to get there and support yourself while you’re there,” he said.

“Don’s characteristic generosity and insight are reflected in this gift,” said Richard Kobe, Professor and Chairperson of the Forestry Department. “Throughout his career, Don has been tremendously generous with his time in discussing ideas, mentoring early career faculty and graduate students, and in offering guest lectures. He has been a fantastic community member. And he also perceives how pilot funding can propel an early career scientist along a promising research and professional trajectory.”

In addition to his vibrant research program, Dickmann taught many courses over his career, most notably silviculture, which he taught every year he was at the university.

“That was a wonderful experience. I grew and evolved over the years teaching that course,” he said. While he was evolving himself, he noticed the student body changing over time as well.

Dickmann was instrumental in the creation of the forestry spring camp experience. The year 1978 marked the first time the camp was offered off campus, and Dickmann recalls spring camp experiences as some of the best parts of his career.

For many years, he also taught the Michigan’s Forests course, which he developed with fellow faculty member Larry Leefers (now emeritus). The course is very popular across a variety of majors and still taught at the university today. The fundamental development of material for this course led to the renowned book The Forests of Michigan, which he co-wrote with Leefers.

Dickmann has left quite an impression on the many students he has taught over the years, and he said it’s always a pleasure to hear from his former students and to learn how their careers have progressed. “I love it when I get those messages. When I hear from a student, it’s the highlight of my day,” he said.

He hopes that former students or colleagues may be interested in making a contribution to this fund to honor their memories together in the Forestry Department.

For information about donating to the Donald Dickmann Junior Faculty Support Fund, please contact Carrie Horstman at greenca5@msu.edu, or donate directly to the fund online at for.msu.edu/dickmann.