

Plain Province, 1,535,000 acres. Since the initial gift from the Garrett Brothers, the Department has acquired, through gift and purchase, approximately 175,000 acres of land.

Prevention and control of wildfire in the forests of the State is an important function of the Department of Forests and Parks. Federal and State legislation provide for a cooperative effort in this activity. This program is vital not only to the continuance and expansion of the timber industry but also to the general welfare of the public by providing protection for watersheds, wildlife, park and recreation areas, farms, industries, homes and the very air we breathe. In cooperation with the State Civil Defense and Emergency Planning Agency, the U. S. Forest Service, and the University of Maryland Agricultural Extension Service, a system of rural fire defense is provided. The Department is a member of the Mid-Atlantic Forest Fire Compact which involves sending or receiving help over State lines in areas of fire emergency. The phenomenal increase in the value of the resources protected warrants the expenditures necessary to maintain this protection. Exhibits are installed at State and County fairs and other gatherings. Enforcement of laws and regulations for forest fire prevention constitutes another important activity.

Fire preparedness involves maintenance of a forest fire organization of forest wardens, registered crews and volunteer fire companies, and providing training and equipment to combat these emergencies. Acquisition of new and modern equipment and maintenance of fire fighting tools for instant readiness, is a constant job.

Fire suppression consists of prompt detection and accurate location of all forest fires as well as burning operations which might reach woodlands, dispatch of adequate suppression forces to such fires; direction of these suppression efforts; investigation of each fire to determine the cause and fix responsibility; prosecution of responsible persons; collection of suppression costs; and complete reporting on all phases of each forest fire which occurs.

In recent years the State has been among the leaders in its programs of forest fire prevention and control. On only one occasion during the past decade has more than 2,000 acres burned in any single year. And another evidence of the effectiveness of the program lies in the fact that annual losses from forest fires have been kept well below the national average for eighteen consecutive years.

The Department of Forests and Parks is responsible for advice and assistance to all landowners in the multiple use development of their woodlands. This service is available to individuals, municipalities and developers. Timber marking, timber stand improvement, wildlife habitat, tree design for subdivisions, and overall environmental aesthetics are some of the areas covered in the Department's program known as Technical Forestry and Reforestation. Other projects include assistance in environmental education, help to wood using industry in utilization and marketing, and revegetation of stripped coal areas and general reforestation throughout the State. The Buckingham Forest Tree Nursery produces approximately 7,000,000 seedlings each year for distribution in Maryland.

The Department also works with County Forest Conservancy District Boards in sharing their concern for better environment and in promoting forestry as a means to that important end.

The Forest Improvement Program is designed to re-establish loblolly pine stands on cutover tracts and the revegetation of coal strip areas. These projects are self-supporting in that landowners and coal operators pay the cost of such work, carried on under local forestry personnel supervision.