



Lesson 7 - Politics and Forestry Beginnings In Wisconsin



Nutshell

There were forward thinkers in Wisconsin who recognized the need to protect forests in the mid-1800's and early 1900's. It wasn't until the early 1920's however, that forestry became firmly established in the state. Students will learn about two of Wisconsin's early forest protection advocates, debate the pros and cons of forestry in the 1920's, and learn about both sides of the fire suppression debate by reading about these topics aloud in class and playing a forest history "Jeopardy!" game.

Concepts

- When a natural resource is not properly managed, negative effects can be felt by society and individuals
- A few conservation-minded individuals in Wisconsin realized the potential problems of over-harvesting forests long before the general public.
- Conflicts arise when at least two parties have differing opinions associated with an issue.
- Wisconsin has been active in conserving and maintaining its forest resources by enacting laws, establishing state agencies, and creating state forests.

Objectives

After completing this lesson, student will be able to:

- Name two major pioneers in Wisconsin's forestry history.
- Identify the pros and cons of managing a natural resource such as forests.

- Explain why fire was such a big problem in Wisconsin in the early 1900's.
- Identify the pros and cons of natural fires.

State Standards

ELA SS

- A.4.1 B.4.6
- C.4.3 B.4.7
- D.4.1 C.4.4
- E.4.8

Total Estimated Time

1 hour and 5 minutes

Vocabulary

Con – a negative argument against something

Crop – a plant that is grown and harvested

Legal – allowable by law

Politics – the art or science of government

Preserve – an area set aside for the protection of a natural resource

Pro – a positive argument in favor of something

Slash - leftover parts of trees that have been cut down

Unconstitutional – something that goes against the constitution

Warden – an official in charge of enforcing certain laws

Materials

Picture of forest (Insert 7.1)

Picture of Cutover (Insert 7.2)

Copies of Insert 7.3 for all students

Copies of Insert 7.4 for all students



Teacher Preparation

Make copies of Inserts 7.3 and 7.4 for your students.

Background Information

Conservation was not a popular idea on Wisconsin's northern frontier. Early settlers recognized the monetary values of our forest for jobs, lumber, agricultural land, and as part of the tax base. Forestry was an idea that they thought threatened all of these things.

There were some forward-thinking people who did try to make changes. They are often described as being ahead of their time. One of these people was Increase Lapham (pronounced La-fum). He wrote a report back in 1867 entitled The Disastrous Effects of the Destruction of Forest Trees now Going on So Rapidly in the State of Wisconsin as part of the Special Commission on Forestry. The commission reported that warmer summers, cooler winters, flooding, soil erosion, and lower water levels would be the result of the rapid deforestation of the times. Despite these warnings, the destruction of Wisconsin's forests continued.

In 1903, the State Forestry Commission was established. It was replaced by the State Board of Forestry in 1905. A man by the name of Edward M. Griffith became Wisconsin's first state forester. He established several forest reserves in the state and started the ball rolling for Wisconsin forestry.

There was much opposition to what Griffith was doing. So much, in fact, that in 1913 a Special Legislative Committee on Forestry was appointed. In 1915 the committee ruled that forestry

fell under "internal improvements" and was hence unconstitutional. It claimed that forestry was a national, and not a state, responsibility. Furthermore, forestry reserves that had already been established had to be returned to the State Commissioners of Public Lands.

In 1925, forestry was re-established in the state of Wisconsin. Griffith's ideas would be accepted twenty to fifty years after he first proposed them. 1930 marked the year when fire protection got effectively underway in Wisconsin, sixty years after the horrible Peshtigo fire. It took a long time, but effective forestry practices were finally underway in Wisconsin.

Introduction

Share the two pictures in Insert 7.1 and 7.2 with your students. (The picture in Insert 7.1 is of Wisconsin's forests before lumbering, and the picture in Insert 7.2 is of Wisconsin lands after clear cutting had occurred.)

Have your students look at the first picture and ask for their feedback. What do you think of when you see this picture? What are some words you would use to describe the picture? Now show your students the second picture. What do you think of when you see this picture? What are some words you might use to describe it? What do you think could be done to fix or repair this land? Who should be responsible for fixing or repairing it?

Explain that the first picture you showed was of Wisconsin before the lumbering era. Wisconsin had huge forests. The forests were so big that people thought they could cut down all of the trees they wanted and never run out. The second



picture you saw was of Wisconsin after the trees had all been cut down. It turns out that Wisconsin did run out of trees faster than most had thought possible. Would you be worried if your surroundings looked like the second picture?

Activity 7.1 – Forestry's Political Beginnings (25 min)

Have your students take turns reading each paragraph in Insert 7.3. Make sure you stop them along the way when questions should be discussed and ideas written up on the board.

Activity 7.2 – Pros and Cons of Fire (20 min)

Now have your students take turns reading each paragraph in Insert 7.4. Again, be sure and facilitate discussion where necessary.

Activity Conclusion

Review the pros and cons of fire with your students and make a list on the board. Evaluation suggestion #1 (found in Insert 7.5) can be used to wrap up this lesson.

Evaluation

- Play Forest History Jeopardy with your class (Insert 7.5).
- Use the discussion from Inserts 7.3 and 7.4 to evaluate your students' understanding.

Extension

- Have your students create posters that give the pros and cons of fire. They can focus on one of each, or list them all, but each poster should have at least one pro and one con.

- Invite a forester or local fire warden to come speak to your class.
- Learn more about Smoky Bear. Share some of his posters. Learn more about the history of this national symbol.
- Have a debate! Divide students into two teams. One team should agree with Increase Lapham's views, and the other should disagree. The same could be done with Edward Griffith's views.

References

Ashworth, H.L. distributor. *Forestry In Wisconsin: A New Outlook*. Official Report of the Wisconsin Commercial Forestry Conference. Milwaukee; 1928.

Barlowe, Raleigh. *Forest Policy In Wisconsin*. *Wisconsin Magazine of History*. 26 March, 1943 p.261-279.

Carstensen, Vernon Rosco. *Farms or Forests: Evolution of a State Land Policy For Northern Wisconsin, 1850-1932*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture; 1958.

Chips and Sawdust: A Newsletter From Forest History Association of Wisconsin, Inc. November 1995.

Kouba, Theodore. *Wisconsin's Amazing Woods Then and Now*. Madison, Wisconsin: Straus Printing and Publishing; 1973.

Lapham, I.A., Knapp, J.G. and Crocker, H. *Report On the Disastrous Effects of the Destruction of Forest Trees Now Going On So Rapidly In the State of Wisconsin*. Madison, Wisconsin: Atwood and Rublee, State Printers, Journal Office; 1867.



LeMay, Neil H. History of Forest Fire Protection In Wisconsin. Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting of Forest History Association of Wisconsin, Inc. Tomahawk, Wisconsin; 1985

Mauthe, William. The New Idea In Conservation. The Wisconsin Magazine 1928 July p179-180.

Mitchell, J. Alfred. Accomplishments In Fire Protection In the Lake States. Journal of Forestry 1938 p748-750.

Moody, Frank B. Progress of Forestry In Wisconsin. American Forestry 1911 p595-598.

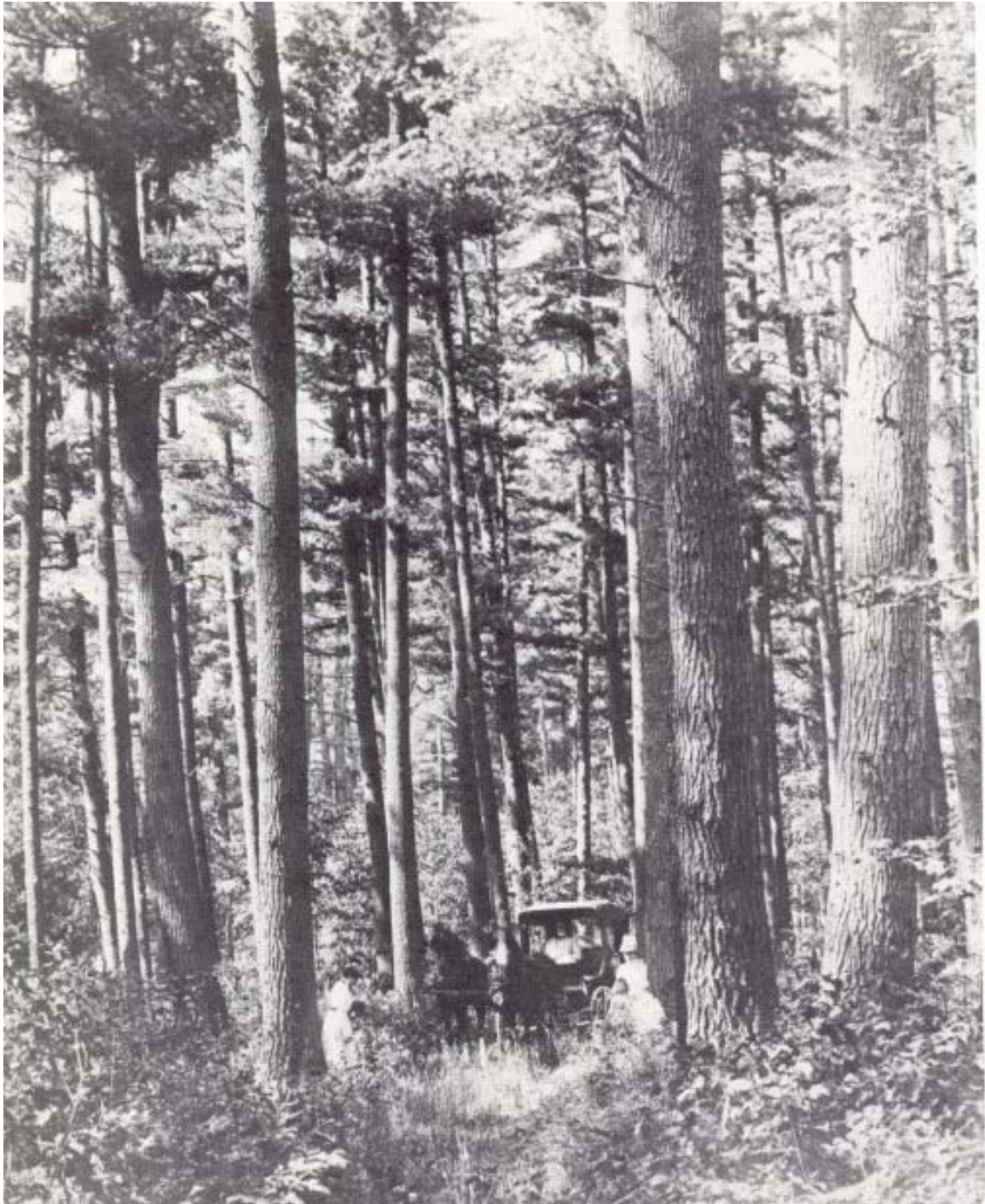
Solberg, Erling D. New Laws for Forests: Wisconsin's Forest Fire, Tax, Zoning, and County-Forest Laws In Operation. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press; 1961.

Wilson, F.G. E.M. Griffeth and the Early Story of Lumbering In Wisconsin Forestry (1903-1915). Madison, Wisconsin: Department of Natural Resources; 1982.





Insert 7.1



Provided courtesy of the Chippewa Valley Museum, Eau Claire, Wisconsin.



Insert 7.2



The State Historical Society of Wisconsin #WHi(W63)2976 (Image has been cropped)



Insert 7.3

In the mid-1800's, there were some people who were concerned about what was happening to Wisconsin's forests. One of these people was Increase Lapham.

Increase Lapham wrote a report titled "The Disastrous Effects of the Destruction of Forest Trees Now Going on So Rapidly in the State of Wisconsin" in 1867. Increase told the people of Wisconsin about the importance of their forests. He believed that if people destroyed the forests they would lose all of their comforts like houses, furniture, heat, and food.

He came up with several ideas for saving the forests. What do you think some of his ideas could have or should have been? What would you have done back then to save the forests? Let's come up with a list on the board.

Lapham's ideas were:

1. The government should help people replant trees by giving people trees. He even listed what kinds of trees should be planted, when, and where.
2. The government should take over some land and create state forests.
3. Laws should be passed that would control the cutting of timber.

Have you ever come up with a really good idea and nobody listened to you? That's what happened to Increase! Even after Increase shared his ideas about the trouble that would come and what should be done, the trees were still cut very quickly. Wildfires and unusable land became a huge problem.

In 1892, Wisconsin joined Nebraska in celebrating Arbor Day. Who knows what Arbor Day is? It is a holiday that celebrates trees and takes place the last Friday in April. Celebrating Arbor Day still did not help promote Lapham's ideas.

In 1903, the state of Wisconsin created the Forestry Commission. A man named Edward Griffith became Wisconsin's first State Forester. He had learned about forests by studying what had happened to the forests in Germany many years before. He was worried that Wisconsin would destroy all of its forests.

Edward Griffith hired fire wardens. The job of a fire warden is to prevent forest fires and enforce fire safety laws. He also created maps of Wisconsin's forested land. Finally, he set aside land in Wisconsin as state forest preserves. A forest preserve is an area of forest that is set aside to be protected.

Many people agreed with Griffith and the state government that Wisconsin's forests should be replanted and taken care of. They thought it was okay to set aside forest preserves and limit logging in some areas.



Other people disagreed with Griffith and the state government. They thought that trees take too long to grow and that planting other crops that grow quicker would be better for everyone. They thought that the public should be able to use the forest and land however they wanted, and were worried that the government would take away fishing and hunting on state forest land.

What do you think? Should the government buy land and make it into a state forest? Is it okay for the government to pass laws that limit logging and how forests are used? What if these things help protect the forest for other people? Let's talk about this and make a list of the pros and cons of establishing state forests.

Enough people were against what the government was doing that in 1915 forestry was actually outlawed in Wisconsin! The state Supreme Court said that it was unconstitutional!

Luckily, by 1924, it was realized that if forests were to be protected for future use, forestry needed to be made legal again. Wisconsin's state forestry program was re-established in 1924.



Insert 7.4

Who has heard the phrase, “Only YOU can prevent forest wildfires!”? Who uses that motto? Smokey Bear! What do you know about Smokey Bear?

What have we learned so far about forest fires in Wisconsin? Let’s make a list on the board of what we have learned.

Most of us probably remember the horrible effects of fire such as those of the Peshtigo Fire. We need to remember how Native Americans used fire to promote plant growth and flush game from the forests. Can fire ever be a good thing?

Forest fires were a huge problem in Wisconsin. After the loggers had cut down all of the trees in areas, left behind was what was known as slash. Slash is tree scraps and leftovers.

During dry, warm years this slash caught fire very easily. Some of these fires were started by lightning, but many of them began when fires started by people for clearing land for farms or railroads went out of control.

Even after the horrible Peshtigo Fire, not much was done by the people of Wisconsin to make sure it wouldn’t happen again. Fires were common throughout the early 1900’s. It wasn’t until the 1930’s that Wisconsin’s state government made a big effort to control forest fires.

Before 1930, people estimate that 500,000 acres of forest burned every year in Wisconsin. After 1930, this number went down to 10,000 acres per year! This was done by hiring more fire wardens, making more fire safety laws, building fire lookout towers, and using airplanes to help look for forest fires.

If fires can cause damage and harm, how can they be a good thing? Think back to how the early Native Americans in Wisconsin used fire. It helped new and healthy plants grow, right?

In fact, some plants need fire to grow. Trees like the jack pine found in Wisconsin have seeds inside cones that cannot be released until heated to very high temperatures. Also, fire can help protect forests from disease.



Insert 7.5

Draw a Jeopardy board up on the chalkboard. Each category will have questions worth 100, 200, 300, and 400 points. The categories should be as follows: A Forward Thinker; Wisconsin's First State Forester; Fire; and Other Things We Learned. Break your students up into three equal groups.

A Forward Thinker

- 100 – What was a major problem for forests in the late 1800's?
- 200 – What was the man's name who wrote, "The Disastrous Effects of the Destruction of Forest Trees Now Going On So Rapidly In the State of Wisconsin?"
- 300 – What was one of Lapham's ideas?
- 400 – What year did Lapham write his paper?

Wisconsin's First State Forester

- 100 – Who was Wisconsin's first state forester?
- 200 – What is a forest preserve?
- 300 – What does a fire warden do?
- 400 – Where did Wisconsin's first state forester first study forestry?

Fire

- 100 – Who is the national forest fire safety mascot?
- 200 – Give an example of a natural fire.
- 300 – Give an example of an unnatural fire.
- 400 – Give a reason that fire can be good.

Other Things We Learned

- 100 – What is the holiday that celebrates trees?
- 200 – Why did some people think that Wisconsin's forests should not be replanted?
- 300 – What are trees scraps and leftovers called?
- 400 – Why wasn't forestry practiced in Wisconsin from 1915-1924?