

# ANNUAL REPORT 2008

## From the Chairman

R. Scott Wallinger

There is growing recognition of the need to update federal and state forest policies to make them relevant to new realities about our forests. Changing family forest ownership demographics, a massive shift of forestlands from forest industry to financial investors, and a decade of record forest fires on predominantly public land in the West are conspicuous. Less obvious is the impact of our growing population: the United States passed the 300-million population mark and will climb to 400 million in another four decades. An urban population will increasingly depend on forest watersheds for its survival and wood for construction even as it consumes forestland for development. In 1850 the United States had the equivalent of 40 acres of forest per person; in 2007 this per capita amount had dropped to 2.5 acres. In four decades there will be less than 2 acres of forest in the United States per person.

*By understanding our past, we shape our future* is our credo, and it is unmistakably relevant in the arena of forest policy assessment and redesign. Before we can intelligently decide where we need to go, we need a clear understanding of how and why we arrived at our current situation. Public policy is one of four areas of focus for the Forest History Society. The Society plays a crucial role in supporting the development of rational resource policies that will lead to a sustainable future. The Society serves as a bridge between scholars, landowners, and policymakers and seeks out unique collaborations that help leaders understand the historical context of resource issues and make informed decisions about forests and our quality of life. The Society is not an advocate for any specific forest policy. Rather, it works to ensure that



policy makers have accurate information about past and current forest policies and understand the historical context for today's decisions to meet future challenges.

We updated our strategic plan to ensure that our publications, educational initiatives, and publications focus on the most critical current information needs. We continue to make our document, photograph, and oral history archives larger and more accessible to researchers and writers and the media. Over the past three years we expanded our Issue Series with new publications on forests, *Genetically Modified Forests* and *America's Forested Wetlands*, and a ten-year update of *America's Fires* is nearing publication.

Our *Stories of the Forest* campaign, having raised nearly \$6 million in new funds, is ongoing as we seek to add a

total of \$9.5 million. Our annual fund has increased steadily each year in support of current operations. But there is more work to be done.

We want to expand the number of individual and corporate donors to the Forest History Society who support us through our annual fund. Annual fund donors don't just provide support to the Society for what they receive directly from the Society. They appreciate the importance of forests in the United States and the need for our growing urban population to have accurate information about our forests. Please help us grow our annual support with your own contributions and by telling others about the Forest History Society! Visit our website at [www.foresthistory.org](http://www.foresthistory.org) to see all the things we are doing with your help. □