

ANNUAL REPORT 2005

From the Chairman

Larry W. Tombaugh

To support an organization, one must believe in its mission. The mission of the Forest History Society is “to improve natural resource management and human welfare by bringing a historical context to environmental decision-making.”

This statement captures a fascinating philosophy. It first demands that the Society assiduously preserve the history that surrounds the use and protection of our vital forest resources. But it also is a forward, action-oriented mission. It says that the Society has a unique responsibility to *expand* forest history—to fill in the blanks on the pages of the past—through the scholarly activities of those who draw upon its archival collections and to bring the lessons of history to the media, to children, and to the general public. Perhaps then the public will understand how their economic wellbeing and the environment in which they live are intertwined with our natural resources.

For going on 60 years, the Society has been doing a wonderful job in all these arenas. But there is much more to do. Consequently, the Board of Directors last year authorized a major fund-raising campaign. Here is why.

The Society wants to foster worldwide access to its collections by digitizing its 25,000 photographs, news clippings dating to the 1880s, and 70 special collections, and then expand online access to these materials.

The publication programs of the Society need to be significantly expanded to help shape understanding of forest history and environmental change for a wider and more varied audience than is now being reached. This will involve an annual Distinguished Lecture, a seed-money fund to encourage new scholarship in forest history, and a Visiting Scholar position at the Society’s headquarters.

Our oral history collection is unique in the world. It has already



captured the voices and stories of over 300 historical figures from the forest industry, government and conservation agencies, and universities. Every generation produces its leaders, and these represent a non-renewable resource whose stories are invaluable for future generations.

We need to be sure that the media are getting factual information when they report on forestry and environmental matters to the public. This will require working directly with the media to inform them of the services that can be provided in getting their stories out.

The Society has proven that its education programs are of interest to children and teachers. We need to build upon the highly successful *If Trees Could Talk* curriculum to let children across America know about the contribution of forests to their daily lives and to the environment upon which they depend for survival.

Capitalizing on these five areas will require a steady source of income for salaries and programs that, in a private,

nonprofit organization, can only come from an endowment. That is why the Society is seeking to increase its endowment by \$8,000,000. Through the outstanding volunteer leadership of Bill Baughman, Chair of the Campaign Steering Committee, we are well on our way to meeting this ambitious goal.

But the Society needs more than endowment. Unrestricted and recurring gifts have historically played a major role in the financial health of the Society. They allow it to establish new programs to take advantage of emerging opportunities. By the end of the Campaign, the Society hopes to have raised \$1,500,000 in unrestricted funds.

The Campaign will be in progress for the next four years or so. I hope that you believe as strongly in the mission of the Forest History Society as I do and that you will choose to contribute generously so that it can meet its full potential.