

## SPECIAL SECTION



### WOMEN'S FOREST CONGRESS

COURTESY OF WOMEN'S FOREST CONGRESS

*The inaugural Women's Forest Congress convened in Minneapolis on October 17–20, 2022.*

*This introduction to our special section commemorating that event is followed by the declaration approved at the end of the congress, reflections of four attendees (including a founder), and then two presentations given at the congress—one on the history of women in forest conservation and the other about the present and future roles of women in the forest sector.*

**BY JAMES G. LEWIS**

### WHY A WOMEN'S FOREST CONGRESS?

The Women's Forest Congress (WFC) is part of the rich tradition of forest congresses held in the United States. All eight congresses, which have been led or co-led by American Forests, the oldest citizen-led conservation organization in the United States, have been convened to address the forest issues of the day. (American Forests was called the American Forestry Association from its founding in 1875 until 1992.) The first American Forest Congress, held in 1882, helped launch the forest conservation movement. The second congress convened in 1905 to bring attention to deteriorating forest conditions. That one concluded with resolutions calling for the federal government to establish a national forest service and enact (or repeal) laws and policies that made sustainable forestry possible nationwide, which were followed up on over the next few years. This congress made forest conservation a national priority, thus transforming the relationship Americans have with their forests. The WFC organizers intend that the Eighth American Forest Congress, too, will launch a new movement that might, yet again, transform the relationship Americans have with their forests.

At the first six congresses, women had a minimal presence. This isn't surprising. Women weren't admitted to forestry schools until the 1930s and were rarely allowed to take field positions for several more decades. Those who did participate as delegates or appear on the program for the next three congresses weren't from the forest industry—they were leaders of the Garden Club of America or the General Federation of Women's Clubs and were given the opportunity to either present or speak from the floor about their organization's conservation activities.<sup>1</sup> At the third congress, in

1946, at which whether to regulate logging on private lands or not was hotly debated, Mrs. Max J. Schmitt of Wisconsin—the program didn't give her first name but identified her by her husband's name—spoke from the floor against regulation for the allotted ten minutes. At the fourth, in 1953, women were on the program for the first time—though it was just three. The fifth congress, held ten years later, represents another turning point. Plant pathologist Dr. Cynthia Westcott presented a talk entitled “The Sane Approach to Pesticide Use” on a panel about pesticides, a topic of great interest after the publication of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* the year before.

What the third through sixth congresses had in common, though, was they followed the same format and had similar outcomes: delegates attended plenary sessions and heard formal papers, and breakout sessions were by interest group. “Little hard debate occurred on the issues, the political forces driving them, or alternative ways of conceiving of forest policy,” according to one assessment.<sup>2</sup> And women had little input, say, or control over the agendas.

The seventh congress, in 1996, broke this mold. It was convened for the first time by the broader forestry community rather than American Forests. The congress was less about “crafting forest policy” and more about finding common ground and agreement about “understanding the things Americans are concerned about with the nation's forests,” according to one principal organizer.<sup>3</sup> It engaged a wide variety of participants, including small private forest owners, community groups, urban forestry agencies, and minorities, especially Native Americans and African Americans. When reflecting on the seventh congress twenty years later, its executive director wrote, “One can imagine that once again a group of interests will pull together

to be strong enough to call for the Eighth Congress. The players will be different because of many changes in the balance of ownership and in the balance of national vs. local and regional voices.”<sup>4</sup>

Since then, the balance between men and women in land ownership and voices has changed, but twenty-five years after that congress, the numbers throughout the forest sector still favor men. Study after study has shown that women are scarce at every level of the forest sector—be it public, private, academic, or industry. In fact, though the past quarter-century has seen more women in forestry and more women landowners, the latest census data show that women account for less than one of every five positions in the forest sector<sup>5</sup> and barely one in five forestland owners.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, climate and forest conditions around the world have continued deteriorating.

The idea for the WFC germinated among women in the forestry community who believe the low workforce participation rate is leaving a serious gap in the sector, holding back participation by more women, and limiting opportunities to think about forests in new ways. Whether involved through landownership, industry, conservation, public agencies, or other roles, women in the forest sector are underrepresented. Addressing the gender diversity gap may create room for innovative problem solving to combat the most pressing challenges facing the forest sector and the forests to which all are connected.

The idea of addressing the low participation rate evolved into a forum to develop strategies and solutions for forests through a female lens. Building on the rich tradition of congresses—that of coming together with the intent to influence, if not transform, forestry in the United States—the WFC was founded in 2019 as an organization that would

offer a space for women from all over the world to bring about positive change across the forest sector. Today the WFC organization is open and inclusive—trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming participants are welcome, as are women of all ages, perspectives, cultural backgrounds, professional levels, abilities, and educational attainment. To deliver on its promises of connection, inclusivity, and innovation, the WFC organization takes a contemporary approach to representation that incorporates diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to support the voices of women and their allies in shaping the future of forests. With equity and activism among its founding principles, the WFC and its participants have made a collective and individual commitment to DEI.

## AT THE CONGRESS

In the runup to Minneapolis, quarterly meetings were held virtually to start building community and momentum for the congress, connect with others, and consider how actions informed by diverse perspectives could profoundly affect the future of forests. The first public gathering was on March 8, 2021—International Women's Day—and had more than 620 registrants from every U.S. state and Puerto Rico, 27 additional countries, and every continent. The turnout boded well for Minneapolis.

After more than two years of planning, over four days some five hundred Congress attendees from ten countries met to address the most pressing challenges for forests and women today and in the future. The focus was not exclusively on forestry knowledge, but the meeting did include opportunities for making connections and establishing a community that organizers intended as an inspiring and safe space for women to come together to address

the world's greatest forest sector challenges.

The structure and offerings at the congress reflected this strong sense of community building. Breakout sessions were designed to be more like collaborative workshops than presentations. Activation spaces—areas dedicated to specific activities—were provided to engage diverse learning styles, provide professional support and guidance, and foster creativity and collaboration in ways that addressed the full needs of attendees. Activation spaces included the Innovation Lab, Wellness Lounge, Career Exploration Experience, and Creativity Space and were intended to set a relaxed and inviting tone and foster a sense of community in which all were welcome.

This broad focus on building community was reflected in the five themes addressed at the congress and subsequently incorporated into the declaration: leadership for equity and inclusion; workforce opportunities for increasing recruitment, retention, and advancement; women as catalysts for change; addressing today's greatest forest challenges; and supporting each other. Thirty-nine delegates to the congress worked in groups based on the five WFC themes to create a declaration for attendees to vote on. The delegates had diverse perspectives, backgrounds, ages, and racial and ethnic identities. They were students and women working in academia, industry, public land management, and other roles in the forest and forest products sectors. In advance of the congress they reviewed and refined draft outcomes, measures of success, goals, and resolutions. During the congress,

delegates engaged with attendees, listened to presentations, and met for delegate-only deliberations to capture and suggest revisions and provide the final draft declaration for voting and approval on the final day. The approved declaration was shared publicly immediately following the congress.

The overriding goal of the WFC Declaration was to establish a shared vision for the future of women in forestry. To achieve that vision, the declaration includes calls to action. It challenges organizations in the forest and forest products sector to foster workforce opportunities, build a pipeline of talent, promote supportive and welcoming workspaces that make healthy lifestyles and lives a priority, work toward improving pay equity, and last but not least, “apply models and frameworks to generate and realize solutions to the greatest forest challenges that are built on women’s strengths, such as inclusive, collaborative, and multi-scale holistic thinking.” The call to action asks the congress’s participants, supporters, and partners “to commit themselves to advance the actions through their organizations, networks, partnerships, and spheres of influence.” Following approval of the declaration, the Women’s Forest Congress adjourned.

It’s too early to say whether the congress in Minneapolis will prove transformative, or on what scale. With the exception of the first two forest congresses, the others have had virtually no effect in part because they were meetings and not the beginning of movements. But by bringing together people from diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and racial and ethnic identities, by gathering

people at different stages of their careers in academia, industry, and other roles in the forest and forest products sector to discuss the need for transformation and provide new ideas and perspectives, the Women’s Forest Congress has shown that the will to transform is immeasurable.

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*James G. Lewis is editor of Forest History Today. He thanks Elizabeth Woodworth, a cofounder of the Women’s Forest Congress, for her assistance with this special section.*

## NOTES

1. Arthur V. Smyth, *Seventh American Forest Congress: Toward a Shared Vision. A Brief History of the American Forest Congresses* (Seventh American Forest Congress, 1995), 8.
2. William R. Bentley, “American Forest Congresses,” *Forests and Forestry in the Americas: An Encyclopedia* (2007), <https://sites.google.com/site/forestryencyclopedia/Home/American%20Forest%20Congresses>.
3. Bob Clausi, quoted in Rich Faltonson, “The Seventh American Forest Congress: What’s Next?” *The Forestry Source*, December 1996, 10.
4. Bentley, “American Forest Congresses.”
5. Data USA, “Forest & Conservation Workers: Diversity,” <https://datausa.io/profile/soc/forest-conservation-workers>.
6. Between 2006 and 2013, the percentage of female forestland owners in the United States who owned more than 10 acres of forestland rose from 12 to 14 percent. By 2018 it was reported that 20.4 percent of all private forestland owners were female and that they owned about 50 million acres of forestland nationwide. See Jacqueline Miner, Puneet Dwivedi, Robert Izlar, Danielle Atkins, and Parag Kadam, “Perspectives of Four Stakeholder Groups about the Participation of Female Forest Landowners in Forest Management in Georgia, United States,” *PLoS ONE* 16(8): e0256654. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256654>.

**2022 WOMEN'S FOREST CONGRESS DECLARATION — 19 OCTOBER 2022** We, the Women's Forest Congress, convened on October 17–20, 2022, with nearly 500 participants from 38 U.S. states, three Canadian provinces, and eight additional nations, make the following Declaration in light of the unique moment in which we stand.

**We recognize and acknowledge:**

Responsible and sustainable forest management plays an intrinsic role in clean air and water, recreation, and biodiversity; and the products and services of the forest affect all people throughout their lives. Moreover, sustaining and promoting the functions and values of forests requires holistic and integrated thinking about the complex relationships on which these systems depend.

Women are essential to the care of forests, provide leadership, and are catalysts. Diverse women's perspectives are even more valuable as new and innovative solutions are sought for our greatest forest challenges.

The impacts of historic and systemic discrimination on traditionally marginalized groups, including people of color and women, trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people, and especially the history of displacement through gentrification and genocide on Indigenous and Tribal nations. This discrimination has limited access and advancement and contributed to marginalization.

**LEADERSHIP FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

The forest and forest products sector currently lacks gender balance and representation. As of 2019, women represented just 16% of forestry and conservation professionals in the United States as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Women and people of color are significantly underrepresented, underserved, and historically excluded; thus, these perspectives are likely to occupy a minority share of existing answers and be missing in leadership and C-suites.

Gender parity, including intersectional parity, leads to a more sustainable forest and forest products

sector. Issues of equal access, discrimination, sexual harassment, assault, microaggressions, lack of support, and mentorship opportunities must be addressed. We need comfortable, safe, inviting, and welcoming work environments.

Black, Indigenous, and other women of color have needs, requirements, challenges, and experiences that White women do not share.

**SUPPORTING EACH OTHER**

Women are exemplary, focused, resilient, and effective leaders and engaged in promoting healthy living and work environments, thereby strengthening our capacity and capabilities. Addressing the complex and multi-faceted relationships characteristic of forest ecosystems serves as inspiration in supporting each other.

Women are caregivers within communities and families and need to remember to prioritize mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health to strengthen the ability to cope with daily stresses and, at the same time, model healthy behaviors for those around us.

Forest-based solutions must be inclusive of the perspectives of family farmers, small landholders, forest communities, Indigenous people, women, and youth and respectful of their rights.

Indigenous and Tribal nations, impacted by a history of displacement, genocide, and cultural genocide, hold traditional ways of knowing that have historically been devalued and deserve to be elevated and included in decision-making and sustainable forest value chains.

**WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES**

Equity and inclusion are a path forward as the best way to diversify

the talent and creativity needed to address the most critical issues and amplify the opportunities for positive change in the forest and forest products sector.

The sight of a diverse and representative leadership—including at the executive suite and board levels—is a source of inspiration and motivation for a more diverse talent pool to consider the forest and forest products sector as a career goal or next step.

**CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE**

Research and place-based knowledge provide evidence that inclusive practices and diverse work environments support creativity. Approaching issues through an inclusive lens can lead to longer-term perspectives that support innovation. When all views are taken into account and valued, women can provide a unique perspective to develop forward-thinking recommendations and actions.

The lack of women's perspectives leaves a void in the forest and forest products sector. Limiting professional participation by women and marginalized groups restricts opportunities to think about forests in new ways. Gender parity, including intersectional parity, leads to a more sustainable sector and climate.

**GREATEST FOREST CHALLENGES**

The challenges facing forests are diverse and include a loss of forest resiliency, disrupted disturbance regimes, wildland-urban interface conflict, transformative market dynamics, political polarization, climate change, and a lack of understanding and trust in forest management.

The world is relying on the forest and forest products sector to provide solutions to global environmental

change. The necessary innovations of today and tomorrow will require interdisciplinary collaboration, creative execution, and the inclusion of a wide range of skills, abilities, perspectives, and talent.

Forests are dynamic and variable across multiple spatial and temporal scales, and taking a longer-term, broader-scale, and inclusive perspective is critical for addressing the greatest forest challenges.

We have the science, experience, and technical expertise, but we need to tap into the hearts and minds of people.

**We resolve to:**

**LEADERSHIP FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

**Advance** our mission and seek to provide all women a space to listen, be seen and heard, and act for the benefit of forests and the forests and forest products sector.

**Develop** the capacity and the space to pursue our mission with an organizational structure, accountability, and participation that support values of diversity, inclusion, equity, and access.

**Educate** leaders in the forest and forest products sector on cultural awareness, unconscious bias, and how to be an effective ally and active bystander.

**Spotlight** and **amplify** Black, Indigenous, and other women of color’s needs, requirements, challenges, experiences, and voices.

**Be** an open and inclusive group within which trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming participants, including all members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, and all ages, perspectives, backgrounds, geographic locations, professional levels, abilities, experiences, and education are celebrated and able to contribute based on their unique experiences and expertise.

**Unleash** the power of inclusive leadership in the forest and forest products sector by inviting,

welcoming, and mentoring leaders of all ages, colors, perspectives, and backgrounds.

**Collaborate** with forest-related initiatives globally to advance the common cause for diversity, equity, and inclusion.<sup>2</sup>

**Document, report, and measure success** on goals for representation and leadership for women in the sector with an objective of greater than 33% women throughout the sector and greater than 25% women in C-suite positions by 2050.<sup>3</sup>

**SUPPORTING EACH OTHER**

**Foster** and **establish** systems for supporting each other, including training, mentorships, educational services, health and wellness, and human resource advancements.

**Gather** and **tell** our stories to ensure that learning diverse perspectives continues as a shared value.

**Invite** colleagues, allies, and contacts to join our efforts to foster vulnerability and connectivity.

**Ensure** forests and the sector are safe, inviting, and welcoming workspaces for all; support those who report or discuss acts or threats of physical, mental, or emotional violence; and allow workplaces to benefit from greater employee wellness.

**WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES**

**Create** a community of outreach and a network of organizations across the forest and forest products sector, including research and educational institutions, corporations, NGOs, and the public sector, to achieve recruitment, retention, placement, and advancement goals.

**Empower** women in all levels and positions of the forest and forest products sector; share experiences for retaining and advancing welcoming work environments; and generate and enact innovative ideas for increasing recruitment, retention, and advancement.

**Promote** the variety of working environments in the sector, whether field, classroom, or lab; rural, suburban, or urban; or home, office-based, or hybrid, whether in solo adventures or on big teams.

**CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE**

**Intentionally identify and prepare** more women for leadership positions.

**Reimagine** frameworks and processes in order to bring a full diversity of impacted peoples and perspectives, including building the structures for greater participation.

**Advocate** for workplace systems that enable all people to be healthy, whole, and equitably compensated.

**Advance** intersectional policies that create pathways for transformative and emboldened women leaders in the sector.

**Promote** the following Women’s Best Practices for Conferences and Events so that the unique features of our Congress are captured and documented in a way that can be used to inform future events in the sector.

- Leverage the use of personal experiences so that the effectiveness of gaining knowledge through storytelling and vulnerability is understood and expected.
- Build strong mentorship and peer networks to deepen unity, promote development, and support cross-collaboration.
- Create environments that support holistic health, including asking about and addressing special accommodations for attendees.

**GREATEST FOREST CHALLENGES**

**Demonstrate** a change in how forest challenges are addressed to include systems thinking, collaborative leadership models, multiple temporal and spatial scales, and holistic solutions.

**Foster** a climate of innovation to tackle the social, environmental, and economic challenges within the forest

and forest products sector with the goal of not only solving the biggest problems but also first insisting that we identify and intentionally engage the voices missing from the conversation as we design and implement the solutions.

**Commit** to supporting, adequately resourcing, and sharing information on forest health, carbon storage and sequestration, and other critical data that address the greatest forest challenges of today and tomorrow.

**Communicate** and value the many interconnected facets of the forest and forest products sector through transparent, authentic, and inspirational messaging that highlights the sector's role in conserving and restoring our planet's most sustainable and renewable resource, benefiting people, nature, and climate.

**Encourage** the endorsement of international efforts such as the "Principles for Ecosystem Restoration to Guide the United Nations Decade 2021–2030" and commitments adopted at the 2022 World Forestry Congress<sup>4</sup> (e.g., the Seoul Forest Declaration, the Ministerial Call on Sustainable Wood, Sustain an Abundance of Forest Ecosystems (SAFE), and the Youth Call for Action).

**Assert** that forests, forestry, and forest stakeholders offer significant nature-based solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, hunger, poverty, and human health. We must act now. There is no time to lose.<sup>5</sup>

### The Women's Forest Congress challenges organizations in the forest and forest products sector to<sup>6</sup>:

**Foster** workforce opportunities for all women through mentorship programs, professional development, scholarships, etc., with a particular focus on reaching out to those who need help or are asking for assistance in any part of their journey;

**Broaden** recruiting practices to include wider networks, and build a

pipeline of talent by connecting with and showcasing forests and the forest and forest products sector to youth and students, creating job shadowing and internship opportunities, etc.;

**Build** workplace systems that support mental health coverage, and include training and programs promoting healthy lifestyles, such as family leave, flexible work schedules, generous vacation plans, social opportunities, and holistic wellness programs;

**Promote** a variety of working environments, encourage flexibility, and ensure all work environments are fully accessible;

**Enable** employees to prioritize mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health and model healthy behaviors for others;

**Create** a safe, inviting, and welcoming workspace for all resulting in greater wellness, increased retention, higher productivity, improved creativity, and heart-centered decision-making;

**Assess** compensation for women and promote paths to pay equity at all levels, including discrepancies in intersectional identities, communities, and demographics;

**Intentionally identify** and support more women and those from underrepresented groups to achieve leadership positions;

**Increase** the use of storytelling in conferences, trainings, and workshops; and

**Apply** models and frameworks to generate and realize solutions to the greatest forest challenges that are built on women's strengths, such as inclusive, collaborative, and multi-scale holistic thinking.

### The participants of the 2022 Women's Forest Congress, our supporters, and partners commit ourselves to advance these actions through our organizations, networks, partnerships, and spheres of influence.

## NOTES

1. "SAF Celebrates Women's History Month," March 18, 2022, [https://www.eforester.org/Main/SAF\\_News/2022/SAF\\_Celebrates\\_Women\\_s\\_History\\_Month](https://www.eforester.org/Main/SAF_News/2022/SAF_Celebrates_Women_s_History_Month); and "Forest and Conservation Workers," [https://datausa.io/profile/soc/forest-conservation-workers#:~:text=Demographic%20information%20on%20Forest%20%26%20conservation,White%20\(Non%2DHispanic\)](https://datausa.io/profile/soc/forest-conservation-workers#:~:text=Demographic%20information%20on%20Forest%20%26%20conservation,White%20(Non%2DHispanic)). For global information, see: [https://unece.org/DAM/timber/docs/publications-other/Time%20for%20Action\\_Gender%20and%20Forestry.pdf](https://unece.org/DAM/timber/docs/publications-other/Time%20for%20Action_Gender%20and%20Forestry.pdf).
2. For example, see: "Australian Forest Products Association Diversity and Inclusion Charter" at: <https://ausfpa.com.au/charter/>.
3. For additional context for these goals, see: "25 Women in Leadership Statistics 2023: Facts on the Gender Gap in Corporate and Political Leadership," <https://www.zippia.com/advice/women-in-leadership-statistics/>; "Women Have Only 18.4% Share of Forestry Sector," <https://www.womeninwood.ca/single-post/2017/03/29/Women-have-only-18-4-share-of-forestry-sector>; "Women in the Workplace 2022," <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>; and Subodh Mishra, "Women in the C-Suite: The Next Frontier in Gender Diversity," <https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2018/08/13/women-in-the-c-suite-the-next-frontier-in-gender-diversity>.
4. The "Principles for Ecosystem Restoration" are at: <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/publications/principles-ecosystem-restoration-guide-united-nations-decade-2021-2030>, and detailed action points from the main sessions of the World Forestry Congress can be found at: <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0248en/cc0248en.pdf>.
5. For examples, see: IUCN's Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions at: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-020-En.pdf>; and the new IPCC mitigation report on the role of nature-based solutions to climate change at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3>.
6. The Women's Forest Congress intends to include accessible resources for individuals to be able to utilize to advance these actions.

# A Founder's Perspective

## *The Women's Forest Congress Is a Movement, Not a Moment*

BY ELIZABETH WOODWORTH

**A**rriving in Minnesota on October 16, 2022, in advance of the inaugural Women's Forest Congress (WFC), was an emotional experience. The congress was the culmination of a long-held dream of a world where all people—girls, boys, women, men, transgender—are treated with equal respect and consideration, a world where we all see forests as the answer for the health and future of our planet and well-being.

My feelings of pride and satisfaction were balanced by some apprehension as the magnitude of what was about to happen sunk in. Years of effort, meetings, conversations, challenges, celebrations, and deliberations were all coming to a head in what seemed like an impossibly short few hours, given where we had started on this journey in late 2019.

As a co-founder of the Women's Forest Congress and a proud member of the WFC Steering Committee, I had the enormous privilege of working with a dedicated and talented team of leaders. These women all gave freely and generously of their time and talents over the course of months and years. It was hard to believe that

the work of so many people, whom I count as friends and colleagues, was finally being put to the test.

Any jitters about the myriad details that can make such an undertaking stressful (like technical glitches, vendor no-shows, or last-minute requests) were calmed as I repeated the mantra that my colleagues and I had relied on over and over again during some of the most challenging times in the lead-up to the congress: It's not just a moment, it's a movement! Letting myself see the scale of what we were undertaking gave me the strength to put things in perspective and really soak up what we were about to achieve.

I can't properly express how delighted I still am that this mantra turned out to be a defining sentiment of the congress. It wasn't just a select group of us who shared this; everyone I met at the congress seemed tuned into a vibe that we were all sharing a front-row seat for a moment in history, which will resonate for generations. We were building something that would be much bigger than any of us could have imagined when we first started the planning process.

Delegates and attendees repeatedly remarked on the intense



COURTESY OF ELIZABETH WOODWORTH

feeling of shared belonging that pervaded the congress. Part of this social movement mindset was also reflected in the presence of youth and the congress's focus on helping chart a new course for those entering the forest sector. On a personal level, many attendees shared their wish for their daughters and granddaughters to see the sector as a place to pursue their dreams. And my wish for my daughter is that she be considered an equal among all peers in her potential and ability to pursue her dreams, whatever they are.



I now know, after almost thirty years of working, that the inequities we still face today are not a result of merit. Today I run my own company and hire the best people based on skills and expertise, not gender, skin color, physical ability, or any other societal category. And needless to say, there is no pay gap at my firm. The WFC has helped me, and countless others, take these fundamental ideals and move them forward.

### IT WAS TIME FOR A WOMEN'S FOREST CONGRESS

The convening of the Women's Forest Congress in 2022 was the latest step in the history of American forest congresses, the first of which was held in 1882. It's a safe bet to say that the 1882 congress looked a lot different from the WFC.

American forest congresses have been held intermittently to shape the evolution of sustainable forestry. Congresses helped usher in the U.S. Forest Service and major legislation like the National Forest Management Act. On the world stage, since 1926, a World Forestry Congress has been

held generally every six years.<sup>1</sup> These congresses have helped establish the practice of sustainable forestry that we know today.

The WFC was founded in 2019 to bring new voices and perspectives to sustainable forestry and to create a space to show the world the courage of women to improve the forest sector. We were aware of the important role the congress would play in continuing to write the proud history of women in forestry—a history that is deeper and richer than many may realize.

Consider that over a hundred years ago, women were fighting wildfires in the Mendocino National Forest in California.<sup>2</sup> And in 1910, Eloise B. Gerry became the first woman scientist hired by the Forest Service's Forest Products Laboratory.<sup>3</sup>

Trailblazing Black women leaders have also made their mark on the history of women in forestry—in 1999, Gloria Brown was the first Black woman to realize her dream of becoming

a national forest supervisor when she took over the Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon.<sup>4</sup> These groundbreaking women would probably feel right at home today as members of the WFC.

### BUILDING A MOVEMENT THAT RESPECTS DIVERSITY

Hundreds of women have come together in this movement to share personal and professional

experiences, connect with others, shape the latest innovations, and consider how actions informed by their perspectives can profoundly affect the future of forests. The

**...we were all sharing a front-row seat for a moment in history, which will resonate for generations. We were building something that would be much bigger than any of us could have imagined...**



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WFC is an open and inclusive movement—trans, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming participants are welcome, as are women of all ages, perspectives, and backgrounds.

These diverse delegates were asked whether they could speak truth to power and identify actions to improve the forest sector. The answer was a resounding *yes!* And for most of us, the answer involves addressing the fact that women still account for only about one of every five positions in the sector.

It's an understatement to say that the forest and forest products sector currently lacks gender balance and representation. As of 2019, women represented just 16 percent of forestry and conservation professionals in the United States as a whole.<sup>5</sup> Women and people of color are significantly underrepresented, underserved, and historically excluded, which means their perspectives are likely to account for a minority share of existing answers and be missing from upper-level management and top leadership positions.

Typically, in discussions of women in the forest sector, the voices of women of color are marginalized. The WFC is committed to actions that address racial injustice. The WFC believes that Black lives matter. We remain committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion for all women in the forest sector.

### FORESTS ARE THE ANSWER FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET

The many challenges facing forests include a loss of forest resiliency, disrupted wildfire management regimes, wildland-urban interface conflict, transformative market dynamics, political polarization, climate change, and a lack of understanding and trust in forest management. But we were undaunted.

Over an inspiring four days, the Women's Forest Congress solidified our shared conviction that forests are the answer for the health and future of our planet. The WFC also shared and fostered a dream of a world where all people have equal access to opportunities and are treated with full respect and consideration. As the WFC evolves, its legacy will continue to grow as the WFC community acts on new ideas, builds personal capacity, and inspires others.

The WFC helped us all envision a forest community characterized by universal equity, inclusion, and a shared sense of belonging. A community where all voices are heard, supported, and empowered. A community where the influence of all is manifest in our relationships with forests.

Together, we accepted a shared mission to create community and cultivate change. Together, we created safe spaces to connect, inspire, and act as catalysts for change for the benefit of forests and all who rely on them now and in the future.

The success of the WFC shows that when you set a table for more diverse people and more voices, you get better outcomes, more innovation, more progress, and more satisfaction for everyone. Together, we established that the WFC is not a moment but a movement—and it's only the beginning.

### MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD FOR WOMEN, FORESTS, AND OUR SHARED FUTURE

My love of forests steered me to focus my professional and personal life on trying to help the world understand the critical role they have in saving our planet. Now, thanks to the WFC, I can work with a group of women, all of whom are on their own journey

and come to this with their own stories, their own pains and joys, and their own personal passion. The WFC showed us we could change the future of the forest sector, embrace the unknown, and dream big together, for the future of forests and the future of women.

The Women's Forest Congress was a moment; the WFC is leading a movement. The WFC continues to thrive on the momentum and to engage with all across the forest community through social media and the WFC website at [womensforestcongress.org](http://womensforestcongress.org).

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*Elizabeth Woodworth is CEO of Wood & Co. Consulting and is one of the Women's Forest Congress founders and a principal organizer of the 2022 Women's Forest Congress. She also serves on the WFC Steering Committee.*

### NOTES

1. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "WFC: Historical Context," <https://www.fao.org/about/meetings/world-forestry-congress/background/past-congresses/en/>. The first world congress was held in 1926, the second in 1936, and the third in 1949. It has been held under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) every six years since 1954.
2. Alex Potter, "The Women Battling Wildfires and Breaking Barriers in the American Wilderness," <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/the-women-battling-wildfires-and-breaking-barriers-in-the-american-wilderness>.
3. David Havlick, "Dr. Eloise Gerry," <https://foresthstory.org/research-explore/us-forest-service-history/people/scientists/dr-eloise-gerry>.
4. U.S. Forest Service, "HerStory: Meet Gloria Brown," <https://www.fs.usda.gov/inside-fs/delivering-mission/excel/herstory-meet-gloria-brown>.
5. Women's Forest Congress, "2022 Women's Forest Congress Declaration," <https://womensforestcongress.org/2022-congress/2022-wfc-declaration>.

# I Felt Like I Belonged There

BY DELIE WILKENS

I approached the Inaugural Women’s First Congress in the same way I approach almost all professional working events: with muted anxiety and an internal mantra of “It’ll be over in a few days.”

It’s not that I wasn’t excited about this event; I was! For the better part of a year, I had been working to develop content for the Women’s Forest Congress sessions, so I knew the quality of what would be presented. I was part of the WFC delegate group, working on the Leadership for Equity and Inclusion theme, so I knew that women of color and LGBTQIA+ individuals would be represented. I even helped to develop the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities’ Innovation Lab, so I knew there would be engaging conversations, fun photos, and (most important) candy. What I did not know (and the genesis for my anxiety) was how the congress itself would be received by the hundreds of women attending or the multitude of employers they were representing.

What I found genuinely surprised me: these women were all there, representing their employers and talking about their work in forestry, but they were also taking ownership of who they were. As people, as women. Sure, I heard “Can you guess the tree species from this tree cookie?” or “What about a certification in urban

forestry?” or “This is how to appeal to a new generation of foresters.” Yet I also heard a much louder voice in the collective room: women talking about themselves. They were talking about strong friendships, new babies, old pets, and fast cars. They were talking about being the only female in the sawmill, being the first woman CEO of their company, and being the first two women to canoe from Minneapolis to Hudson Bay. It was awe inspiring to hear so many stories of triumph and perseverance and vulnerability, and it was even more inspiring to see the response.

There was cheering, whooping, yelling, laughing, and—more than anything—supporting. I didn’t witness any exclusive side conversations. No sly remarks, no undermining of a message. In fact, several people explicitly stated that type of movement would not work. It was not about the exclusion of anyone. We need the support of other women, of men, of anyone who believes in what we are doing. That is the only way to do this work well.

What began as an anxious feeling soon melted away into a calm elation, a steady hum of inspiration as I slipped in and out of breakout rooms, creativity rooms, and wellness rooms. Occasionally, I would have the familiar nagging feeling of “Should I take a few minutes to check my email?” but it was quickly followed by, “Goodness, I really



COURTESY OF DELIE WILKENS

don’t want to miss Mia and Kathy talking about mentorship!”

You don’t get very far into your career in forestry before someone reminds you that most of us are in forestry because we like . . . well, forests. The ones far away from people and airports and conferences. That is, of course, a generalization, but we tend not to be an overly extroverted bunch. Yet you wouldn’t be able to tell that from this congress. People often tell me that you cannot tell an introvert from an extrovert if they are in the right environment, around the right people. It’s almost as if this whole thing was organized not based on your standard template for conferences, but by really understanding the people who would be attending and what they needed to hear.

I don’t think I’m alone in saying that I felt like I belonged there—not because I was convincing myself but because others were showing me that I did.

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*Delie Wilkens is a program analyst with the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities. This article was originally published on the Women’s Forest Congress blog as “My Reflections on the Inaugural Women’s Forest Congress” at [womensforestcongress.org/blog](https://womensforestcongress.org/blog).*

# I Am a Catalyst for Change

BY AMANDA MAHAFFEY

I was in a room with five hundred women forest stewards. What?! When did that happen, ever? It happened at the inaugural Women's Forest Congress in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The congress was designed to inspire and empower women in the forest sector. This event was the culmination of years of work by women leaders in the field who felt that now was the time for a space dedicated to elevating the voices of women in the forestry profession.

The Women's Forest Congress was unlike any conference I have ever been to. The focus was not on forestry knowledge, though this group could offer a wealth of that, but rather on building connections and community so that together, we might address the world's greatest forest challenges. Why a Women's Forest Congress? Data and experience show that women are sadly underrepresented in the field and in leadership positions within the sector. The women who attended came from industry, academia, nonprofits, government, and everything in between. We represented thirty-eight states, three Canadian provinces, and eight other countries. We came as leaders, mid-career professionals, young foresters, and students. We came to share our passion for igniting a new role for women in forestry.

The program flowed through an arc of experience woven of the five

themes of the congress: Leadership for Equity and Inclusion; Workforce Opportunities for Increasing Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement; Women as Catalysts for Change; Addressing Today's Greatest Forest Challenges; and Supporting Each Other. Inspirational speakers from inside and outside the forestry profession taught us to commit ourselves to embodying the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. To never give up in our determination to blaze a path for girls who will come after us. To have each other's backs and affirm our truths. To support each other and lift each other up. To tell "herstory" in our sector's history in the past, present, and future. To paddle upstream together and breathe in the world around us. To laugh, dance, and celebrate who we are.

Breakout sessions felt more like collaborative workshops than the usual formal presentations. Rooms were packed to overflowing with women asking good questions, providing input in world cafés, and building connections through small group discussions. Special spaces for creativity, wellness, and nursing mothers set this meeting apart from traditional forestry conferences. In the midst of all this activity, delegates worked diligently to articulate declarations that would come out of the congress and establish a shared vision for the future of women in forestry. We heard powerful individual



COURTESY OF KEVIN MAHAFFEY

stories and universal support for one another. This special gathering of women was made even more impactful because of our shared experiences through the pandemic, which had a pronounced effect on women.

My mind is blown by the experience of the 2022 Women's Forest Congress. This landmark gathering invited us to bring our whole selves, on equal footing with our colleagues, and with plenty to accomplish together. As I return home, I know inside that I am changed by this experience. I am ready to inspire, train, and empower the women around me to be the change we want to see, to work together to steward our forests for the future.

**I am a woman forester.  
I am a catalyst for change.  
With others, I will rise,  
and we will shape  
the future.**

*Amanda Mahaffey is a deputy director of the Forest Stewards Guild and is based in Maine. This article was originally published on the Women's Forest Congress blog as "Women's Forest Congress Summary" at [womensforestcongress.org/blog](https://womensforestcongress.org/blog).*

# History in the Making

## *A Librarian's Experience at the Women's Forest Congress*

BY LAUREN BISSONETTE

**T**his past October 17, I woke up bright and early to fly to Minnesota. Why was I going there? I'd been before to visit my spouse's family, but I think the state's renowned natural splendor and warm Midwest demeanor would attract anyone. However, I was going there for the inaugural Women's Forest Congress.

As the Forest History Society's librarian, I first learned of the WFC in early 2021, when FHS approached congress organizers to offer our expertise and provide historical background on past forest congresses. FHS wanted to assist with ensuring that the story of this congress would be preserved. By attending I would be both a witness to and a participant in making history.

Speaking of history, you should know this was the Eighth American Forest Congress. It took until the Fourth American Forest Congress, held in 1953, before women (three, to be exact) were on the program.<sup>1</sup>

So imagine this: I get to the hotel where the congress is being held and go to my room to prepare for a pre-congress field tour. Then I head back down to the lobby. As soon as the

elevator doors open, I hear a symphony of women's voices and I know this is where I am supposed to be. I mean that not just literally, but spiritually. I let my guard drop, knowing I am in a safe space and I belong here.

### **THERE IS POWER IN A SPECIFIC PLACE**

Sponsored by the Minnesota Women's Woodland Network, the Native American Culture Sites tour took us to *Bdote*, a sacred site located on an island at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers. *Bdote* has been honored for centuries by the Dakota people as a place of creation. Our guide, the powerful orator Jim Bear Jacobs, told us that as American colonizers moved in, it eventually turned into a site of mass imprisonment and death for Indigenous people. Again and again during the nineteenth century, the Dakota people were pushed from their homes until they occupied only a small strip of land on the Minnesota River. The money promised to them for ceding their land was instead claimed by and distributed to white traders. Negligence and wanton corruption by the U.S. government pushed the Dakota people over the brink—armed conflict erupted in



COURTESY OF LAUREN BISSONETTE

the summer of 1862. Though the U.S.–Dakota War would last only six weeks, it had major consequences for the Dakota people and other Native Americans. Afterward, the Dakota people were held in a concentration camp at this location; this place of creation was now known as a place of death from disease, abuse, and genocidal actions.

Three hundred Dakota men were sentenced to death. After President Abraham Lincoln reviewed the cases, 38 men were hanged on December 26, 1862, in the largest mass execution in American history. Six days later, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

It's one thing to learn about history from a book. It is another to stand in place where history has happened. It literally grounds you. There is power in a specific place and a deeper understanding through the context of a space. This story was shared with us at the *Wokiksuye K'a Woyuonihan (Remembering and Honoring)* memorial at Fort Snelling State Park, a memorial that honors the 1,600 Dakota people imprisoned at the fort following the war.

With a newfound appreciation and reverence for the land, our group headed back for the welcome

reception and dinner. Although I am a socially anxious person, I walked into the reception with a concerted calmness and curiosity. “What did I have to worry about?” I asked myself as I waited in line for a complimentary glass of wine that would undoubtedly ease my nerves. I was resigned to mingle with my unknown peers and flex my atrophied networking muscles. It was easier than I anticipated. As I entered the line for hors d’oeuvres, I immediately recognized a woman I’d met just a month earlier at the Society of American Foresters national convention, where we’d enjoyed a dinner together. In a crowd of strangers, I was elated to see her again here. Later on, I was pulled away by another friendly face. Rachel Kline, a historian with the U.S. Forest Service and liaison to the FHS Board of Directors, introduced me to some of her colleagues and we all went into the hotel ballroom for the reception and dinner. Rachel later gave an inspiring keynote talk on women’s legacy in forestry and conservation.

### INTENTIONAL WELLNESS

Though I’m early in my professional career and have attended some academic conferences, I had never been to a professional gathering like this, where wellness was at the forefront of the organizers’ minds. Before each day’s events, you could attend a yoga or Zumba session. Between or during sessions we had “brain breaks,” where we could get up and move around, dance, stretch, and meditate. There were dedicated spaces for nursing mothers, a wellness lounge for decompressing, and a creativity space to tap into your energy and express yourself artistically. Mental health was a priority, especially given the demands of the outside world and women’s common role as caregivers

by default. It was refreshing to have a space where we could simply *be*.

These practices are important for all and should be employed at conferences and even workplaces alike. The WFC organization seeks to advocate for workplace support systems that uphold mental health coverage, flexible work schedules, family leave, and wellness programs. Visiting forests is a proven form of therapy—forests provide a space for healing—and those who are lucky enough to work in forestry get that added benefit. But intentional employee wellness practices benefit forestry and other workplaces because of increased worker retention, productivity, and creativity.

One of my favorite sessions was “Communicating through Conflict and Bountiful Boundaries.” This session offered tools and techniques to handle heated situations and interpersonal conflict both in the workplace and at home. Once seating had completely filled up, women stood along the walls and sat on the floor. It was no surprise to me that this was a popular class—women are socialized to be people pleasers, and others often step all over their boundaries. (I avoid conflict whenever possible and find it difficult to create and maintain boundaries.) Over the next hour and a half, we learned how to begin difficult conversations with honesty and respect and how to respond with authenticity and curiosity. Attendees shared their own experiences and struggles, and we walked away with empowerment and support.

### NOT JUST A SPACE FOR WOMEN

The WFC was not just a space for women. The congress sought to be equitable and inclusive, welcoming individuals of all ages, colors, and genders—this includes

trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming folks. I am a queer person and nonbinary in nature (pun intended); to feel more comfortable in a new space, I tend to seek out others like myself. Statistically, I knew others had to be here.

As the librarian at FHS, I’ve searched high and low for references to queer individuals in forest and conservation history. Unsurprisingly, there’s not much out there—historically, it has been dangerous to be an out and proud queer person. Take, for example, Rachel Carson. When she published *Silent Spring* in 1962, Carson faced withering personal attacks, and her opponents tried to censor her book. But perhaps the biggest censor was Carson herself—and for good reason. Surviving letters between Carson and Dorothy Freeman, her neighbor in Maine who was married, reveal their deep and intimate lesbian relationship.<sup>2</sup> They had an agreement to destroy the letters to avoid scandal and to protect Carson’s legacy.<sup>3</sup> Her *Silent Spring* changed the world. But to me, Carson’s legacy is even greater because of her queerness—that she perhaps hid her own nature and truth in order to expose other truths about nature. I wondered, what would Rachel have thought about this gathering?

By the second day of the congress, there were lively discussions on the conference app, and I was surprised that none surrounded the LGBTQIA2S+ community.<sup>4</sup> So I started one. With a quick introduction of myself and a prompt to get a discussion going, others started following the thread almost immediately. They, too, had been looking for the opportunity to connect with other members of the community! It was because of this online discussion thread that I learned of other resources and meetups for

queer folks in forestry, such as the Forest Steward Guild’s “Seeing the Forest for the Queers,” a monthly online discussion group for people who identify with the LGBTQIA2S+ community in the natural resources field. I felt proud to have facilitated a channel that connected us.

### **BUILDING A TABLE FOR ALL**

Historically, as one of the speakers noted, women have found themselves not at the table but on the menu: those at the table have denied women representation or the chance to participate and were making decisions about and for us. However, at this congress, women were not only given a seat at that table, but they built the table and chairs from wood they’ve grown, harvested, and milled—and they invited all to join with them. And I was there. One hundred and forty

years after the first forest congress, where nary a lady was to be seen, I was in a room with five hundred women who resolved to foster workforce opportunities for all women, create systems of support that prioritize mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health, and intentionally identify and boost women and those from underrepresented groups to achieve leadership positions. This was history in the making, and I wasn’t sitting in my librarian’s office reading about it. I and my peers were making history. I was in that space, and it was powerful.

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*Lauren Bissonette is the librarian of the Forest History Society. They serve as Publicity and Outreach Chair for the American Library Association Sustainability Roundtable.*

### **NOTES**

1. American Forestry Association, *Proceedings of the Fourth American Forest Congress* (Washington, DC: American Forestry Association, 1953).
2. Carolyn Gage, “Review of Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature,” May 27, 2021, <https://carolyngage.weebly.com/blog/review-of-rachel-carson-witness-for-nature>. In this review of Linda Lear’s 1999 biography of Carson, Gage quotes from the surviving correspondence between the two that was edited by Martha Freeman, Dorothy’s granddaughter, and published in *Always, Rachel: The Letters of Rachel Carson and Dorothy Freeman, 1952–1964* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995). Gage also discusses the pivotal relationships Carson had with two other women before she met Freeman.
3. Jill Lepore, “The Right Way to Remember Rachel Carson,” *The New Yorker*, March 19, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/03/26/the-right-way-to-remember-rachel-carson>.
4. The term “LGBTQIA2S+” stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Asexual, Two-Spirit and other identifiers. For more information about these labels, see “GLAAD Media Reference Guide - LGBTQ Terms,” GLAAD, March 15, 2022, <https://www.glaad.org/reference/terms>.

**Attendees toast the approval of the Women’s Forest Congress Declaration.**



COURTESY OF LAUREN BISSONETTE

SPECIAL SECTION

# Women's Legacy and Future in Forestry

*Paving the Way  
for Progress*

BY RACHEL D. KLINE



*Rachel Kline and Edie Sonne Hall presented as part of the panel “Women’s Legacy and Future in Forestry: Paving the Way for Progress” at the Women’s Forest Congress. This article is adapted from that presentation.*

I’m a historian, so the weight of this moment in history does not escape me. The first American Forest Congress met in Cincinnati’s Eden Park in 1882. It was the first time that a large number of men—and a handful of women—from the public and private sectors gathered together to discuss the future of America’s forests and what they might do about it. And 140 years later, here we are in Minneapolis, a large number of women—and a handful of men—brought together for similar reasons.

As we see today, women certainly have not just a bright future in forestry but in fact a bright present. But women also have a longstanding history in this field that predates even that first congress. Most of our conversation over the past three days has revolved around diversity and inclusion, and I would argue that in order to have an inclusive present and future, we also have to recognize an inclusive past. Women have a long history in forestry and conservation. You are the inheritors of that legacy.

And what has struck me most while being here and listening is that what has been said here is what women have been saying since 1850, at least in print—though they used different terms than what I’ve heard here: “access, diversifying, collaborating, creating connections, relationships,

an ecosystems approach.” These are all things that have been on women’s minds for more than a century in relationship to nature. This conference hasn’t been focused on the technical aspects of work. Can you all talk about that stuff? Of course you can. But without the relationships and the collaboration, it’s just data or process. And that’s what women bring—that rich texture of relationship. And they have for nearly two centuries.

I’ve been researching women in conservation and forestry for a number of years, but this passion goes back further for me to my childhood as I played on the Roosevelt National Forest or spun in my grandfather’s chair at the Rocky Mountain Research Station in Fort Collins, Colorado. My grandfather held many roles in fire and administration, and even dressed as Smokey Bear, for the U.S. Forest Service for 30 years. But I also watched my grandmother support his position in ways that I couldn’t really comprehend at the time. I now know that my grandparents were part of a richly steeped tradition of an “all hands on deck” approach to forestry and that my grandmother and other women played a tremendous role in the creation, organization, and execution of that forestry. Nana hosted a fish fry every Friday for the staff when Papa worked on the Lincoln National Forest in New Mexico during the 1960s. I’ve been so fortunate to follow in their footsteps, working for the Forest Service for over thirteen years now. I’ve visited or worked on more than sixty forests and grasslands and worked in every

region of the agency. When I got the job, my papa quipped, “Huh? We hire historians?” But he thought it was really amazing that I joined the agency, and I’m so proud to work in this field and use history to inform land management decisions. And I’d like to note that while I love working for the U.S. Forest Service, today I’m sharing my personal research.

That research shows a story that is too often untold: that women have been involved in forestry and conservation since the nineteenth century. And it’s their approach to land and nature that has ushered modern forestry, conservation, and agencies like the Forest Service into the twenty-first century. And how women will take that into the future. To quote the illustrious rapper Pitbull, “To understand the future, we have to go back in time.”

Mainstream history has long held that men have been the center of the story. And they have most certainly held, until recently, most if not all professional and leadership positions within the forestry field. We talk about all the greats like Henry David Thoreau, George Perkins Marsh, John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, who was the “Father of the Forest Service” and America’s first professional forester, and Aldo Leopold, who is considered to be the originator of the term “land ethic,” which calls for an ethical, caring relationship between people and nature.

Meanwhile, women were excluded from forestry schools as well as professional and technical forestry positions and leadership for the first half of the twentieth century, and they fought hard to move into those positions in the latter half of the century. But this doesn’t mean women

**As the stickers on her luggage show, Margaret March-Mount crisscrossed the country teaching women and children about forest conservation.**

haven't been present in forestry from the beginning.

So, are these men I've mentioned important? Absolutely. They are very much part of the story. But they're only half. And as Jackie Heinricher spoke about on Monday evening, let's address the other half.<sup>1</sup> Because while they may have been excluded from a male-dominated forestry field, they made their own contributions, what these early women called a "feminine forestry" and a "conservation cause."

### FEMININE FORESTRY

First, I would like to introduce you to Susan Fenimore Cooper. Some of you may know of her—she was the devoted daughter of James Fenimore Cooper, the famous American author best known for *Last of the Mohicans*. But she's so much more than that.

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Susan Fenimore Cooper was an integral voice within early

American nature conversations. And it would be her work that would lay the foundation for women in conservation.

Cooper's observations of nature as part of the home and community were pivotal in the formation of women's nature appreciation at the time. She provided a model for women to engage with natural subjects and advocate for their preservation as a moral obligation, calling on them to awaken their interest in nature, "which may lead them" to what she called "something higher."<sup>2</sup>

Four years before Thoreau published *Walden*, Cooper published her book *Rural Hours* in 1850. *Rural Hours* is the first nature writing text published by a woman in the United States, and the book saw four decades of success, with numerous editions and reprints.

It was written in the style of a daily journal, capturing Cooper's

observations over a period of two years of the seasons, flora, and fauna of her native upstate New York. But more than just daily musings, Cooper saw patterns of climate change, loss of species, and unsustainable environmental practices, and she feared for the loss of the American landscape.

Cooper advocated that Americans approach the landscape "more humbly and gratefully and with less greed," by creating a sustainable balance between humans and nature. While she praised the "social spirit" of the land modestly shaped by the laborer and husbandman, she criticized the unsustainable practices of Americans' depleting forests and species for the use of one generation. Throughout her works spanning forty-three years, Cooper repeatedly reported the loss of American wildflower species, the diminishing numbers of migrating birds, the decrease of fish, and the



Susan Fenimore Cooper, seen here around 1855, had to use the pseudonym "A Lady" in order to get her book *Rural Hours* published because it was so unusual.



PUBLIC DOMAIN (2)

reduction of wildlife like moose, elk, deer, wolves, and martens killed for their fur or displaced by wood-cutters.

On forestry, she criticized practices like pollarding, or lopping the heads off trees. She called such a mutilation of trees unethical and a deplorable practice that wasted whole trees for fleeting pursuits. She also spoke out on the exploitation of old-growth trees.

Cooper's remedy for this exploitation was to connect nature and forests to the home as a way for Americans to understand the value of trees and why they should care. Writing "the earth is the common home of all," she asserted that Americans had a moral obligation to know and recognize the nature around them.

Susan Cooper's call to "something higher" planted a seed in the minds of nineteenth-century women to recognize the importance and value of nature, and she was quickly followed in print. We also know that Thoreau read her because he quotes her, revealing that this was certainly a conversation involving both men and women.

So, who are some of these other women? Elizabeth Wright, Olive Throne Miller, Celia Thaxter, Sarah Orne Jewett, Edith Thomas, Anna Botsford Comstock, Gene Stratton Porter, and Mary Hunter Austin are just a few who wrote on natural history, the importance of nature, the progressive depletion of the natural world, the need for thoughtful preservation, and the assertion of nature not as other but as home. In 1918, Mary Austin credited women's capacity for intuitive judgment as their platform from which to speak, stating that women should bring to nature writing "Not their ability to see the world in the way men see it, but

the importance and validity of their seeing it some other way."<sup>3</sup>

During the Progressive Era, which lasted from 1890 to 1920, thousands of women took up Cooper's appeal for nature appreciation and preservation and advocated for the protection of birds, forests, and watersheds. Like Cooper, they claimed that preserving American nature preserved American life.

One of these women was botanist Mira Lloyd Dock. She was the most prominent spokeswoman for scientific forestry at the turn of the century. A wealthy Pennsylvanian, Dock was a lecturer, clubwoman, and public official, being the first woman to serve on an official conservation board. Her scientific know-how and passion for forestry enabled her to educate women about conservation but also gave her the ear of professional men. Friends with Gifford Pinchot and other male foresters, she gained favor within the professional forestry circuit, which enabled her to expand her own education—not available to most women—as well as assert her influence into the pressing forestry issues of the day.

She also taught aspiring male foresters at the Pennsylvania State Forest Academy and even created portions of the curriculum. A forest owner herself, she permitted the school to use her property for its experimental field school. Dock really highlights how women circumnavigated the exclusion of women in forestry by studying something else, like botany, and becoming an authority in forestry anyway.

### THE CONSERVATION CAUSE

As I was researching these women, particularly in the early Forest Service, I kept coming across this phrase that

they would use: "the conservation cause." While women engaged in all kinds of conservation work, a constant thread throughout their records is their shared idea of a conservation cause based on the "greatest good." Gifford Pinchot captured his philosophy in his use of the utilitarian maxim the "greatest good for the greatest number," derived from eighteenth-century English writer Jeremy Bentham, to which Pinchot added "in the long run." This philosophy for the new agency emphasized that forest management should consider the many needs of forest users and implement long-term decisions that best served the most people as well as the environment over time. The question of who was best fit to determine and fulfill "the greatest good" was answered with the Progressive credo of efficient government regulation based on scientific management.

Meanwhile, the many women who worked for the Forest Service since its earliest days took conservation and, like Pinchot, made it their own. While Forest Service women heartily subscribed to the ideal of scientific management, they added to it a deeper environmental concern and tied it to American morality, culture, and citizenship. In their minds, the practice of forestry was not only for the benefit of the lumberman or the carpenter, but also for the cultivation of relationships between tree life and human life.

Let's take a look at some of these women.

First is Edith Mosher, who worked for the Forest Service from 1905 to 1920. She is known as the founder of conservation education in the agency. And I love how her story begins, almost like a superhero origin story. An elementary school

teacher, Mosher was standing at her blackboard one day in 1900, preparing a lesson inspired by a small peach branch she held in her hand, when it dawned on her: there were no decent instructional books on nature with which to teach her students. Thoroughly irritated at the lack of useful nature texts, she vowed to illustrate her own set of nature books for schoolchildren. So she bought a ticket to Washington, D.C. She told her boss she was going to a teacher's conference. But once she got there, she sold her return ticket, took a civil service exam, and—wham!—was hired by the General Land Office. She moved to the Forest Service once it was established in 1905 and didn't look back.

While she was a clerk under Pinchot, outside of her normal duties she began illustrating those nature texts she had promised herself, and in 1907 Mosher published her first booklet, *Fruit and Nut-Bearing Trees*. The agency saw the value in her work and supported her, leading her to publish two more booklets, *Our Oaks and Maples* and *Our Cone-Bearing Trees*, both in 1909.

The hallmark of these nature texts was her full-page illustrations, roughly thirty close-up scientific—and just beautiful—drawings. In the text, she mixed in scientific observations and lessons for teachers.

Though she started out wanting to provide schoolchildren with more detailed textbooks, her efforts turned into a larger initiative of sharing with students the idea of conservation as a cultural obligation and an entreaty to protect the forests as a civic responsibility.

And how she accomplished this was to connect literature, poetry, and thoughts about American life with nature. She often used poetry and

verse to set the stage. For example, she begins the booklet on oaks and maples with the poem from William Wordsworth:

One impulse from the vernal  
wood  
May teach you more of man  
Of moral evil, and of good,  
Than all the sages can.<sup>4</sup>

In 1917, she published *Forest Study in the Primary Grades*, the first Forest Service textbook for children that had numerous lessons for schoolteachers, again combining poetry and scientific observations.<sup>5</sup> I think one of her greatest contributions is her poem that gets children to think about fire prevention long before Smokey ever did:

What do we burn when we burn  
our trees?  
We burn the home for you and  
me,  
We burn the carriage house, barn,  
and shed,  
The baby's cradle, the little boy's  
sled,  
The book case, the table, the  
rocker of ease—  
We burn all these when we burn  
our trees.  
What do we burn when we burn  
our trees?  
The homes of birds, the squirrels,  
and bees,  
The home of the brook, and the  
cooling spring  
Where violets blossom, and  
bluebirds sing,  
The beauties of nature, so fair to  
please—  
We burn all these when we burn  
our trees.

Through this poem and others in her *Forest Study in the Primary Grades*,

Mosher emphasized that learning forest conservation issues as a young student made children better citizens and people. She argued that, with a love for nature and an understanding of the interconnectedness of forests and humans, children would grow into adults and citizens more apt to solve the pressing issues facing forests and natural resources. Through prose and poetry, she convinced readers to care for and protect forests as a personal responsibility.

Next, I'd like to talk about Daisy Priscilla Edgerton, who worked for the Forest Service Division of Information and Education from 1923 to 1938. In 1931, Edgerton wrote, "There is perhaps no set of women workers in Uncle Sam's army of federal employees more loyal and enthusiastic for the cause and the job" than those in the Forest Service.

In 1927, she authored *The Forest: A Handbook for Teachers*, which proved quite popular. Like Mosher, Edgerton used literature and culture as a means of helping students understand and relate to forestry, but she emphasized a hands-on approach to learning. "The best way to teach the subject is to take the pupils to the woods," Edgerton instructs. "When this is impossible, specimens and exhibits should be brought into the schoolroom for study."<sup>6</sup> *The Forest* provided information and classroom exercises for grades one through nine that could be carried out over the course of the entire school year. She also authored a textbook in 1930, one of the first of its kind, called *Southern Forests: First Steps in Forest Study*.

"Wherever she goes, young forests begin to grow," a children's newspaper wrote in 1940 of Margaret March-Mount. As the director of Women's Forestry in the Division of Information and Education,

she spoke to thousands of women across the country to convince them of their moral obligation to care for nature and trees. Reading this woman's schedule made me tired. She gave talks to women's clubs, wrote articles, presented lectures, and gave radio addresses. She spoke about conservation programs, planting trees, and fire prevention, and why it all mattered. In particular, she popularized the "Penny Pines" campaign, a children's conservation campaign to encourage students to

fund tree planting on national forests. In exchange for every penny given, the Forest Service planted two or three pine trees. For every four dollars received, the Forest Service promised to plant a thousand seedlings in states where pines would grow. She raised so much money for trees, you can still see her forests across the country today.

In 1942, March-Mount wrote in an article for *American Forests* magazine that "No longer is forestry wholly 'a man's profession.' The wonder-world

of the forest is now a woman's world also."

She outlined that the goal of the Women's Forestry program was to make women into "forest builders" who would protect the forests as their homes. She claimed that women could build careers at home as foresters, working on the "human side of forestry."<sup>77</sup> March-Mount's program revealed the contrast in men's and women's approach to forest conservation: while Forest Service men predominately viewed timber as a crop to be harvested, women desired to build up forests to enhance American life.

And in the midst of war, she reminded Americans that while bombs explode, trees grow, and from that assurance Americans could find resolve to preserve and protect their forests, homes, and way of life even in uncertainty.

In the tradition of Susan Fenimore Cooper and the nineteenth-century women naturalists, the well-known Dr. Eloise Gerry, the first female research scientist hired in the Forest Service, also connected her scientific findings with community values. In 1924, she wrote a four-part series of short stories for children featured in *American Forests* and *Forest Life* magazine. The "Pine-Burr Stories" followed a child's adventure into the woods to inspect trees with their father or play with cousins, decorate the Christmas tree made from the delights of the forest, and help plant seeds to grow new forests. By



FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY PHOTO COLLECTION, FH56859

**Eloise Gerry was an accomplished scientist whose field-based studies helped save the naval stores industry in the South.**



connecting the stories to the daily lives of children, Gerry showed the importance of large forests and tiny seeds to young children and put a relatable, human face on scientific practice.

These are just a handful of women who carried out the conservation cause through their work and outreach. I've hardly scratched the surface. I could talk all day about lookouts, foresters, librarians, clerks, wives, and more women in research.

I'd like to bring Rachel Carson into the room for a minute. I think she would be in awe at what we're doing here today. Even though she wasn't in forestry, this marine biologist, writer, and conservationist had a profound impact on America's forests with her book *Silent Spring*.

Carson, who was well grounded in science, embodied what might be thought of as the hallmarks of women's environmentalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: she brought to scientific resource management a sense of wonder and sentimental appreciation, encouraging parents to share nature with children. "I sincerely believe," said Carson, "that for the child, and for the parent seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to *know* as to *feel*. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow."<sup>8</sup>

For women in conservation like Carson, Mosher, Edgerton, and

**The writings of Rachel Carson changed how Americans thought and felt about nature. She is seen here at the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania in 1945.**

March-Mount, the chief aims were educating Americans about resource issues, taking responsibility for nature, and connecting people with the land.

Women's early conservation cause has taken on a modern appearance as "environmental concern," merging contemporary ecosystem management and new professional and field positions with women's historical approach to conservation—focusing less on timber harvests (as men's forestry generally did) and more on multiple uses, increased diversity in forest planning, wilderness designations, and community-based environmental problems. Women's emphasis on a culturally minded conservation philosophy to preserve American life has been instrumental in helping to redirect forestry and, in particular, the Forest Service's management focus to one more closely aligned with the general public's environmental ethos.

Today, women continue to reflect on that philosophy of a conservation cause. Leslie Weldon, a former deputy chief for the National Forest System and now acting chief diversity and inclusion officer in the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, offered, "I am not alone among women in the Forest Service in sharing a conservation ethic. . . . This commitment has a shared central ethos: that we must work with the people we serve to fulfill our conservation mission."<sup>9</sup> Grizelle González, director of the International Institute of Tropical Forestry, has observed, "Delivering our conservation mission is about openness and willingness to work [across] multiple disciplines and a diverse community of partners."<sup>10</sup> And I'll never forget what Gloria Brown, the first female African American forest supervisor in the

U.S. Forest Service, once said to me: that the essence of her career was about her relationships with the people she worked with and the land she cared for.

While my research is primarily concerned with women in the Forest Service, there are so many more stories of women in forestry—landowners, private industry leaders, state foresters, to name just a few—still to tell.

But as this congress proves, you're not alone on this journey. You haven't been for over a century.

*Rachel Kline is a supervisory historian for the USDA Forest Service who holds a PhD from the University of New Hampshire.*

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# The Future

## *Mobilizing Women in Forestry to Save the World*

BY EDIE SONNE HALL

*Rachel Kline and Edie Sonne Hall spoke at the panel “Women’s Legacy and Future in Forestry: Paving the Way for Progress” at the Women’s Forest Congress. Edie’s presentation followed Rachel’s. This article is adapted from that presentation.*

**M**y name is Edie Sonne Hall and I’m here to talk about the future of women in forestry. I am going to make the case for why women in forestry are needed to lead the way to help harness the benevolent power of trees to save the world.

Before doing so, I want to give a shout-out to the past. Rachel Kline did an incredible job highlighting the largely unappreciated contributions women have always made to the field of forestry. But it goes without saying that these contributions are largely unappreciated because women were not allowed to be in the jobs that had the most public influence. But I also want to acknowledge the more recent past. I want to acknowledge all of my mentors and all the women in the recent decades who have had to put their foot, toenail, or whatever they could into that weighted elevator door that went to the leadership levels and said: “Excuse me, I believe there’s room for one more.” You have shown that women *can* do any job that a man can do. Thank you for all the work and sacrifices you have made to get the

room ready for us—because look at all of us here today. We are here, and we are ready!

First, a little about me. I love trees. I love trees so much I named my kids after them. But it is the scale of forests and landscapes on which I have focused most of my career. I founded and run a woman-owned small business. I work with organizations of all types—from nonprofits to industry associations to government to individual companies—to help bridge the gap between science and policy and management. I am also a woman tree farmer, with some land that has been in my family for generations as well as some land that I recently purchased with my husband. Some of these trees I love have been purposely planted on abandoned agricultural land in South Carolina, on the land of the Chicora and Waccamah. Others have naturally regenerated around the old stone walls of failed agricultural lands in upstate New York, on the land of the Kanyen’kehà:ka (Mohawk). Still others have filled in and burned after multiple decades of fire suppression and, more recently, fire in north-central Washington in the Syilx tmix (Okanagan) territory of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville.

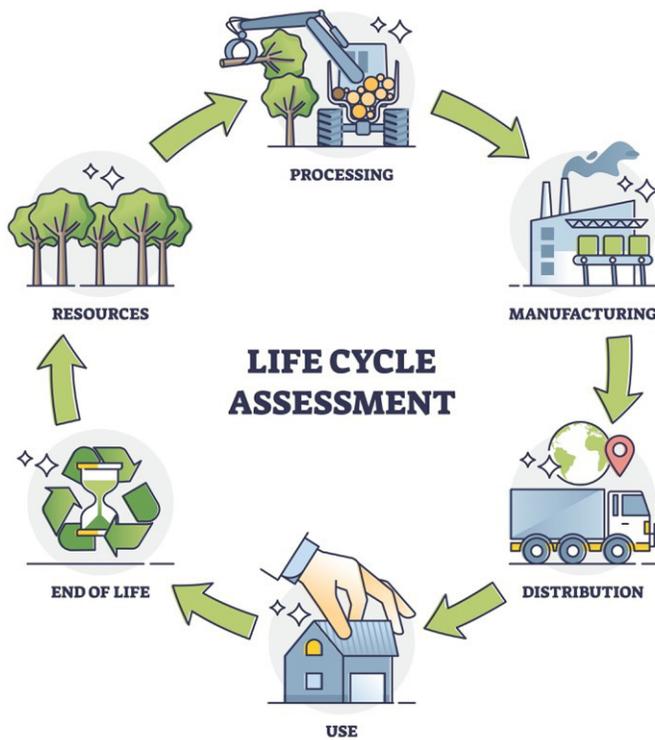
Being a family tree farmer is one of the reasons why I chose a career in forestry, and it certainly provides an important perspective.

Through my jobs and my land and my hobbies, I have studied trees and forests at many different scales—from global projects with the World Business Council on Sustainable Development down to measuring microfibril angles in wood cells when I worked as a wood quality research scientist. I have spent the past twenty-plus years focusing on climate change and how forests and forest products can help reduce atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions. I also follow closely how climate change will, and in many cases already has, altered forests around the world. And every day I am more and more convinced of the power of trees and their ecosystems to help us. I mean, *really* help us.

So what is the problem? We have a planetary resource constraint issue, and we have not been very strategic about it. Currently, the world extracts a hundred billion metric tons of natural resources annually, which we use for society’s needs, from housing to transportation to food. The quantity of natural resources extracted annually increased twelvefold between 1900 and 2015 and is expected to double again by 2050.<sup>1</sup> Currently, seventy-four percent of annual resource extraction is of nonrenewable resources.<sup>2</sup> Forty percent of global carbon emissions come from the building sector.<sup>3</sup> Eight percent of global emissions come from concrete alone.<sup>4</sup>

However, much of society’s needs can be met with renewable alternatives. Almost anything that is currently made from fossil fuel—from chemicals to packaging to plastic composites, fabrics, and personal

## Wood Uses and Their Fossil-Based and Fossil-Intensive Substitutes



Almost anything that is currently made from fossil fuel can be made from renewable resources. This graphic, adapted from Verkerk, et al., *Role of Forest Products*, shows some of the ones made from wood.

**Wood foam** can be used as insulation in walls, furniture and doors, and packaging and can replace fossil-based polystyrene and polyurethane.

**Textiles (made from wood pulp)** can replace polyester, polyamides, acrylics, cotton.

**Composites (made from wood chips)** can be used in decking, siding, roofing, furniture.

**Engineered wood (e.g. CLT, LVL, made from sawlogs)** used in buildings can replace fossil intensive concrete, steel, bricks.

**Bioplastics (made from pulp by-products such as tall oil, wood sugars and lignin)** used in packaging (including food grade) can replace fossil plastics.

OUR WORLD IN DATA, [HTTPS://OURWORLDINDATA.ORG/WORLD-LOST-ONE-THIRD-FORESTS](https://ourworldindata.org/world-lost-one-third-forests)

benefits of using just twenty-five percent more wood-based building materials over the trend line would be the equivalent of 1.9 gigatons of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>e) in 2050. In addition, the carbon stored in wood products increases the mitigation benefits by another 1 gigaton CO<sub>2</sub>e, which together gets us more than ten percent of the way toward the reductions needed to meet a 1.5°C-degree temperature stabilization.<sup>5</sup>

Forests also provide other essential services. They provide drinking water to more than 150 million people in the United States—that’s almost fifty percent of the population.<sup>6</sup> Six percent of U.S. forests are within one hundred feet of a water body.<sup>7</sup> U.S. forests support 17,464 native species: 15,256 vascular plants, 1,014 invertebrates (that we know), 459 birds, 233 mammals, 226 reptiles, 216 amphibians, and 60 freshwater fish.<sup>8</sup> Forests also provide flood control, air purification, and shade in cities. And, of course, my favorite—recreation. “Nature Rx” is the real deal.

The bottom line is that trees and forests can do everything! So we have the solution, right? Then why is this so hard? Well, trees are dynamic over space and time, but they do not provide all ecosystem services on every acre or continuously over time. This makes it harder to plan.

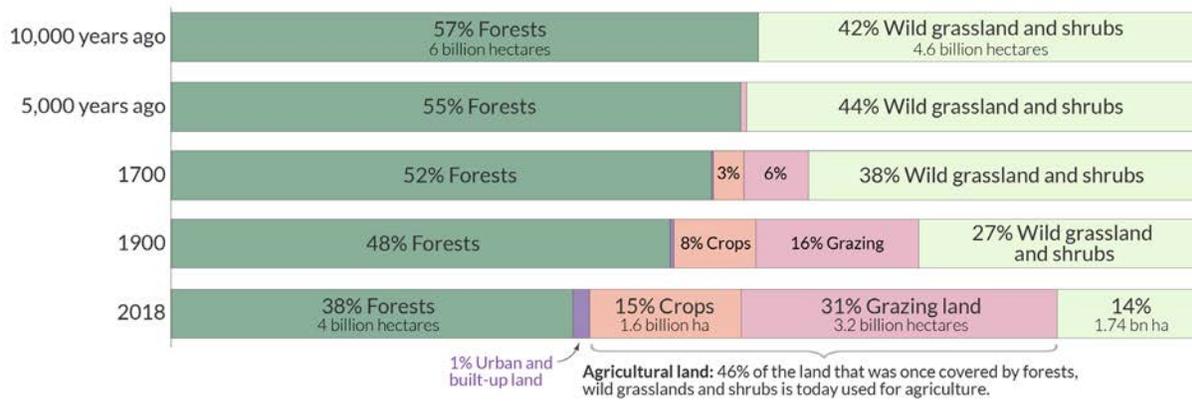
Until recently we haven’t really had to plan, since Earth is large relative to our population and resource needs. Earth has 10.6 billion hectares of workable land, and that is a fixed asset. However, we have a growing population, and we already overshoot our annual planetary resource allocations. We are now at a point where our population is too large to have inefficient uses of land. This is a reality. But what is also a reality is that we have been really inefficient

care products—can be made from renewable resources, including wood. Not only are forest resources the solution to resource scarcity, but they also can play an essential role

in providing low-carbon and even negative-carbon products and energy.

The Food and Agriculture Organization found that the global greenhouse gas (GHG) substitution

### Historic and Current Land-Use Percentages



Over the last 10,000 years, one-third of the world’s forests have been replaced by agricultural land. Half of this loss has occurred in the last century alone.

OUR WORLD IN DATA, [HTTPS://OURWORLDINDATA.ORG/WORLD-LOST-ONE-THIRD-FORESTS](https://ourworldindata.org/world-lost-one-third-forests)

about our land-use management and allocations, and we have not been applying systems thinking.<sup>9</sup>

This is where the natural strengths of women come in. What are some strengths of women? Women tend to be optimizers versus maximizers. Women are good at incorporating trade-offs and managing for both the short and the long term. Women also tend to have compassion and seek cooperation. Maybe it is because women have more practice with all of these. Look around the room at all of you. Over the past week, likely many in your row have been juggling work, arranging carpools, scheduling dentist appointments three months out, and deciding which are the essential actions to meet short-, mid-, and long-term goals. Or caring for your parents, kids, and community members and making sure that no one is fighting. You are all trying hard. And you sometimes fail.

But you are thinking about how to balance it all, and how to find

practical solutions to give everyone what they need, including you. I’m not saying that one person needs to do everything—but as a whole, the system must consider everything. And if you are smart, you are enlisting the help of others—your village, your support network. This is important because teamwork and cooperation are what are needed to help harness the power of trees. No one person is going to solve this.

The old saying goes, “For every complex problem, there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong.”

We know there is not a simple solution. We know that we need to consider context, sustainability, resilience, and the latest research. If we do all these, we can absolutely have a world with healthy, resilient, productive forests that are providing renewable resources for a growing population.

So how do we get there? Here are key elements that will help us help harness the power of trees. Courage.

Communication. Teamwork. And balance and joy.

#### COURAGE

You have information in your brain, based on your set of learned knowledge and experience, that is important to put on the table. It is important because it is likely not already on the table. You have to speak up, even if you don’t have the entire answer. And if you don’t have the entire answer, say that! Wouldn’t it be fantastic if we could all clarify our statements with, “I feel eighty percent confident about what I am about to say.” Some people, by the way, absolutely do this, and I think it’s a great practice. So speak up, even if you don’t think you know everything.

#### COMMUNICATION

Figure out how you best communicate and what your weaknesses are. Some people provide information only when asked. If it is hard for you to find the courage to provide the information

you know, then find an ally who enjoys being the “butterfly.” Align yourself with great partners and allies and appreciate the different strengths of different people. There is not one person who can do everything, so partnerships and teams are essential.

## TEAMWORK

A team works well when there is a common goal, when there is trust, and when people care about the goal and about each other. I have been on some incredible teams, and it sure feels good. It is like the energy that comes from within each person coalesces together into one giant superpower. And you know the saying, “There is no ‘I’ in team”? It’s absolutely true.

I’ve also thought a lot about what our team is in the larger sense. If we are on “Team Trees,” then why does it seem like we have so much fighting or miscommunication even among the wide spectrum of people who work with trees, from environmentalists to industry folks across the broad value chain to academics and government officials? We share a common goal, right? We all want healthy, resilient, productive forests, and we all want humans to have the resources they need to live well.

Perhaps we are so accustomed to teams of the people we know—the people we trust. Just as we must embrace diversity of management types over space and time, it is time to ask ourselves, Who is on my team? And what are we fighting for? I’m here to tell you to make room on the field because we are all on the same team, and we are fighting for our planet to not only survive but thrive.

## BALANCE AND JOY

First, find your balance. We *all* need this reminder in an age where we are constantly tethered to our phones

and on-call for responding to work 24/7. No one is productive 24/7. You need to find the outlet that recharges your battery. Yes, yes, yes—get a hobby, or five. Get rest, get exercise, meditate. But also find the joy. Do something that makes you laugh unexpectedly. Do something foolish, silly, wacky. For example, I spent time leading up to this congress rewriting the lyrics to “Timber” by Pitbull featuring Ke\$ha. I was audibly laughing at my desk and then laughed with every person I shared the information with. And you will, too, if you know this song.

Of course, my go-to place for finding joy is in the woods. Which leads me back to forests. They are always the highlight and always the center. We are in awe of their resilience and we are in awe of their longevity. But we are also in awe of their dynamic nature, and we want to figure out how to have ten billion people living well within the limits of this planet. We can’t do this without harnessing the renewability of trees. We are at a point where our population is too large to have inefficient uses of land.

In her talk, Rachel quoted the illustrious Pitbull, “To understand the future, you have to go back in time.” She helped us understand the incredible ways women have always influenced the conservation thinking of forest and natural resource management. But we had to be sneaky and pretend it was someone else’s idea, or prove that we could do anything the same way a man could do it. Now it is time to let our strengths shine. Let’s look at the whole system and search for the win-wins across time and space. And you know that room where it happens? That room that we have worked so hard to get into? Perhaps it’s time to redecorate it.

*Eddie Sonne Hall is the founder and principal of Three Trees Consulting, which provides expertise in forest carbon accounting, ecosystem services, green building, life-cycle assessment, and sustainable forest certification.*

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