

Book details state forest history

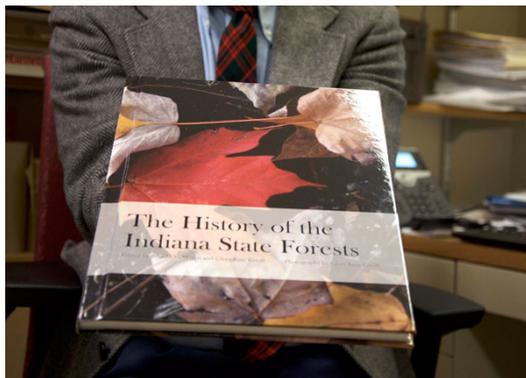
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MUNCIE — The first Indiana state forest — Clark State Forest — was established in Henryville, Indiana, in 1903.

More than a century later, a Ball State University professor is involved in chronicling the history of all of the forests set aside for protection by the state government.

Ron Morris, who teaches history at BSU, co-edited "The History of Indiana State Forests" a book that came out of an immersive learning project compiled of Honors College theses.



"The History of Indiana State Forests," a new book that grew from an immersive learning project, was co-edited by a Ball State University professor. The book looks at Clark State Forest, which was the first to be designated in 1903, and the 11 additional state forests that have been added since then. (The Commercial Review/Mary Freda)

As the Hoosier state's original state forest, Clark State Forest was first formed as a research facility and nursery because of a concern about the availability of lumber for the state's woodworking facilities. It was later expanded by the Works Progress administration by more than 1,000 percent to 24,000 acres from the initial 2,028.

Since Clark State Forest was designated just after the turn of the century, another 11 have been added to the list. They span 158,300 acres and include Ferdinand State Forest in Ferdinand; Greene-Sullivan State Forest in Dugger; Harrison-Crawford State Forest in Corydon; Jackson-Washington State Forest, Brownstown; Martin State Forest in Shoals; Morgan-Monroe State Forest in Martinsville; Owen-Putnam State Forest in Spencer; Pike State Forest in Ferdinand; Salamonie River State Forest in Lagro; Selmier State Forest in North Vernon; and Yellowwood State Forest in Nashville.

The 144-page, color book that Morris worked on details information about each state forest, while including historical references to each time period the forest was established. Morris said the chapters mention the New Deal, World War II and even an elephant, Modoc, that ran across the Frances Slocum State Forest in the 1940s.

Limited quantities of the book, which was funded partly through the Ball State Discovery Women's Group, are available in the \$39.95 hardcover edition. The \$9.95 digital download is only available to those who purchase the hardcover book.

"The state forests were established at a time when people were cutting down two trees for every tree that was being planted," Morris said. "We were cutting down trees rapidly and people were very afraid that there would be no timber in the future for commercial purposes and so, state forests were established.

"The idea was conservation not preservation."

Morris, who has seen each forest by "wandering through the woods," said despite some thinking otherwise, the sites change over time.

The project began, Morris said, partly because the state forests hadn't been examined since the 1950s and a lot has happened in the state since including the baby boom, industrialization, deindustrialization and a bicentennial.

Immersive learning courses aren't new to Morris. He spent nine years leading a Virginia B. Ball Center for Creative Inquiry seminar, where he helped students develop Crossroads Connect, a digital social studies textbook for fourth graders. A second textbook was produced for third graders as a part of the project. Both focused on providing students and teachers with an interactive textbook to prompt students to ask about Indiana and its history.

Though the state forests were established before Indiana's centennial, a new state park system was established as a part of the 1916 centennial celebration. Morris said state forests are different because the idea of state parks was "preservation and recreation" versus "conservation not preservation."

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