

JOURNAL OF ARBORICULTURE

September 1978
Vol. 4, No. 9

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES¹

by Maurice K. Goddard

In 1681, William Penn, in his Charter of Rights to the Colonists in Penn's Woods, said, "in clearing the ground, care be taken to leave one acre of trees for every five acres cleared, especially to preserve oak and mulberries for silk and shipping." Unfortunately, his admonition fell on deaf ears for many years to come. And, in fact, Philadelphia ended up lacking in shade trees until the end of the 18th century. It even reached the point that insurance companies would not insure houses with trees in front of them.

Obviously, such a thing could not happen today. People are well aware now of the value of trees in their lives and they are more and more dedicated to increasing the use of trees, especially in urban areas. In the last decade, a new emphasis has been placed on trees for their ability to improve the environment, help cleanse and purify the air, ameliorate temperatures, reduce objectionable noise, and neutralize waste.

As Pennsylvania's Secretary of Environmental Resources, I am well aware of the value of trees in each of these categories and many more. My awareness is on different levels since I am a forester by profession but now am concerned with much broader areas of pollution control and resources management. In the years since our agency was formed in 1971, we have learned that it isn't possible to compartmentalize our many concerns. That is, our forestry people can't ignore pollution abatement activities because they have a vital tool to be used in such activities. And the pollution control people can't ignore the foresters because pollution affects trees just as it affects all living things and because our entire environment is bound together in a close relationship in which whatever happens to one aspect of the environ-

ment has an impact everywhere else.

Learning to cooperate together has been a new experience for both sides, however, especially when talking about urban areas. For too many years, foresters concerned themselves with the great expanses of forest land and environmental protection people concerned themselves with developed areas and they never really thought about each other at all.

Fortunately, all this has changed. Urban forestry is probably our most important new specialty and the one with the greatest challenge for us today.

Just think how trees can be used in combatting noise pollution, air pollution, and visual blight in cities. Noise in the cities is not a new problem. Julius Caesar reportedly banned night driving of chariots because of noise from the wheels on cobblestones. But that was nothing compared to the cacophony of sound which can assault the ears of the city dweller. And lately measurements have shown noise levels in an average community to be going up four-fold.

Air pollution is a major problem in cities, with our love affair with the automobile continuing unabated despite its effect on our air and its cost in terms of energy. And there can be little question that development in many areas brings with it visual blight which has a profound effect on those who live with it. But trees, as individuals or in forests, along with other plants can do much to help make urban and urbanizing areas livable. Trees filter out noise. They absorb polluted air and emit air which is richer in oxygen and freer of pollutants. They cool through their shade. They can screen unsightly views and provide scenic appeal and natural beauty which often is missing in urban areas.

¹Presented at the annual ISA Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in August 1977.

Obviously, it is not always possible to put trees where we need them and government does not have the power, or would we necessarily want it, to dictate to communities where they should put trees. But we do have some things we can do to help out on a state-wide basis. When I joined state government in 1955, one of the goals I set for our agency was to develop a State Park System which would have an operating unit within 25 miles of every Pennsylvanian. And today we have largely met that goal.

I must be honest with you and say that in considering a state park, probably the first thing which is on people's minds is water. We can prove easily that those parks in our System with water-based recreation are used much more heavily than those without such opportunities. But closely following behind water is tree cover because if we don't provide shaded areas where people can feel noticeably cooler and more relaxed, they are not likely to make much use of the park. And that is true in seasons other than the summer as well, because the forested area provides habitat for animals, and the presence of birds and animals will be of interest to hunters and to those involved in nature study.

With many city dwellers not really interested in living in the middle of a forest and committed to their urban life style, while still needing some relief from its drawbacks, we feel we have an obligation and a great opportunity with our State Park System to provide an environment which will complement their home area. Thus, we help to maintain the balance between a need for city life and a need for environmental well being.

For those able to leave their homes and travel a bit, we have two million acres in State Forest land in Pennsylvania. Within those State Forests, there are 44 natural areas and 13 wild areas set aside

and managed to preserve their characteristics. In addition, the Bureau of Forestry has a Division of Forest Pest Management to fight against the insects which can harm our trees and a Cooperative Forest Management Program for landowner assistance. Experts from all these areas are available for help and consultation as needed. And this is particularly true in the urban areas where we want to see trees used for all the help they can give us in making life more livable.

In 149 B.C., the Roman Emperor Cicero said, "He plants trees to benefit another generation." And we must keep in mind today, 2100 years later, that we are acting on behalf of future generations as well as ourselves.

In 1971, the voters of Pennsylvania adopted an environmental amendment to the State Constitution. That amendment stated that the people "have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustees of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people."

Nowhere is that commitment more meaningful than in our urban areas. And there are few things more important to the environmental rights of all Pennsylvanians than the good and full use of trees. Thus, I am particularly happy to be with you at the start of this great convention and wish you much success throughout the rest of this week and in your endeavors after you leave us.

*Secretary of Environmental Resources
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania*