

Robert D. Whipkey

In 1969, Robert D. Whipkey began a professionally challenging career with the West Virginia Division of Forestry.

He began as a Service Forester in Braxton and Clay Counties. He provided technical assistance to private landowners who were interested in adopting better forest management practices on their properties. Hundreds benefited from his expertise and assistance.

His work ethic, integrity and expertise soon led to promotion to the level of Assistant District Forester, administering programs in eight southern counties. He coordinated forest management activities on three state forests and developed volunteer logger training programs, educating loggers on best management practices.

The program centered around voluntary compliance, and Mr. Whipkey had to convince participants of the crucial importance of adopting the recommended practices. His persuasive abilities and sound reasoning convinced many to improve timber harvesting in his region.

His successes led to another promotion to the position of Assistant State Forester in Charleston. In his 15 years in this post, Whipkey was responsible for several major projects and initiatives that have greatly improved forest management in West Virginia.

The forest stewardship program came from a federal initiative geared towards improving forest management on privately owned forest land. Mr. Whipkey was the catalyst for the formation of a West Virginia Forest Stewardship Committee and development of the group's statewide program.

During the next 11 years over 100 consulting foresters were certified to prepare forest stewardship plans. Mr. Whipkey spent countless hours organizing and conducting West Virginia's first forestry education training programs to ensure an adequate number of public and private foresters were available to prepare state-of-the-art forest stewardship plans for landowners.

He was instrumental in the development of the state's Best Management Practices Handbook, and he oversaw management of West Virginia's nine state forests. He assumed responsibility for the state's forest nursery in 1990, producing thousands of seedlings for reforestation and tree production.

Outside of the Division, he helped form the Woodland Owners Association of West Virginia and has been an active member of the West Virginia Christmas Tree Growers Association, currently serving on the board of directors. He also served on the board of directors of the West Virginia Forestry Association.

