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**Review: Michigan's State Forests: A Century of Stewardship**

By William B. Botti and Michael D. Moore

Reviewed by Elery Hamilton-Smith  
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Botti, William B. and Moore, Michael D. *Michigan's State Forests: A Century of Stewardship*. Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, 2006. 201pp. ISBN: 0870137808. US\$29.95, paper.

Many professional foresters will identify with the problems and challenges identified in this excellent history of the Michigan State Forest Systems. The continuing changes in governance, rises and falls of the budgetary process, and the impacts of other unrelated political processes and fortunes are all too familiar.

But this is also a story of vision, persistence and achievement. It can even be described as a standard-setting story. Michigan had moved from almost total destruction of forests to a healthy and well-balanced multiple-use forest system.

This is doubtless due in part to the selective white settlement of the beautiful gentle landscapes of the peninsula with their common views across the lakes. This perspective suggests that Michigan's settlers came because they were attracted by the environmental character and values and so were receptive to the very idea of restoring forest lands.

However, this concept was fostered by the appointment of German forester Frederick Roth as both warden of the state forests and head of the school of forestry. He was one of the young immigrants from Germany who brought with him a vision of and capacity for forest management and fostered its development in their new country. He was followed by Marcus Schaaf who remained as state forester for 40 years. Their combined influence led to a clearly articulated sense of the value and importance of forests and a commitment to restoration of those lands which had been ravaged by the first savage onslaught of economic development.

So, Michigan saw the benefits of a favorable cultural environment, strong visionary leadership and a long history of continuity, all of which enabled a positive series of strategies to resist new threats.

But the authors rightly raise the question of whether the personal zeal which drove the care of forested lands will survive the increasing bureaucratization of public affairs. Certainly there are many examples which support the notion that bureaucracy is a formidable threat to both human values and professionalism in governance. So this book is worthy of attention by not only Forest Professionals, but all those interested in the history and political fortunes of conservation.

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