

BRIEF HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN THE LSU SCHOOL OF RENEWABLE NATURAL RESOURCES 1911-2003

by Paul Y. Burns, Director of the School 1955-76, now Professor Emeritus

Forestry education at LSU began in 1911, when a course, "The Elements of Forestry," was taught. In 1923 the first two years of a four-year forestry curriculum were offered in the Department of Horticulture and Forestry in the College of Agriculture. The third and fourth years were then added, and the Department of Forestry as established in 1926 with two faculty members; the first Bachelor of Science in Forestry (B.S.F.) degree was awarded that year. From the beginning, the B.S.F. program emphasized both theory and practical instruction in the laboratory and in the field.

In 1927 the department was donated 1,100 acres of forest near Bogalusa, which has been used as a summer or spring camp. The Master of Forestry (M.F.) degree was offered in 1935, and in 1936 formal research in forestry began when the Department of Forestry became one of the units of the Agricultural Experiment Station. From that time forward, most of the faculty were given joint teaching/research appointments.

The forestry program was accredited in 1937 by the Society of American Foresters, the first forestry school accreditation in the South; this professional accreditation has been continuous. By 1939 enrollment reach 99 undergraduates and one graduate student. During World War II, enrollment dropped drastically; nearly all students, who were young men, were needed in the military. Enrollment greatly increased following WW II, and 78 B.S.F. degrees were awarded in 1950.

A year after the Master of Science in Game Management degree was initiated in 1947, the Department's name was changed to the School of Forestry, and the Department Head became the School Director. The School remained in the College of Agriculture and has continued in this status.

Needed space was provided in a new Forestry Building in 1956. The first fisheries faculty member was hired in 1959. In 1961 Master of Science majors in fisheries, forestry, and forest products technology were authorized. The following year the School became the School of Forestry and Wildlife Management and the Ph.D. in forestry was offered. At this time federal money for forestry research was made available annually, enabling greater graduate enrollment because of the increase in the number of assistantships available.

The Louisiana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit was established at the School in 1962, the Cooperative Fisheries Unit the next year, and these Units were later merged into the Louisiana Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. The Unit scientists have become involved not only in research but in graduate-level teaching.

The School graduated its first female student in 1969.

Because of lack of student interest in wood science, the B.S. curriculum in wood science, initiated in 1968, was terminated nine years later, and the M.F. and M.S. in forest products technology were dropped in 1985.

The M.S.G.M. was changed in 1973 to the M.S., major in wildlife. In 1981 the Ph.D. in wildlife and fisheries science was offered. In 1984 the School became the School of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries.

A new Forestry-Wildlife-Fisheries (now Renewable Natural Resources) building was occupied in 1986. The enrollment of undergraduates dropped the next year to 49, the lowest since World War II. In 1987 a B.S. curriculum, major in wildlife and fisheries, was established, soon becoming popular.

The Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory (now the Louisiana Forest Products Development Center) was established in 1992, the major part being housed in the School. Funds were provided for graduate assistantships and faculty.

Graduate student enrollment peaked at 121 in 1995, and the number of undergraduates reached its highest, 227, in 1998.

In 1998 aquaculture faculty became members of the Aquaculture Research Station but continued to teach in the School. Forestry and wildlife Cooperative Extension faculty were transferred to the School in 2000.

The School changed its name in 2002 to the School of Renewable Natural Resources. In 2003, fall enrollment was 121 undergraduates in the School and 79 graduate students. Besides the two professional undergraduate curricula, B.S.F. and B.S. in wildlife and fisheries, graduate degrees offered were: M.S. with major in fisheries or forestry or wildlife and Ph.D. in forestry or wildlife and fisheries science. Faculty listed in the 2003-04 LSU Catalog totaled 28 active, 18 adjunct, and 10 professors emeriti. Degrees granted 1926-2003: 1,920 bachelor, 830 master, and 101 Ph.D. The School's alumni have distinguished themselves in forest, wildlife, and fisheries industries; in city, state, and federal agencies; in international forestry; and in education. In addition, many graduates have made valuable contributions to society in positions only marginally related to their academic major.

Heading the School's education programs over the years were: J.G. Lee Sr. (1926), Gordon D. Marckworth (1927-31), Bryant A. Bateman (1932-34), Ralph W. Hayes (1934-55), Paul Y. Burns (1955-76), Thomas Hansbrough (1976-88), Stanley B. Carpenter (1988-97), Norwin E. Linnartz (1997-2000), Bob G. Blackmon (2000-date).

A more detailed history of the School can be obtained by contacting Dr. Burns at pyburns@lycos.com.