

Profiles in Forestry:

John Tuttle, Forestry Field Program Supervisor, Missouri Department of Conservation

John Tuttle is forestry field program supervisor with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), a position in which he manages the MDC's Forest Products Program. The program works with the forest products industry in Missouri by providing utilization and marketing information. The program also is responsible for logger training, biomass issues, and training staff in best management practices on logging sites.

When did you become interested in forestry?

I was raised in a logging family and have loved forestry for as long as I can remember. My first sale administrator on a US Forest Service timber sale was a great person, and he actually was the reason I started to dream of becoming a forester.

How did you get where you are today (what has been your career path)?

My earliest memories of going to the log woods were before I was old enough to go to kindergarten. I actually dropped out of high school after finishing the 9th grade. I started driving a log skidder for my dad that summer. I logged professionally for 18 years.

My dream of becoming a forester was always in my mind. After a severe logging accident in which I crushed a vertebra in my back, I decided to go back to school to obtain my degree. My doctor told me I was one of the luckiest people he had ever known, and he felt that I did not fully understand that most people with the type of injury I received are usually paralyzed.

Going back to school after dropping out of high school was tough. I can still remember studying hard to get the GED certificate. My first class in college was Basic English, where we actually had spelling words to remember. After six years, I graduated with honors from the University of Missouri-Columbia with a degree in forest management at the age of 38.

I spent almost seven years as a resource forester for the Missouri Department of Conservation in Carter County before being promoted to my current position. I, along with my work team, was responsible for managing almost 28,000 acres of state-owned forestland. These management activities included forest inventory, marking timber sales, administrating timber sales, carrying out reforestation projects, suppressing wildfires, prescribed burning, and area maintenance projects on state-owned land. I also worked with private forest landowners by writing forest stewardship plans, helped carried out timber sales, and assisted them with many other management activities.

What's a typical day for you?

One thing I enjoy about my job is that most days are not typi-

cal. I spend a lot of time visiting sawmills and learning about the mill owners' concerns and how I can assist them. I might leave early one morning and spend three days traveling around Missouri working with industry.

Other days I spend in the office taking care of requests from industry. Some of these requests help sawmillers find markets for their products. Other requests help landowners get in touch with sawmills when they want to sell their timber products.

I do spend time working with other government agencies and organizations. I help pursue grants for utilization and market ideas, and I am deeply involved in helping carry out these grant activities.

What knowledge and skills are essential for your job?

It is critical in my job to have the knowledge of what it takes to survive in the forest products industry as a logger or mill owner. Being able to communicate with industry as an ex-logger has helped me tremendously. Also, important are public speaking, ability to work well with others, knowledge of the science of forestry, and the ability to keep abreast of the forest products markets.

What is the biggest challenge associated with your position?

My biggest challenges are to help the forest products industry realize that high-grading forest stands is not a good thing and that protecting soil from erosion during timber harvesting is critical.

What keeps you motivated?

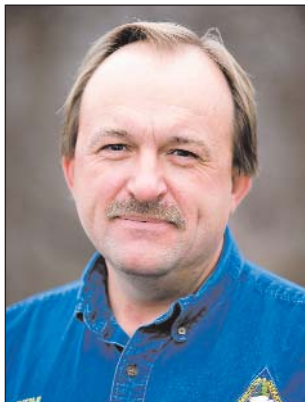
I absolutely love forestry. I see the need for the forest products industry in Missouri to improve and want to be part of that change. Also, when I decided to become a forester, it was not to change jobs to get a better one; it was to follow my dreams.

Another major motivation for me is to be a role model for my children. I was the first in my family to graduate from college, and I want my three children to follow my footsteps.

What advice would you give to new or young foresters?

Spend time with a mentor to learn what forestry is about. Spend time working part-time or even volunteering in forestry. Arrive at work early and stay late, and never change until you retire. Always remember that, until retirement, we all have to do our best everyday, and we have to prove ourselves constantly to the people we work for. One last thing to remember is to be a lifelong learner and be receptive to change. The person who cannot change is the one that is left behind in his or her career.

Has SAF membership benefited your career? If so, how?



Among Tuttle's advice for new foresters is to spend time with a mentor to learn what forestry is about, to be a lifelong learner, and to be receptive to change.

I joined the Missouri SAF in 1996. SAF has benefited my career by allowing me to network with other professionals. I enjoy the meetings and discussing issues pertaining to forestry. I truly believe I have a voice in forestry through SAF. I also cannot wait to get the *Journal of Forestry* and *The Forestry Source* every month to read the articles.

“Profiles in Forestry” is an irregular feature that highlights the wide variety of positions within the broad field of forestry and the people who hold them. If you’d like to be featured, contact Source Editor Joseph Smith at smithj@safnet.org.