

# Appendix B

## DuPont State Forest Historical Overview<sup>1</sup>

By the 1800's the European settlers of western North Carolina had largely adopted the same land tending practices as the Cherokee before them. Land was cleared through the process of girdling trees and the utilization of fire. Nutrient depleted fields were left fallow and allowed to revert back to forestland only to be cleared and farmed again once deemed productive. Settlers commonly kept livestock including cattle, hogs, and mules that had free range throughout upland areas of forest. Generally fencing was used only to keep free roaming livestock out of agricultural bottomland areas. Livestock was driven to market through the broadest river valley gaps.

In addition to livestock, other important agricultural commodities of the 1800s included dairy products, potatoes, wool, orchard produce, and honey. Whiskey production was a major occupation for early settlers as it was easier to transport, less perishable, and more valuable than other commodities. Lumber was utilized locally as was textiles. Western North Carolina became a major source for copper, gold, lead, and zinc mining by the 1830's. Boom towns were born and abandoned within a 20 year span as miners moved to California. The presence of gold was a major cause of the final push to remove the Cherokee from their land.

The social and economic upheaval of the Civil War increasingly isolated the mountain people of the Southern Appalachians from the rest of the country. As the population dwindled and farms were abandoned forests developed. The need for timber resources and game during the war balanced these gains. Agriculture declined during and following the war though the traditions of subsistence farming and the keeping of open-range livestock persisted. By the 1880's land speculators and investors became increasingly interested in the natural resources of the Southern Appalachians, made visible to an increasing number of people due to increased tourism. Speculators bought the timber and mineral rights along future railroad routes. As routes were constructed those resources were liquidated.

Continued economic prosperity, particularly in the northern portion of the country, accelerated the exploitation of Southern Appalachian resources to the detriment of the land-base. Narrow-gauge railroads and new harvesting technology allowed increased access to and utilization of forest material. Heavy cutting practices which left large amounts of down wood, debris, and logging residue provided the fuel for large destructive wildfires often ignited by railroads and machinery. The combination of timber liquidation and fire left the formerly forested landscape of the southern Appalachians denuded of vegetation. Soil loss from erosion and frequent flooding were also direct results of these practices. By 1908 a government survey of the southern Appalachians estimated that 86 percent of the total acreage was either cleared, or in stages of young and secondary growth. Nearly all of the acreage had been burned.

As regional demand for natural resources affected the ecology of the Southern Appalachians, local markets and land-use practices affected the specific landscape of Cedar Mountain and the area that would become DuPont State Forest. During the early 1900s a water-powered sawmill

was in operation in the Corn Mill Shoals area. Later that mill was disassembled and moved to just below Bridal Veil Falls. Gloucester Lumber Company operated a commercial sawmill in Rosman, as did Carr Lumber Company in Pisgah Forest. These mills purchased thousands of acres of timber in the upper French Broad River watershed. Prior to the 1920s demand for white oak and assorted hardwood timber for railroad crossties led to an early focus on the harvesting of those trees. At that time railroad ties were not treated and had to be replaced every 5 to 10 years. Additionally thousands of cords of hardwood were harvested locally for firewood.

Local tanneries purchased hardwood trees, including American chestnut, to extract tannic acid from the bark. The Champion paper mill in Canton, built in the early 1900s, initially used spruce and fir harvested from high elevation forests for its paper-making process. The mill later switched to a mix of hardwood and softwood pulpwood. The majority of forestland in the Cedar Mountain area was harvested to supply raw materials for these local markets.

Portions of forest at higher elevations throughout the area, most noticeably Grassy Mountain, were frequently burned by local farmers after timber was harvested to create grazing areas for cattle. Grazing in conjunction with use of fire to perpetuate grassland prevented the establishment of dense areas of forest. Forest areas adjacent to open grazing areas typically had open understories. Grazing pressure decreased in the 1930's when the federal government began to purchase cattle as a result of the Great Depression. This marked decrease in grazing led to the gradual development of more complex forests.

The Cedar Mountain area experienced a drought in the early 1940s resulting in a large wildfire that burned over much of the area west of the Little River in 1943. Over the past decades several smaller fires have also occurred. Very few forested areas of DuPont State Forest have not been influenced by fire.

Prior to 1950 the Coxe family leased over 5,000 acres along the Little River. The Coxes lived in Asheville and managed the property primarily for hunting and fishing. They built the Buck Forest Lodge near High Falls where a picnic shelter is now located. There was also a caretaker house and a barn located near the intersection of what is now Joanna Road and Pitch Pine Trail. Neither Lake Julia nor Dense Lake was there at the time and most of the surrounding area was maintained as pasture. Large fields along the river above High Falls and several smaller fields scattered about the remainder of the property were also maintained. Joe Golden was the caretaker throughout the 1940s. He raised corn and other crops on the property and operated a small sawmill west of the river on what is now DuPont Corporation property. Golden was shot and killed below Triple Falls on Mother's Day in 1947. The killing was investigated but no one was ever charged with the murder.

During the 1950s The DuPont Corporation began buying land in the watershed of the Little River. They purchased the Coxe property as well as several smaller farms in the area. In total the company purchased approximately 10,000 acres of land in order to control the supply of clean water for their manufacturing process. The company began operating a silicon chip manufacturing plant in 1955. In later years x-ray film was manufactured.

The DuPont Corporation eventually established a forest management program under the leadership of Charles Paxton. One of the first forest practices was the establishment of 330 acres of white pine plantation on abandoned pastureland in the area known as the Flatwoods or Guion Farm. The trees were planted on a 6-foot by 6-foot spacing. By 1957 the DuPont Corporation entered into an agreement with Champion Paper to harvest timber from other areas of the property. Many harvested areas were re-planted with white pine.

Early in the forestry program harvest prescriptions focused on leaving some acceptable growing stock in reserve. In later years there was minimal harvest planning employed and logging was not carefully supervised. These conditions led to high grade harvesting during which only the most valuable trees were harvested and poor quality residual stands were perpetuated. This practice of high grading was common throughout the southern Appalachians at the time, the effects of which still have an impact on the forests present today.

In the 1960s Summit Lake, now called Lake Julia, was constructed by Ben Cart for the purpose of establishing Summit Camp on its western shore. A building overlooking Lake Julia was constructed for camp offices and the infirmary. Cart was an avid pilot and also constructed an airstrip and hanger. When the camp closed in the 1980s Cart sold the property to the DuPont Corporation. The corporation renovated the camp offices and used the building as a lodge to provide overnight accommodations for clients and company officials. DuPont State Forest offices are now located in this building. Other Summit Camp buildings that remain in use today include the equipment shed, barn, two houses, and the hanger. The airstrip is in disrepair and only used for helicopter training exercises.

In the 1980's harvesting on the forest was limited to thinning stands of white pine that had been planted in the 1950s. The white pines planted throughout the old pastures are now about fifty to 60 years old and most have been thinned three times. The last thinning was completed in 1989.

DuPont State Forest was created in 1997 when the DuPont Corporation sold 7,640 acres of property to the state of North Carolina through funding provided by the Natural Heritage Trust Fund. The public purchase of the property was facilitated by the Conservation Fund, a national non-profit organization. Approximately 2,600 acres of the property is registered with North Carolina Natural Heritage Program as having special ecological significance, limiting land-use for the protection of those ecological communities. The 2,700 acres directly adjacent to the DuPont Corporation production facility was sold to Sterling Diagnostic Imaging in 1996. In March of 2000, the Natural Heritage Trust Fund financed the purchase of an additional 526 acres of land to be added to DuPont State Forest. In October of 2000, an additional 2,200 acres along the Little River corridor was acquired by the state through the process of eminent domain utilizing funds from the state's Clean Water Management Trust Fund. Two small tracts were added to the forest in 2006. To date the forest contains approximately 10,430 acres.

<sup>1</sup>The historical overview was developed based on information contained in *The Southern Appalachians: A History of Landscape* (Yarnell, 1998), and from information provided by former property land managers and caretakers.

# **Administrative Structure**

## **The North Carolina Division of Forest Resources**

The administration of DuPont State Forest falls under the direction of the North Carolina Division of Forest Resources, which is an agency of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources. When the state forest was first established, prior to the hiring of staff dedicated solely to its management and operation, tasks were accomplished as time permitted through the cooperative effort of North Carolina Division of Forest Resources personnel from across western North Carolina. Beginning in 2002, full-time staff was hired. As of the writing of this plan a staff of seven is assigned to DuPont State Forest including a Forest Supervisor; Assistant Forest Supervisor; Management Forester; Educational Ranger (2); Maintenance Mechanic, and Equipment Operator. In addition, the nearby Holmes Educational State Forest including its two Education Rangers is supervised and operated as a component of DuPont State Forest.

## **DuPont State Forest Advisory Committee**

The DuPont State Forest Advisory Committee is composed of 12 individuals each representing a particular group of stakeholders. Committee members are appointed by the State Forester. They provide advice to the North Carolina Division of Forest Resources concerning the management, development, protection, and use of DuPont State Forest. The members inform the community and region about forest plans and activities, and communicate interests of the community and forest users back to the Forest Supervisor. As such, committee meetings are a forum for discussion and a vehicle for communication and promotion of forest needs.

Members serve staggered terms of three years. To the greatest extent possible members are appointed to represent the interests of the forestry profession, local government, forest user-groups, local businesses, conservation groups, local landowners, and other environmental resource concerns. A list of current Advisory Committee members is on file in the Forest Supervisor's office.

The DuPont State Forest Advisory Committee has no final authority or responsibility for policy making or administration. As the name implies the committee acts only in an advisory capacity for the Forest Supervisor. Though the Advisory Committee has no legal authority it serves an important function in the interpretation of the forest's programs, facilities and services.