

The 70th anniversary of Kaunas Forestry College – Experimental Enterprise

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Kaunas Forestry College – Experimental Enterprise is the only in Lithuania educational and state forest management institution, preparing forestry specialists of middle level, skilled forest workers, as well as providing in-service courses. It also takes care of reforestation, management, conservation and rational use of the forest land subordinated to this institution which performs the functions of experimental basis for the Forest Research Institute.

Forestry College – Experimental Enterprise was founded having joined Kaunas Forestry College and Dubrava Experimental Forest Enterprise by the common order of the Ministers of Science & Education and Forestry on February 5, 1996. By this joining it was sought to improve the training of forestry specialists and workers, especially practical training, taking advantage of the forests and material, i.e. technical basis at former Dubrava Experimental Enterprise.

Kaunas Forestry College started its activity on September 1, 1927, when Alytus Forest College was founded at Alytus Forest Enterprise. Only 6th form graduates from high school of that time were admitted to

the college. Education lasted two years. Only special subjects were taught. In the first four years 40 students were enrolled each year, later – 90, while since 1939 – 50 students annually. The college had 12 classrooms.

In 1938 Forest College was called Secondary Forest School. In 1938 it was transferred from Alytus to Vilnius. In 1940-1941 the school was attended by 90 students. Over the period of Nazi occupation it wasn't closed and continued the training of forestry specialists under quite difficult conditions. The last graduates of the school received their certificates on July 7, 1944. Graduation certificates given during Nazi occupation were not acknowledged in Soviet times. From 1927 to 1944 470 foresters graduated from the school. They left a remarkable imprint in the history of Lithuanian woods.

In accordance with the resolution of the Council of Peoples Commissars of the LSSR on January 1 1945, the school was reorganized into Vilnius Forest Technical School with three years' training. Since 1952 training was prolonged up to 4 years.

In 1959 correspondence department was opened. Graduates from secondary or 8 – year school were

admitted to it. Training duration – three and five years, respectively. In 1946-1963 681 forest technicians graduated from Vilnius Forest Technical School, among them 647 from the day-time department and 34 from the correspondence department.

In 1963 Vilnius Forest Technical School was transferred to Girionys in the Kaunas district and was called Kaunas Forest Technicum. At that moment the day-time department had 207 students, the correspondence department – 150, while vocational school at the technicum – 90 students. Training duration since 1964 was 3 years and 6 months. In 1965 enrollment increased up to 90 students.

In 1980 the correspondence department was closed (407 forest technicians graduated from it). In the same year landscape technicians started their studies. Students with secondary education were admitted to this specialty. Training duration – 2 years and 6 months. The last group of landscape technicians graduated in 1994. From 1981 to 1994 389 students acquired the qualification of landscape technician.

In 1991 Kaunas Forest Technicum was reorganized into Kaunas Forestry College with two departments: higher studies and vocational training. The department of higher studies admits 50 secondary school graduates every year.

Graduates have to take state exams in special subjects and acquire the qualification of technician. Besides, graduates receive the licences of woodcutter, driver (“B” category) and tractor driver.

Vocational department admits 50 9th form graduates every year. Studies last for 4 years. Students acquire knowledge on silviculture essentials, learn to operate different types of chainsaws, brushcutters, drive tractors. Graduates from the college receive vocational training diplomas and the qualification of forest or sawmill masters. Those, who take GCSE exams, receive secondary education certificates and may continue their studies in any higher education institution.

Vocational training department organizes short courses for adults. Every year 150 – 200 woodcutters and 70 -100 forest guards perfect their qualification here.

In the period 1964 -1997 2334 forestry specialists have graduated from Kaunas Forest Technicum and Forestry College day – time department.

Dubrava Experimental Forest Enterprise was founded in 1975 as experimental basis for the Lithuanian Forest Research Institute. At the moment of foundation it was called Dubrava Forest Investigation Station, which since 1963 functioned as Dubrava Experimental Forestry and at

the same time served as experimental and training basis for the Forest Institute and Forestry College. In 1991 Forest Investigation Station was reorganized into Dubrava Experimental Forest Enterprise.

At the moment of foundation the area of Dubrava Experimental Forest Enterprise comprised 7,069 ha. In 1996 total area made up 18432 ha, forest land 16817 ha, from them stands – 16258 ha. The enterprise has delineated the area of 3,746 hectares of restricted management. It covers parks, protected areas, seed breeding objects, cultural monuments.

Coniferous stands prevail (71.7 %). The forests are productive – 40 % of stands fall under I A and I productivity class. Distribution of stands maturity groups is the following: young stands comprise 19% middle – aged – 42.6%, premature – 22.4% and mature – 16.0%.

Forest area of the enterprise is divided into 6 districts and Girionys forest park. There is also a wood processing yard, mechanical – repair workshops and a nursery.

The enterprise performs production, research and training functions, as well as represents Lithuanian forest husbandry. More than 150 complex investigation objects are established in the forests, covering about 600 hectares. Experiments on stand formation, harvesting, stand inventory, selection and seed breeding, hydrology, etc. are conducted there. Specialists of the enterprise helped in establishing more than 500 industrial - experimental objects, covering 1600 hectares.

Over four decades 2,661 hectares of new plantations were established. Most plantations are of immense scientific, educational and economic value. Especially valuable are protective plantations surrounding the Kaunas Sea. They were planted in 1959-1963 on the area of more than 600 hectares. Nearby the Kaunas Sea and Girionys settlement Girionys Park and Arboretum which are the largest in Lithuania and richest in species composition were established. It represents the largest collection of woody plants in Lithuania. There are about 1,000 species and forms of trees and bushes. In 1958 a nursery was founded. It was one of the most advanced and richest nurseries in Lithuania. In the Forest seed Breeding Center, founded on its basis, 2,618 plus trees have been selected and recorded anew, selectional stand inventory has been conducted, and over 250 thous. grafted seedlings for forest seed orchards have been grown. In the enterprise 35.6 hectares of seed orchards and 28.3 hectares of clonal archives were planted where 550 plus trees are vegetative progenies. In 1975 a seed extraction plant was built. Seeds and cones from most

Lithuanian forest enterprises are extracted and stored here on a centralized basis. In 1994 Forest Seed Breeding Centre was reorganized into Lithuanian Forest Selection and Seed Breeding Centre.

In the forests of the enterprise almost all final and non-clear felling methods, recommended by the Forest Research Institute, were tested. All the forests were technologically arranged. Over 40 years 338.6 thous. m³ of timber were supplied, by sanitary cuttings – 288.7 thous. m³, by final fellings – 330.4 thous. m³ of timber. For a long time nonclear final fellings prevailed. Owing to the right management policy, species composition in stands has considerably improved, in most mixed stands management, more valuable species have become prevailing, stocking level in stands has improved as well. The mean growing stock per hectare has increased more than twice.

Until 1990 on average 23-24 thous. m³ of commercial timber were produced annually. In 1993 spruce stands

suffered from storm damages and sequential die-off caused by bark beetle outbreaks. Then the extent of final fellings considerably increased: in 1995-68.1 thous. m³, while in 1996-even 107.3 thous. m³ of timber were felled.

Wood processing is well developed in the enterprise. In recent years about 20-22 thous. m³ of round wood are processed in the timber processing yard and sawmill annually.

Over 5200 ha of forest land were drained and over 150 km of roads were constructed. Much has been done to improve forest recreational functions.

During four decades the enterprise has created a good industrial-technical basis.

From the very beginning the Experimental Forest Enterprise was the school of advanced management. The meetings and seminars on different forestry development questions in Lithuania take regularly place here. The enterprise is frequently visited by forestry specialists and scientists from abroad.