

History of Indiana Department of Natural Resources:

A Symposium.

JOHN J. FAVINGER, Moderator,

John Patton, Robert Hollingsworth, Burt Hamrick, Louis Hasenstab,
Robert Jackson, W. B. Barnes

Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

The Department of Natural Resources as it is organized at present was created by an amalgamation of existing state agencies by the General Assembly in 1965. The first of the agencies that are an integral part of the Department had its beginning when David Dale Owen, M.D., of New Harmony was appointed by the Governor in 1837 to be Geologist of the State of Indiana and to conduct a geological reconnaissance of Indiana. This first survey, authorized by the General Assembly on February 6, 1837, was an "ad hoc" assignment to be completed and a report issued for the use of the next legislature. In 1839 the General Assembly authorized continuation of a geological survey of the State for one additional year, but Dr. Owen was not reappointed, and state-supported geological work ceased for a time.

In 1851 the newly created State Board of Agriculture authorized Dr. Ryland T. Brown to act as its "Geological Agent", and in this capacity Dr. Brown in 1853 issued a report on various aspects of the State's geology and mineral resources. The Brown survey was an administrative action of the State Board of Agriculture, rather than a commission from the General Assembly.

The General Assembly recommissioned David Dale Owen to undertake a second geological survey in 1859. Before this project was completed, Owen died suddenly in 1860, and the survey was finished by his younger brother Richard, who was appointed State Geologist. The results of the second Owen survey were published in 1862, and again state-supported geological work was suspended.

After the Civil War a Department of Geology and Natural Science was created by the Legislature and there has been continuous survey work since 1869. At times the State Geologist was elected and, for thirty years prior to the 1919 legislation creating the Department of Conservation, he headed up a Department of Geology and Natural Resources.

In 1857 the first closed seasons on game reflected concern for diminishing supplies of deer, wild turkey, quail, ruffed grouse, and prairie chicken. Ten years later it became unlawful to trap, net, shoot, or seine fish in all Indiana waters, except the St. Joseph and Ohio Rivers.

The State Museum gradually evolved during this period from geological samples and other natural history specimens gathered by the geologist and their aides during the early surveys. Returning Civil War veterans deposited flags, souvenirs, and other memorabilia in the growing collection. The dusty cabinets in the basement of the State House have been replaced by the modern highly professional

exhibits in new quarters in the old Indianapolis City Hall at Ohio and Alabama. This magnificent example of classical revival architecture has never been more appropriately utilized than at the present time.

In 1871 spearing of fish was prohibited during part of the year, and two years later certain song birds were given protection by law.

In 1881 the Office of Commissioner of Fisheries was created. Colonel Wm. J. Dennis was appointed Commissioner and called a state convention to discuss various problems. Governor Alvin Hovey noted the polluted condition of the Ohio River at this convention. About this time enforcement of game and fish laws became an additional responsibility of township road supervisors.

The transition period between the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries was reflected by a flurry of activity in Conservation legislation. The Office of Commissioner of Fisheries was expanded to include Game in 1899. The original Indiana San Jose Scale and Nursery Inspection Law was passed by the General Assembly that same year, with the enforcement in charge of Professor James Troop at Purdue.

In 1901 the State Board of Forestry was created and the first hunting permits issued by the Commissioner of Fisheries and Game. Two years later deer, wild turkey and ruffed grouse were given year-around protection.

In 1903 the Clark County State Forest was created, and the first forest fire protection laws were enacted two years later.

The year 1907 saw the Fish and Game Laws incorporated into the criminal code and the requirement that one have a license to hunt rabbits outside his home township.

This same year the State Entomologist's Office was made into an autonomous state agency with headquarters in the State House and increased regulatory functions. In 1909 responsibility for apiary inspection to control American foulbrood, a serious and infectious bee disease, was added.

In addition to the beekeeping laws, 1909 saw a closed season on prairie chickens and an event of considerable impact to Indiana's natural resources when C. C. Deam was appointed State Forester.

Any historical account of the development of our Department of Natural Resources would be remiss without mention of Charles Deam, Frank Wallace, and Richard Lieber, who appeared on the scene in approximately that order. Each of these in separate fields worked toward increased cognizance of the need for regulation and protection of all natural resources.

A State Parks Commission was appointed in 1915, and 1916 a State Park system was created with McCormick's Creek as Indiana's first State Park and Turkey Run the second. Richard Lieber was a member of this Commission.

With the establishment of the State Park system came a movement to consolidate it and related agencies into a single Department to eliminate duplication of effort and to present a unified approach to the preservation and conservation of our natural resources. In 1917

the Corydon State Memorial was established; the 1919 General Assembly created the Department of Conservation consisting of the following divisions:

1. Geology
2. Entomology
3. Forestry
4. Land and Waters
5. Fish and Game

The existing agencies were abolished and absorbed into the new Department with most of the incumbent personnel retained. Richard Lieber was appointed the first Director, and he also served as Superintendent of Lands and Water (State Parks and Memorials) and, initially, as Acting Superintendent of Fisheries and Game.

The Roaring Twenties was a period of great expansion for the new Department. Seven State Parks, Muscatatuck, Indiana Dunes, Pokagon, Spring Mill, Shakamak, Brown County, and Mounds, and three Memorials, were added during this period.

During the Great Depression the Department of Conservation was organized by being absorbed into a Department of Public Works, with Virgil Simmons appointed as Commissioner. Shortly afterwards discretionary power was granted to the Department to suspend, abridge, and shorten open seasons and reduce bag limits when deemed necessary. In 1937 the Fish and Game Laws were recodified and the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson) passed.

In 1941 administration of the Conservation Department was returned to a four-member, bi-partisan Commission, and long-time State Entomologist Frank Wallace was appointed Acting Director for the first year. The Department maintained this basic structure until the Department of Natural Resources came into existence in 1965.

The conservation movement had gained impetus during the tag-end of the depression with increased Federal participation, but it came virtually to a stand-still during World War II. Activity to preserve our natural resources accelerated in the post-war period and has continued.

The Flood Control and Water Resources Commission was established in 1945 with Anton Hulman as Chairman. The Water Resources Division in the Conservation Department was created in the same year and the Geology Division moved to the Indiana University campus. Responsibility for the State Museum was transferred to the Division of Lands and Waters.

The late 1950's and early 1960's were a period of growth and realignment of responsibilities. Public hunting and fishing sites were acquired to ease the pressure on private land.

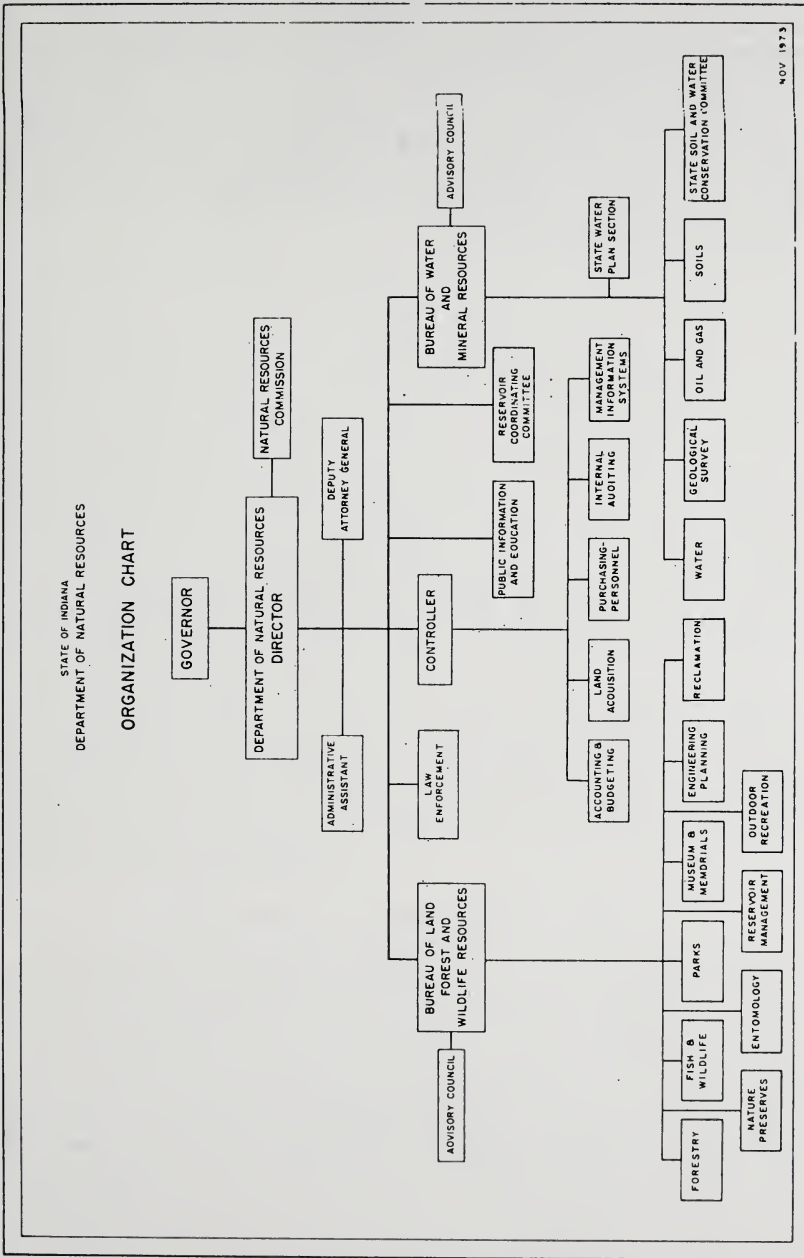
In 1965 the Department of Natural Resources was created by the combination of the following agencies:

Department of Conservation

The Flood Control and Water Resources Commission

The State Soil and Water Conservation Committee
 The Indiana Recreation Council

The following chart shows the present structure of the Department:



The current president of the Indiana Academy of Science, or his designate, serves as one of the twelve members of the Natural Resources Commission. The association between the Academy and the Department of Natural Resources is of long standing. In the legislation creating the Department of Conservation in 1919 it was required that the Governor appoint one member of that four-man commission from a list of persons nominated by the Academy. Dean Stanley Coulter of Purdue was appointed and served with distinction for many years.

New Divisions have evolved as the need has arisen over the years. Some have been by Commission action, but new responsibilities normally are a direct legislative mandate. The establishment of the Division of Nature Preserves is a good example and came about, at least in part, by Academy prompting and effort.