One of the great things about Pennsylvania, is the constant transition that reminds us exactly where we are in the course of life. The seasons seem to change swiftly and dramatically. Kids activities are constantly revolving, school’s back in, the leather ball is being celebrated (hemlock was used for tanning leather), the bands are practicing for halftime shows (many instruments are made of wood) and... there’s always pumpkin spice. “The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but building the new.” – Socrates

In the LHR the landscape changes are ever present. Rubbernecking is one of my favorite activities. I love to take in the sights and smells this time of year. As I #EXPLORELHR, I am going to imagine a landscape without a single hardwood. One that is sprinkled with stumps and lifeless trees. One that hailed the power of the almighty dollar. I am going to imagine what life was like without the beautiful sceneries we have today. Then I am going to reflect on Joseph Rothrock and the work he did to restore the natural beauty of our region.

I am going to think of the once booming towns that were prosperous because of the lumber industry. I am going to imagine the small areas once thriving from the success of timbering the lands, and know that today many are ghost towns and struggling boroughs. I will think of the people who made lumbering their lively hood and the work done to build our region as one of the greatest places to live, work and play.

As I think of the past and how it leads to the future, I can’t help but recognize the work that is still being done in our region and the endless possibilities that still exist. Timbering is still a strong industry in the LHR, but the health of the forest depends on responsible reforestation. Pennsylvania wood is still being sought after because of its durability and beauty. The laws put in place by our predecessors have changed the way we timber, but the need for this renewable resource will outlast us all. We should all be talking about the importance of lumber to our workable future.

Maybe you will take time to reflect upon our beautiful landscape and remember how lucky you are to be living among some of the most beautiful countryside in the world.

Enjoy the newsletter!

Godspeed,

Holly Komonczi
Executive Director

Learn more about his impact on forestry today here
SMOKEY TURNS 75

Smokey Bear, the U.S. Forest Service’s symbol of fire prevention, turned 75 last month. Smokey is the longest-running public service ad campaign, first appearing on a poster on Aug. 9, 1944. While his look has changed quite a bit, his message has remained the same. The Smokey campaign has continued to evolve. Smokey was given his own ZIP code in the '60s, where people could send mail to the cartoon character. Even “the occasional pot of honey would be sent to Smokey.

Smokey’s popularity has certainly endured. But has Smokey ben too successful? The number of forest fires since the Smokey campaign began has declined. But in recent years, they’ve gotten larger and more destructive. And scientists talk about "the Smokey Bear effect," the belief that all fires are bad. "We still need fire in our landscapes, and this is incredibly important, and it’s very hard to understand," says University of Colorado-Boulder geology professor Jennifer Balch.

"In part because of Smokey, you think that, you know, all fire is bad and we must remove fire from the landscape, whereas that’s actually not what we should be doing." Balch says because there have been fewer fires, more fuel has built up, which combined with climate change and more people living near what were previously wilderness areas, has led to more intense and devastating fires, such as the one that destroyed the town of Paradise, Calif., in November 2018. Smokey’s tag line was revised in 2001 to, "Only you can prevent wildfires," rather than "forest fires." — "because after 75 years of 'Only you can prevent wildfires,' turns out there's much more to say." And who’s to say the fire-preventin’ bear won’t be around in another 75 years?

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

County Level Plan to Evaluate Wildfire Risk to Communities & Infrastructure

Back in the late 1800 and early 1900s the Lumber Heritage Region suffered tremendous losses to our forests due to uncontrolled wildfires. The heavy logging that occurred left the forest floor strewn with debris that often ignited with devastating results. Thankfully, we’ve learned from those past practices and manage our forests much better. However, it is almost impossible to entirely reduce the risk. That is why it is important to have tools such as a community wildfire protection plan (CWPP) in place.

Elk and McKeans Counties recently partnered with the Allegheny National Forest to develop a CWPP. The plan evaluates wildfire threat to communities and infrastructure, and identifies measures that homeowners, land managers, and fire departments can take to reduce the impact of wildfire to life, property, and other community values at risk.

Human-ignited fires, usually from debris burning, are the primary cause of wildfires in the state and in Elk and McKean Counties. Careless burning during dry, windy periods can quickly lead to a small fire getting out of control. These fires are often referred to as “brush” fires and rarely burn more than a few acres before they are doused.

Other factors including both ecological and demographic have heightened the risk of wildfires in our area. Periodic drought, defoliating insect infestations and an increased fuel loads are just a few factors that the CWPP looked at.

Homeowners can also find many suggestions for ways to decrease the risk to your structure(s) if a fire starts in your area.

For more information you can log on to either Elk County’s or McKean County’s websites.

Protection and prevention are the keys to stopping a devastating fire from occurring in your neighborhood.
Many of us have driven by the place known as Memorial Springs, just south of Emporium on Route 120 (CCC Memorial Hwy). Many people stop for water and look over the memorial but how many really know the story behind it? It is a fitting tribute to the memory of those who died so long ago in hills of Cameron County. How the story unfolds is best told by one of the survivors Pete Damico. Pete worked at one of the many CCC camps and was a member of the crew sent out to fight the forest fires that day. Here is his story from the files of the Cameron County Historical Society:

The Pepper Hill Fire

"It was the morning of October 19, 1938. The torrid sun relentlessly beat down its wave of heat and light, literally scorching the forests about Sinnamahoning, as if intentionally igniting the spark of destruction that was to follow. We had returned a few hours earlier from fighting a small forest fire and were getting a brief rest. At noon the fire gong once again sounded throughout the camp. We jumped out of bed, back into denims and rushed to the mess hall for dinner, before going to the "fire front."

Following a hurried lunch, I placed a fire tank on my back, and with eighteen other fellows was off on the greatest adventure of my life. Little did we dream of the tragedy that lurked on Pepper Hill Mountain.

Arriving at the ‘front’ we began cleaning a path at the foot of the mountain. After progressing about fifty feet and starting a back fire, we were ordered to go to the head of the fire and work downhill. About three fourths of the way to the top, nine of us fellows (the others had gone ahead) stopped to take a rest; one of the lads biting into a sandwich he had hidden in his shirt. Looking back he screamed, dropped his sandwich and then fainted. Waves upon waves of red and yellow flames, only a hundred feet away, were eating their way to the top of Pepper Hill ready in a few seconds to devour us. Instantly the picture of the back fire we had ignited at the foot of the hill flashed through my mind; it has jumped the path and, driven by a fresh wind, had taken to the trees and madly charged toward us. To run ahead of the flames was futile; they would easily catch us. On the three remaining sides the red headless monster leaped and laughed as they threw heavenward showers of sparks and clouds of smoke and came fatally closer.

SMOKE! SPARKS! FLAMES! FLESH! I dropped my tank shut my eyes, mumbled a short prayer and ran directly into the face of the back fire. In semi daze I dragged my weary feet and burned body until completely fatigued; scorched and parched with thirst, I fell exhausted at the foot of a tree. A long time later, it seemed like eternity, I regained consciousness, hearing one of my buddies screaming at the top of his lungs as though they were about to burst, lying only five feet away from me. He was terribly burned; I could scarcely recognize him. A hundred feet away another of the crew was lying on the ground, his face buried in the earth. The fire was dying. With my two companions we began trudging back to the road. After several short steps, one, whose clothing was entirely burned off him, dropped naked and exhausted. Could we carry him? Help him? We tried, but his listless body weighed tons. After a few attempts we had no alternative but to attempt to get through ourselves. Reaching the road, I frantically...
quenched my thirst with water from the kegs carried on the truck. With a passing motorist we rode to the Bucktail Veterans Camp and then, minutes later, was raced in an ambulance to the Renovo Hospital.

After three weeks in Renovo, I was moved to the Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D. C. where I was a patient for two months. Receiving my discharge, I went back to the Hunts Run Camp and was on quarters for the following month. A few weeks later, still bearing scars on both hands and legs, I was transferred to Camp S125, Elimsport, PA to attend the Central Shop School, where I am at present. Of that fire crew of nine men, six perished in the flames, one lived one day, another two weeks. Only I was fortunate enough to survive the disaster. Never does a day pass that I fail to thank Providence for my extremely good fortune to have seen death’s face to face and lived.”

134 Acres were burned that In all, the fire claimed eight lives: Gilbert Mahoney 38, Ridgeway, Basil Bogush, 19, Conemaugh, John Boring, 19, Johnstown, Howard May, 18, Erie, and Andrew Stefphanic, 18, Twin Rocks, all died in the fire. Ross Hollobaugh, 18, Rimersburg, died the next day in Renovo; Stephen Jacofsky, 17, Johnstown died the next day at St. Marys Hospital; George Vogel, hometown unknown, died November 2, in Renovo.

On October 19, 2016 on the anniversary of the fire a state historical marker was placed at the base of Pepper Hill on route 872 marking the spot where the men had perished. So, why is there a Memorial on Route 120? When word of the tragedy went through the CCC world, pennies poured in from over 8,000 enrollees for a monument to be built in memory of the boys. The site for the monument that we know as Memorial Springs was selected because The Springs was already a popular tourist stop.

Next time you are traveling Route 120 south of Emporium stop and take notice of this beautiful tribute to those men who died protecting our forests.
It all began in 1921 with a partnership between F.L. Patterson and D.W. Frasure. The two men operated a mangle roller bobbin manufacturing facility in Wellsboro Pennsylvania. Mangle rollers are hard maple spool-like components used at the time in the manufacturing of textiles.

By 1927 the original bobbin-manufacturing plant was joined by a mill in Galeton, and in Friendship New York. Prosperity followed hard work and by 1929 records show 100 employees and a significant profit.

Through the 1930s bobbin export decreased but the Wellsboro sawmill continued on.

In 1936 a retail building materials department was added in Wellsboro, then in 1948 the business was incorporated and Patterson Lumber Co. Inc. was formed.

1951 brought the purchase of the Emporium Lumber Co. sawmill site (in Galeton Pennsylvania) and surrounding timberlands.

By 1957 Patterson Lumber Co., Inc. was cutting about 4.5 million feet of lumber annually including: hard maple, cherry, beech, hemlock, birch and oak.

In the 1960s some major fires struck the Galeton sawmill and each time it was rebuilt.

In 1974 dry kilns were added which expanded the capabilities of the mill and diversified the customer base.

Now a fourth-generation, family-run sawmill, Patterson Lumber Co., Inc. employs the latest technological advancements to increase production and eliminate waste, while further increasing safety and lumber quality.

The LHR is a 15 county region in North West/North Central Pennsylvania that accentuates the importance of the lumber industry for the past, present and future. The goal of the heritage region is to market its assets to potential visitors, to serve as a resource to the PA hardwood industry, and to keep the economic impact of the region in the forefront.

**Something to Think About**

How forest fires are good?

Controlled burns are also used to prevent forest fires. Even before human involvement, natural, low-intensity wildfires occurred every few years to burn up fuel, plant debris, and dead trees, making way for young, healthy trees and vegetation to thrive. That new growth in turn supports forest wildlife.