

A Forest Stewards Guild Founder's Essay

Written by Robert Hrubes

In December of 1995, I was invited to a meeting in Santa Fe hosted by Henry Carey of The Forest Trust. There I found myself in a gathering of like-minded souls, the nature of and extent to which I had never experienced in my professional career. Over two days, I came to understand that I was not the only round peg in a profession of square holes. That realization was a source of inspiration that remains strong, today.

Looking back over the past 25 years of active involvement in the Guild, two intertwined concepts or ethical principles rise above all else. These define the Guild and the ethos that I have strived, through actions and career decisions, to promote and practice:

- Stewardship as the central paradigm of resource management
- The “first duty” of professional foresters and allied resource professionals is to forests and their future.

The Forest Stewards Guild was formally created by nearly 70 Founding Members who gathered at the Biltmore Estate in North Carolina. Almost all the attendees in the 1995 meeting in Santa Fe were in Ashville, joined by others who shared their values, felt the “spark,” and who felt compelled to create and sustain an organization committed to forest stewardship.

The Founding Members that gathered in Ashville knew they needed to come up with a name for this embryonic outfit, if it was to take root. As I recall, “Forest Stewards” came quickly, adroitly reflecting the shared ethos of stewardship. But what about a noun to describe what kind of organization we wanted it to be? I recall a drawn-out brainstorming session in a Biltmore room, everyone checking their watches with mounting anxiety, realizing that time was running out before we would all be heading home to our respective corners of the country. Seemingly at the last moment, Jeff Smith (whose name and moment of inspiration deserves our collective acknowledgement) blurted out: “How about The Forest Stewards Guild!?” With collective relief and satisfaction, Jeff’s suggestion was immediately and (I choose to remember) unanimously embraced. And the rest is (ongoing) history...