

Gene Francisco



Gene began his career with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, in January 1969, as a fire control dispatcher/forest ranger trainee stationed at the Mercer Ranger Station. In 1970, he received his first field station and was appointed to Forest Ranger at the Bowler Ranger Station in Shawano County. In 1973, Gene transferred to the Antigo Ranger Station and served as the Antigo/WhiteLake Forester/Ranger for the next 12 years, covering southern and eastern Langlade County.

Gene was promoted to Area Forester/Ranger for the Oshkosh Area covering Winnebago, Calumet, Outagamie, Waupaca and Waushara counties in 1985. In 1990, Charlie Higgs, the Chief State Forester, chose Gene as his Deputy Bureau Director and Gene moved to Madison.

Charlie retired in 1998. Gene was appointed to the Forestry Bureau Director /State Forester the following summer. The Forestry Bureau became a Division in the Fall of 1999 and Gene was appointed the Forestry Division Administrator/State Forester, by Secretary George Meyer, in January 2000. Gene served in this position until his 2003 retirement.

During his tenure as Chief State Forester, Gene served as President of the Northeast Area Association of State Foresters, Chairman of the National Forest Fire Prevention Committee and served on the National Forest Fire and Resource Management Committees.

A few accomplishments that Gene found most rewarding during his tenure as Chief State Forester were:

- * elevating forestry to division status within WDNR
- * purchasing the Tomahawk Timberlands, Wisconsin's first Forest Legacy Conservation Easement
- * purchasing/establishing the Peshtigo River State Forest
- * adding Vernon County to the Wisconsin County Forest system
- * creating a statutorily mandated Forestry Advisory Council
- * creating an ongoing funding source for the Forestry Education (LEAF) program and securing significant staffing
- * acquiring resources to meet the burgeoning private forestry and pest programs.

After retirement from the DNR, Gene started a consulting business and served as the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Professional Loggers Association (WPLA), Timber Producers Association (TPA) and the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association (GLTPA) located in Tomahawk and Rhinelander. He was instrumental in merging the WPLA and TPA into the GLTPA, improving efficiency and cost effectiveness among the forest products trade associations.

A major accomplishment during his tenure at the GLTPA was elevating Wisconsin's logging industry into the ranks of professional resource managers. He created a certified master logger program, established the right to practice forestry law, improved forest products trucking legislation protecting our highways as well as reducing trucking costs and improved the relationship between the logging community, environmental groups and other agencies.

His most treasured memories are the friendships he made throughout his 34 year career with the WDNR including colleagues within and outside the DNR, throughout WI and the US.

Gene has been married to Sue for 42 years. Sue is a registered nurse and is retired from the Madison VA Hospital. Gene and Sue have a son Gene (wife Dee) who lives in Green Bay, WI and a daughter Kristen (husband Nick) and granddaughter Erin, Sun Prairie, WI.

Sue and Gene now spend about half of their time working on an 80 acre tree farm in Michigan's UP just north of Florence, WI and the other half traveling, golfing and spending time with family.



Gene, with guide Tino, and the 35 pound Mahi Mahi he caught off the coast of Hautulco, MX in 2008.



The Francisco's 80 acre tree farm and cabin located in the UP, near Florence, WI.



Gene harvesting some of the 100 year old white pine that was made into paneling and trim for the cabin.



Sue, the logging supervisor, checking on Gene's work!