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**Celebrating a Century of the Weeks Act
PSU and N.H.'s North Country Reflect on Landmark Conservation Effort**

Plymouth, N.H. – Plymouth State University is celebrating the 100th birthday of one of the most successful land conservation efforts in U.S. and New Hampshire history. The Weeks Act was signed into law in 1911, after a decade-long debate about the role of the federal government in protecting forestlands. The Weeks Act, named after Massachusetts Congressman John Weeks, allowed the use of federal funding to purchase forest land for conservation. The Weeks Act appropriated \$9 million to purchase 6 million acres of land in the eastern United States.

“At the turn of the 20th Century, New Hampshire’s forests had been poorly managed and threatened by forest fires,” said Thad Guldbrandsen, director of PSU’s Center for Rural Partnerships. “This created a number of environmental, social, and economic problems, not only in the White Mountains, but also downstream along the Merrimack River and elsewhere. Flooding rivers closed down mills, causing people to be out of work for days, for example.”

Linda Upham-Bornstein, a historian at the Center for Rural Partnerships, noted one of the most interesting aspects regarding the passage of the Weeks Act was the collaboration of conservation forces and industrial concerns. Guldbrandsen said this joint effort was a unique situation at that time in history.

“Instead of competing against each other, the two groups found that they shared mutual interests, and they united with other actively to support the passage of the Weeks Bill,” said Guldbrandsen.

“The Weeks Act is the culmination of a creative coalition between industrialists and conservationists who saw the value of more proactive forest management.”

PSU has scheduled the Centennial Lecture Series, to increase public awareness about this landmark legislation. Historian Marcia Schmidt Blaine explains that the organizers hope the audience will reflect on why people value the forested White Mountains. What made the value so important to society that the private forests became a public one? The series opened on January 13 and 21 with presentations by Mark Okrant and Linda Upham-Bornstein, in Bretton Woods and Lancaster, respectively. Other events in the lecture series include:

- Thursday, February 18, at Plymouth State University, Heritage Commons, 4:30 p.m.
“**100 Years of Public Land Management**” presented by Tom Wagner
- Art Exhibition at Plymouth State University, Silver Center for the Performing Arts
March 3—April 11 “**Protecting the Forest: The Weeks Act of 1911**”
Opening reception, Thursday, March 4, 6 p.m.
- Monday, March 8, at Plymouth State University, Heritage Commons 4:30 p.m.
“**The Impact of North Country Community and Collaboration in the Weeks Act of 1911**” presented by Rebecca Weeks Sherrill More
- Friday, March 12, at Plymouth State University, Heritage Commons, 1 PM
“**Two Centuries of Tourism in the White Mountains: A Region Comes Full Circle**”
presented by Mark Okrant
- Thursday, March 18, at Plymouth State University, Heritage Commons, 6:30 p.m.
“**Making the National Forests National: The Weeks Act and the Expansion of Federal Forestry**,” presented by Char Miller,
- Tuesday, March 30, at Plymouth State University, Heritage Commons, 6:30 p.m.
“**Working Forests: From Market Revolution to Industrialization**,” presented by Linda Upham-Bornstein
- Thursday April 1 at Plymouth State University, Heritage Commons, 4p.m.
“**Saving the Mountains: Joseph B Walker, Phillip Ayers, and the Weeks Act of 1911**” presented by Marcia Schmidt Blaine
- Friday April 9, location to be determined, 2:30 p.m.

“Stories of New Hampshire and the Forests,” presented by Becky Rule

Guldbrandsen said the lecture series gives the public a valuable perspective on how the Weeks Act has affected the state. “The purpose of this lecture series is to reflect on this 100 year experiment,” Guldbrandsen said. “We want to raise awareness about the Weeks Act and consider the various consequences of establishing the White Mountains National Forest. What have been the outcomes? What are the lessons? What does this 100 year experiment teach us about how to address today’s problems? How do we consider the future?”

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