

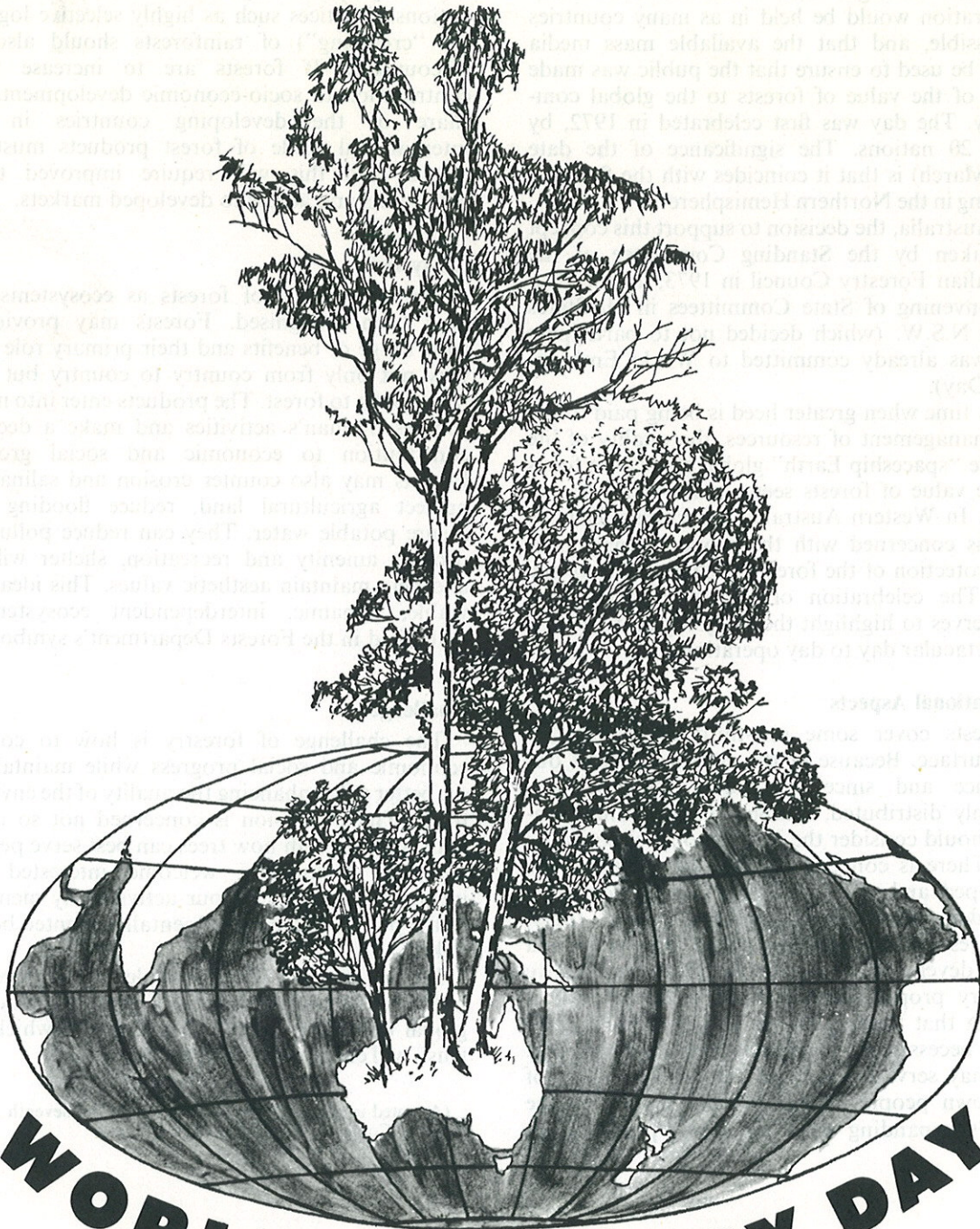


INFORMATION SHEET

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WORLD FORESTRY DAY

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21st March

The proposal for a World Forestry Day originated from the 23rd General Assembly of the European Confederation of Agriculture in 1971. Later that year, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, an agency of the United Nations, gave support to the idea, considering that this event would contribute to the public's awareness of the importance of forests.

It was envisaged that a simultaneous commemoration would be held in as many countries as possible, and that the available mass media would be used to ensure that the public was made aware of the value of forests to the global community. The day was first celebrated in 1972, by about 20 nations. The significance of the date (21st March) is that it coincides with the first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere.

In Australia, the decision to support this concept was taken by the Standing Committee of the Australian Forestry Council in 1973, and led to the convening of State Committees in all States except N.S.W. (which decided not to participate as it was already committed to World Environment Day).

At a time when greater heed is being paid to the wise management of resources, the quality of life and the "spaceship Earth" global concept, a focus on the value of forests seems particularly appropriate. In Western Australia, the Forests Department is concerned with the proper management and protection of the forest estate each day of the year. The celebration of World Forestry Day only serves to highlight the on-going and perhaps unspectacular day to day operations.

International Aspects

Forests cover some one-third of the earth's land surface. Because of the global aspect of our existence and since the forest resources are unevenly distributed, national policies and planning should consider the international situation as well. There is concern that the gap between the developed and the developing nations continues to widen. Some of the world's largest forest resources lie in countries where economic and social development is lagging. Over and above the very proper considerations of social justice, the fact that these resources are of world significance necessitates proper development, so that they may serve to raise the standard of living of their own people as well as contributing to the world's expanding need for forest products. In

particular, there is need for effective and intensified research and communications, so that new knowledge may be incorporated swiftly into practice.

At the same time, justice is essential in the drawing up of trade and preferential tariff barriers by the developed nations, the negotiation of "fair" prices and the encouragement of primary and secondary processing within the developing nations. Practices such as highly selective logging (or "creaming") of rainforests should also be discouraged. If forests are to increase their contribution to socio-economic development, the share of the developing countries in the international trade of forest products must increase, and this will require improved trade conditions and access to developed markets.

Ecosystems

The importance of forests as ecosystems has long been recognised. Forests may provide a wide range of benefits and their primary role may vary not only from country to country but also from forest to forest. The products enter into many spheres of man's activities and make a decisive contribution to economic and social growth. Forests may also counter erosion and salination, protect agricultural land, reduce flooding and assure potable water. They can reduce pollution, provide amenity and recreation, shelter wildlife and help maintain aesthetic values. This idea of a viable, dynamic, interdependent ecosystem is embodied in the Forests Department's symbol.

Challenge

The challenge of forestry is how to control economic and social progress while maintaining or, better still, enhancing the quality of the environment. The profession is concerned not so much with trees, as with how trees can best serve people. Because of this we welcome interested and informed comment on our activities by members of the public, and environmentally-oriented bodies alike.

World Forestry Day provides an avenue for publicising the importance of forests on both a global and local scale, an opportunity which, we trust, will encourage public response.

(Adapted in part from the Declaration of the Seventh World Forestry Congress, Argentina, 1972.)