

Senator Lisa Baker

125th Anniversary Of State Parks And Forests

May 22, 2018

We frequently celebrate milestones in our Commonwealth's political and economic heritage. It is a different matter when we celebrate our natural heritage, for this creation was an inheritance, not something that men and women imagined and engineered from a cold standing start. Yet, it was a groundbreaking political and economic move when the state forests and state parks were established.

When we describe our state parks as crown jewels, when we talk about the magnificent habitat of our forestlands, we are paying tribute to individuals who possessed remarkable foresight. Because of their determination and purpose, we can enjoy the beauty, quality, and value of these protected and preserved lands. We could spend a long time cataloguing and describing the spectacular features found within the state park system.

This resolution and anniversary recognition help restore the names of these preservation pioneers in terms of public awareness. Most notably from the 20th District is Governor Gifford Pinchot who partnered with Teddy Roosevelt to set aside incredible parcels of iconic wilderness. Known as the "father of conservation," he served as the first chief of the U.S. Forests Service and introduced the concept of preserving the past in order to protect the future.

Many of us, as part of our faith, are reminded of the duty toward stewardship. We should note the individuals and groups behind this anniversary celebration, for they are bringing passion and devotion to the pursuit of responsible stewardship. Because of the many organizations committed to the cause, Pennsylvanians, even those who may never visit, have ownership of marvelous natural assets.

It is clear that our challenges in providing the clean air and the clean water underpinning the environmental rights amendment in the state Constitution would be all the more difficult without the woodlands. Whether we simply enjoy the

scenic vistas or partake of the more vigorous activities associated with the outdoors, we have the privilege of doing so because exceptional men and women saw the right thing to do and found effective ways to carry it out. We are grateful for what they did for us, and in turn, our actions should be such that we earn the equal gratitude of future generations.