

“Forest conservation bespeaks of a people’s wisdom”

Puerto Rico has a rich conservation history. Early forest research and management efforts place the island in the forefront of tropical forest conservation. The Luquillo Forest (now the El Yunque National Forest) was proclaimed a forest reserve by Spain in 1876; it is one of the oldest forest reserves in the western hemisphere. The Puerto Rican Forest Service was established in 1866, almost half a century before the USDA Forest Service came into existence. As early as 1966, well before the first National Earth Day Celebration in 1970, Puerto Rico had already taken action to organize public conservation awareness.

For almost two centuries, Puerto Rico and El Yunque have played a central role in tropical forest conservation:

1824 First Puerto Rico watershed conservation law enacted.

1839 Spanish Crown establishes Public Forestry Commission and first comprehensive forest law.

1850 First Spanish public forestry appropriation for Puerto Rico.

1876 King Alphonso XII proclaims Luquillo Forest a forest reserve, with timber, soil and water conservation.

1898 Crown lands of Puerto Rico pass from Spain to the United States.

1903 President Theodore Roosevelt proclaims Luquillo Forest Reserve.

1905 USDA Bureau of Forestry publishes the

report “Luquillo Forest Reserve, Porto Rico;” the first detailed report about the forest and its resources.

1907 With the advent of the USDA Forest Service the Luquillo Forest Reserve is renamed the Luquillo National Forest and thus becomes the first tropical rain forest in the National forest system.

1916 The first Puerto Rico government boundary survey indicates that the area of Luquillo National Forest is 12,443 acres.

1917 First Luquillo National Forest Supervisor is named Chief Forester of Puerto Rico; Puerto Rico establishes Insular Forest Service.

1920 Large-scale trial program planting exotic and native species begins in Puerto Rico. First tree nursery is established.

1926 Construction of initial portions of Road 191, the main access to the forest begins.

1931 First forest plantations (mahogany) are established within the Luquillo National Forest.

1933 Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program begins on island; accomplishes extensive reforestation, forest road construction, and recreational and administrative improvements in Federal and State forests. El Yunque Recreation Area is constructed.

1934 Forest Service begins major reforestation program on island’s public forests; in 12 years, over 18,000 acres are planted with 53 tree species, 28 of which are native.

1935 The Luquillo National Forest is renamed

Caribbean National Forest acknowledging the purchase of the Toro Negro Unit in central Puerto Rico.

1937 First systematic inventory of forest timber resource completed.

1939 Tropical Forest Experiment Station (now International Institute of Tropical Forestry) is established making the Caribbean NF one of the most studied tropical forests in the world. Scientific site adaptability testing program begins; more than 100 native and 350 introduced tree species are tested.

1943 Caribbean NF and Tropical Forest Experiment Station consolidated into Tropical Forestry Unit.

Timber sale program is greatly accelerated for wartime charcoal fuel production.

1946 Caribbean NF designated an insular wildlife refuge.

1949 First multiple use and timber management plan for the forest completed.

Secretary of Agriculture designates 2,172 acres of the forest as the Baño de Oro Research Natural Area.

1953 Puerto Rico Forest Service separated from USDA Forest Service.

First of 16 international tropical forestry short courses held at the Tropical Forestry Unit.

1956 Caribbean NF additionally designated Luquillo Experimental Forest, recognizing the growing importance of research.

Land use plan for the Luquillo Experimental Forest is completed.

1961 Institute of Tropical Forestry is created.

1968 Formal research efforts to save the endangered Puerto Rican Parrot begin in

Caribbean NF in collaboration with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the World Wildlife Fund.

Revised Timber Management Plan for the Luquillo Experimental Forest is approved and rewritten to conform to the 1956 Land Use Plan.

1974 Intensive “mahogany line plantation” reforestation program begins.

1976 Forest is designated part of the international network of Biosphere Reserves.

Catalina tree nursery is established under Forest Service management to provide seedlings for the island reforestation program.

1977 First silviculture examination and prescription is completed on the forest.

1982 Field Office is moved from Sabana to newly constructed Catalina Office. New forest organization is created.

1988 El Portal Tropical Rain Forest Center planning is initiated.

1989 Hurricane Hugo causes major damage to Forest, Catalina Work Center, and to the recreation areas.

1992 International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF) is established, enhancing international cooperation and collaboration.

1996 El Portal Tropical Rain Forest Center opens, continuing a tradition of education, outreach, and public service.

2003 Puerto Rico celebrates centennial of Luquillo Forest Reserve.

2007 Caribbean NF is renamed El Yunque National Forest to better reflect the cultural values and sentiment of the Puerto Rican population.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

For more information:

**El Yunque National Forest
HC-01 Box 13490
Rio Grande, PR 00745-9625**

Tel: 787-888-1880

Or visit our website:

www.fs.usda.gov/elyunque

