

James W. Mitchell

James W. Mitchell was born in Barbour County in 1947 and grew up in Arden. He attended Philippi High School, a two-room school, and was a member of the first graduating class from the new Philip-Barbour High School in 1964.

He attended West Virginia University (WVU), majoring in Forestry and Wildlife Management, and graduated in 1968 with a B.S. degree in Forestry. After graduating from WVU he was employed with the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources Forestry Division in French Creek as a service forester, where he worked for 33 years dispensing advice on managed timberlands and performing fire control duties. Not only did his prevention work and cooperation with county fire departments contribute to fewer fires, his fire investigation skills led to an outstanding conviction rate on fire prosecutions.

In addition to routine duties of the job, Mr. Mitchell served on a committee at WVU that developed the national award-winning “Managing Your Woodlot” video series. The videos include “Best Management Practices,” “Selling Timber” and “Stewardship.”



Mr. Mitchell is an active member of the Society of American Foresters (SAF) and chaired ad hoc committees to respond to appeals of United States Forest Service (USFS) timber sales. He is also a member of the West Virginia Forestry Association (WVFA), National Woodland Owner’s Association and American Forestry Association. He is a technical advisor to the Upshur County Farm Bureau, former president of the Upshur Sportsmen’s Conservation Club, board member of the Washington District VFD and is a registered professional forester in West Virginia. He is also active with many civic groups and county litter programs.

Mr. Mitchell assisted with the National 4-H Forestry Invitational held at Jackson’s Mill and served on the state committee for the development of the Division’s Forest Management and Fire Control Manuals. He worked closely with the Boy Scouts, 4-H and sportsmen’s clubs to keep their land under sustained yield management programs, which provided them with multiple-use demonstration areas and a much-needed source of regular income.

He retired in 2002 and started his consulting forestry business “Sentinel Forestry Services,” where he still assists private landholders’ forest management efforts. His “spare time” is devoted to an active forest management program and growing Christmas trees on his 75-acre farm near Tallmansville, W.Va.

Mr. Mitchell was the District III West Virginia Division of Forestry (DOF) Employee of the Year in 1986 and 1989. He was the state DOF Employee of the year in 1993 and 1999. In 2002, he was named the WVFA Forester of the Year and also received the Northeastern Cooperative Forest Management (CFM) Forester of the Year award, given by the USFS to the outstanding CFM forester in a 20-state area of the northeastern United States. He is the only forester to have nominated five West Virginia Tree Farmer of the Year winners.