

N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Release: Immediate
Date: Jan. 31, 2007

Contact: Diana Kees
Phone: (919) 715-4112

OWEN NAMED AS STATE FORESTER

RALEIGH – Wib Owen has been named as the new director for the N.C. Division of Forest Resources and will begin his duties Feb. 1.

Owen, 51, replaces acting director Dan Smith, who will retire from the division after working for the agency in various positions since 1978. The Division of Forest Resources' primary purpose is to ensure adequate and quality forest resources for the state to meet present and future needs. Forestry – the state's second largest industry – contributes nearly \$30 billion annually to the state's economy and provides 144,000 jobs for North Carolinians.

“North Carolina's forest lands add immeasurable value to our economy and quality of life,” said Bill Ross, secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. “Wib's experience in managing the state's natural resources and his knowledge of state budget and management practices will be a major asset to the division and the department.”

Owen comes to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, where he has worked in various positions since 1978. For the past 11 years, he has served as the assistant chief of the commission's wildlife management division. In this position, he was responsible for field operations, including land management, technical guidance and wildlife diversity, and coordinated land acquisition for the division. Owen also worked with staff to develop operations policy and programs related to wildlife and forest management on land owned by the Wildlife Resources Commission and wildlife/forestry technical guidance to private landowners. Prior to that position, Owen served the commission for eight years as a wildlife forester, where he had forest management responsibilities on 65,000 acres of state-owned property and also provided technical guidance to private landowners through the Forest Stewardship Program.

Owen received a master's in wildlife biology and bachelor's degrees in forestry and recreation from N.C. State University.

A native North Carolinian, Owen grew up in Rowan County. He and his wife, Jodie, live in Garner and have three children.

###