

Brush Burning In Forests Does Not Conserve Water

Forest Service Man Refutes Belief Of Old-Timers

Recently at a meeting of the Chetco Rod & Gun Club, Marian Nance, of the Forest Service, refuted a remark that burning of underbrush in the forest, permitting the snow to settle solidly on the ground to prevent rapid melting. To go on record in this statement, and to have the same conveyed to the public, Mr. Nance wrote R. S. Perkins, giving his reasons for his remark. The letter reads:

Gold Beach, June 25, 1946

R. S. Perkins, president,
Chetco Rod & Gun Club,
Brookings, Oregon.

Dear Bob:

Reference is made to your fine letter of June 14—which would have answered earlier if we had not been at Rand Ranger Station attending our guard school during the past week.

Some of the old-timers contend that the Chetco River has fewer fish and less water today than formerly because so-called 'brush' is being allowed to grow in the back country forming this watershed. They feel that burning off the brush would remedy the situation, and they are undoubtedly sincere in their beliefs. However, they are wrong because their conclusions are based on false premises.

The old-timers claim that brush supports the snow, preventing its lying compactly on the ground and consequently allowing melting to proceed quickly instead of over a longer period of time. Runoff is rapid, the water is lower, and fish do not go up the river to spawn. However, let us look at a few of the facts:

It may be true (for a short time only) that the brush does hold snow away from the ground and hasten melting, but the condition to which they object would never have come into existence if the hills had not been burned the first time. Now, let us follow the chain of events a few links farther. The "brush" to which the objection is made if protected from fire will develop into oak and madrone trees in a few years, thus establishing conditions from one to five times more favorable to the retention of fallen snow (due to shade, principally) than bare burned hillsides. Furthermore, the young forests are open underneath and produce more acorns than the brush previously did. Remember too, that this natural reproduction of a stand of timber and the absorbent forest soils under it requires up to 100 years after a fire. And everyone, fisherman, hunter, recreationist, lumberman, and just plain citizens suffer from the loss during this re-building period.

The other very important aspect of the situation should not be overlooked. These forests, young and old, "brush" patches, and rocky ridges belong to everyone. The forest service simply administers them in an effort to produce the greatest good to the greatest number of people in the long run. Selfish interests have no place in this scheme. Consequently, the interests of communities and many individuals needing pure drinking water, forage for livestock, recreation, timber products, and many other less tangible forest assets far outweigh in importance any gains that might accrue to a few individuals for a very short time if the plant cover were burned off the hills.

To me it appears quite probable that the action taken previously—and now advocated by a few misguided enthusiasts -- namely, burning off the "brush", was responsible for the present state of affairs. Burning again can only make things worse, forcing the rebuilding process to start anew.

Another interesting sidelight on the number of fish in the river now and formerly is this. An article in last weeks paper indicated that other rivers (the Rogue, especially) are experiencing the same reduction in numbers of fish. The important difference, however, exists in the purported cause of this condition. The authority quoted in the paper stated that fewer fish are getting by the nets of offshore fishermen. Certainly there was no contention that the plant cover on the hills had any adverse effect on the situation.

Another matter I would like to take up with you is this. Since it is impossible for us to depend entirely upon the very small number (four guards regularly in the area from the Chetco River drainage south to the state line) of Forest Service employees even for initial action on fires, may we depend upon your club to act as sort of a clearing-house for emergency assistance in southern Curry County if we should have to have help quickly for fire suppression? It should not be too difficult to draw up for future reference a list of names of those who could help out for a few days, showing their qualifications, such as machine operator, truck driver, mechanic, blacksmith, timekeeper, cook, firefighting overhead, etc., or just plain firefighter. They will, of course, be paid for their service. Too, this is one activity your club could sponsor that would be to the advantage of every citizen in that part of the county.

Regarding recreation facilities, I have two suggestions to make. What do you think of your club sponsoring a drive for funds necessary to purchase the myrtlewood grove in the vicinity of Bruce Hole to be converted into a public recreation area? It should make an ideal spot.

Another suggestion is this: If your club members want me to do so, I'll be glad to arrange a "show-me" trip for any of them who wish to look into the recreation possibilities in the vicinity of Snow Camp. There are definite advantages of this nature in that area, particularly in the vicinity of Snow Camp Meadow and Alpine Glade. You folks could bring a lunch and meet me at the Pistol River store. From there we could go on together, visit a lookout or two, look over camp sites, observe a mining operation if you came, and return in the evening. Very truly yours, Marion Nance, district ranger.

PISTOL RIVER

Paul Hockema is vacationing with relatives at Salem, Portland and Medford, Oregon. He recently sold his sawmill to John Sshoff.

De Freville Hill has moved from Long Beach, Calif. He is the son of Mrs. H. Hunt.

Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Miller of Crescent City went clam digging Saturday morning. They spent the rest of the day visiting Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Raymond and Florence Book.

Mrs. Joe Mead's sister, Miriam Prather is here for a short visit. She has been in the W.A.A.C.s for two years. Her home is in Glendale, California.

Mr. and Mrs. O. B. Hoffman of Chicago, Illinois are here visiting Mr. and Mrs. H. Hunt.

Patsy Reeve of North Hollywood California is spending her summer vacation with her grandparents Mr. and Mrs. D. O. Scott. House guests of Mr. and Mrs.

W. A. Raymond Last week-end were Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Hull and sons, Mr. and Mrs. King, Mr. George Hull and son Ben, Mr. and Mrs. Bletchen, and Mr. Haye Bryn all of Grants Pass, Oregon. Martha Carpenter, Ray and Lenard of Bodego Bay have been visiting friends and relatives at Pistol River and Carpenterville. They formerly lived at Carpenterville.

Joseph T. Mead, Doris and Skip Barbeaum of Sekin, Wash. and Dorothy Owen of Grants Pass visited the Joe Mead family last week.

A bride shower was given for Doris Carpenter Saturday afternoon at her mothers home. A pot luck lunch was served and Doris received many lovely gifts.

Mrs. Ralph Walker was a visitor in Brookings last week.

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Local News Items

The men of the Baptist Community church sprung a surprise on their pastor, Rev. C. E. Dunham at the Sunday morning service. They presented him with a beautifully engraved gold Waltham watch.

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Vincent

and son, Jimmy, of Oswego week-end visitors here. Vincents will move here to make their home.

Mr. and Mrs. John Tworek, son, Rennie, of San Francisco are vacationing at the home of Mrs. Tworek's parents, Mr. Mrs. Dan Hassett of Harbor

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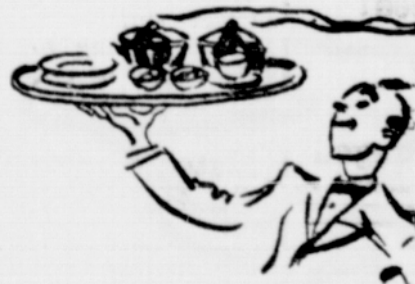
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