

PROTECTION OF OUR FORESTS EFFECTIVE

Agencies in Oregon Well Organized to Guard Timber Against Fire Demon.

LOSSES IN PAST GREAT

More Than 4,000,000 Acres of Trees Burned to Date—State, Federal and Private Interests in Close Co-operation.

BY HUGH HENRY.

The 1917 fire season witnessed the crucial test of Oregon's timber protection system.

Not only the exceptionally large number of fires, but United States weather bureau statistics, the fact that atmospheric conditions produced a partial crop failure and statements of old residents, generally, prove that no other fire season within the last 30 years constituted an equally dangerous hazard to Oregon's timber resources.

There were more than 3000 fires, or more than during 1915 and 1916 combined. The proportion of bad fires this last year also was much higher. During August, particularly, conditions were such that fires, unless confined, burned day and night in every direction. Humidity was so low that no high wind was needed to fan quickly a small blaze into dangerous proportions. Old residents assert that many destructive forest conflagrations of early days occurred during just such periods.

Forest Fires Destructive.

In this connection it may not be known generally that of the timber on 27,000,000 acres of Oregon's original forested area that on more than 4,000,000 acres has been destroyed by fire. In other words, more than one-tenth out of every eight, prior to the beginning of organized fire protection, had been removed from taxation and destroyed as an economic asset.

Assuming that the 4,000,000 acres of timber land destroyed in Oregon carried 25,000 feet per acre, the stumpage burned, if it had been manufactured and sold at \$15 per thousand, would be worth \$1,500,000,000.

Federal, state and private fire protection agencies this year, however, kept the timber loss down to a minimum. Generally speaking, the small amount of green timber destroyed was that adjacent to "old burns" which had been caused for the most part by the careless use of fire in past years.

Protection Agencies Effective.

In thus preserving timber threatened with destruction protection agencies perform a really important public service. Citizens of Oregon now generally realize the immense economic value of the state's forests and fully appreciate that even privately owned timber will provide a far larger financial return to the community than to its owners. Lumber production costs show that about 80 per cent of the value of lumber selling, for instance, at \$15 per thousand is paid to the community for labor, supplies, etc.

Those who, perchance, do not realize the amount of money brought into the state by the lumber industry will be interested to know that while Alaska's much-advertised gold output is annually about \$1,000,000, the value of Oregon's yearly lumber production is approximately \$30,000,000, or nearly twice as much.

Oregon's hop crop has been much discussed in prohibition camps. It would have to be increased from four to five times, depending upon prices, to equal the income from lumber. Oregon's fruit production is one-third that of lumber in point of value; while sheep yield one-seventh as much annually. The yearly salmon pack is worth \$2,000,000, or about one-fourth the amount received for our lumber.

Lumbering Greatest Industry. A leading banker says that every dollar of actual new money coming into the state is brought in by the lumber industry.

More than 100 sawmills now are in operation. Before the war 64 per cent of Oregon's 25,000 wage earners were employed directly or indirectly by the lumber industry. To put this differently, if Oregon's timber had been destroyed totally and no other employment provided for these men, two out of every three wage earners would have had to leave the state. It can-

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not be gainsaid that timber is Oregon's "meal ticket," if properly conserved. Residents of Oregon who consider the present and future welfare of the state realize, when looking at a burned-over area, that the acreage involved has never contributed through lumber production to the financial betterment of our people, and furthermore, unless reforested, never will be a source of such revenue.

Forest Code Is Aid.

As is the case with many reforms, however, a disaster was needed to awaken thoroughly public sentiment to the necessity of state effort and leadership in fire protection. The costly fires of 1910 did this, and the 1911

ests. The yearly state appropriation is \$27,000, while the United States forest service expends an average of not less than \$200,000. Congress this last year appropriated \$35,000 for the protection of the Oregon & California Railroad grant lands. From 250 to 300 paid patrolmen guard the timber wealth of Oregon during the danger season.

While expenditures are made throughout the state by Federal, state and private agencies as noted, there is no duplication of effort. To prevent this territory is exchanged wherever necessary and in numerous instances patrolmen are hired jointly by two and even three agencies. To the complete harmony which exists among the various patrol forces is due in a large

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Legislature promptly enacted a modern forest code, which since has been amended in several important particulars, as experience dictated. Necessary appropriations have been made by succeeding Legislatures. The success of fire-fighting efforts since the enactment of Oregon's forest code is due greatly to the foresight of the Legislatures of past years in fostering timber protective work.

The administration of the fire laws is entrusted to the state forester. While state appropriations have been quite generous, it is still impossible for him to employ the wardens to do this work properly, as is evidenced by the unusually large number of human agency fires the past season caused by carelessness or by ignorance of the danger involved in the use of fire.

The large number of fires of this character is convincing evidence that further amendments to the forest fire law are needed. Much needless expense and destruction of ranchhouses, barns, fences, timber and other property resulted this year, for instance, from lack of a provision that uncontrolled fires are a nuisance and must be extinguished thoroughly by the person responsible for such fires. Furthermore, wardens should be clothed with additional power to enforce reasonable rules to protect property adjacent to slashings or dangerous fires.

Protection Cost Large. Private timber owners individually and through 14 co-operative patrol associations spend annually from \$75,000 to \$150,000 in the protection of timber in the area outside the National For-

measure the success experienced during recent years in preventing destruction of timber by forest fires.

IDAHO HUSBAND FINDS WIFE

Mrs. Hicks Bishop Regains Memory at Lacrosse, Wis., Poor Farm.

HELENA, Mont., Dec. 31.—A La Crosse, Wis., dispatch to the Helena Independent says: Some time ago an unknown woman was committed to the poor farm here. Today she was recognized by Hicks Bishop, of Saultpoint, Idaho, as his wife, who had wandered away while suffering from a lapse of memory. Sight of her husband restored Mrs. Bishop's memory, and she immediately opened the lining of her skirt and took \$220 from it. They are on their way back to Idaho.

Bank's Capital Increased.

NORTH YAKIMA, Wash., Dec. 31.—(Special).—At a meeting Saturday of the directors of the Yakima National Bank the capital stock of the institution was increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000. The action of the directors will become effective as soon as approved formally by the Controller of the Currency. This formality already is assured.

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