

FIRES IN FORESTS UNDER CONTROL

Fighters in Western Washington Make Progress.

PRAYER IS FOR RAIN

Only Sousing Precipitation Can
Quench Embers and Rid Air
of Pall of Smoke.

PUGET SOUND BUREAU, Seattle, Wash., July 7.—The forest fires in western Washington are being brought under control. This does not mean that they are being put out—only a sousing rain can quench them and clear the air of the smoke that curtains the whole region from the heights of the Cascade foothills to the sea. But the fire-fighting forces have been making progress in the isolation of fire areas, and leaders in this work believe that there will be little if any further spread of flames unless an unusual and misdirected wind should spring up.

The efforts of the Washington Forest Fire association and the state forestry department have been chiefly directed to checking new and incipient flames and, on a larger scale, to ditching around fire areas so as to prevent the extension of the fires. Efforts to extinguish fires that have not going good are practically useless; but without the sweep of the wind it may be possible to hold the fires within limits, letting them burn on until the rain comes. This is the best hope in the present situation; it gives no indication of relief from the smoke pall, but affords all possible assurance against enlargement of the fire damage.

Standing Timber Protected.

By this means the standing timber in western Washington has been protected so far this season. Contrary to popular belief, the fire fighters report that little harm has been done to merchantable timber. The worst of the fires have raged on lands that had previously been burned over and in timber already listed as "killed." The loss in second growth has been considerable, and a good deal of logging equipment has been destroyed. The aggregate loss to date, however, is said not to be very heavy by comparison with losses in earlier years. Certainly the loss does not measure up to atmospheric appearances

which would indicate that all western Washington was in flames. Governor Hart's appeal for cessation of all logging operations was not at first received with favor among the loggers, who said that they would have to keep full crews in their camps for fire protection and that the fire hazard would not be materially increased by continuing work as usual. The governor's appeal was based on the report of fire-fighting officials that the majority of this year's fires were incidentally due to logging operations. Some of these fires have been said to be of such purely accidental origin that proper measures for prevention could not have been applied.

Instances Are Cited.

Two or three cited instances of this kind are interesting: All donkey engines in the woods have spark arresters. In one case a good sized spark broke through the mesh of the arrester, landed at a point about 30 above ground in a dead and charred tree some distance away and began to blaze. The logging crew stopped all other work and started to cut the tree down—there was no other way of reaching the blaze; but before this could be done the flames had leaped to other trees and gone raging on their way high above the heads of the men. In another case an engine spark arrester got clogged and the draft was impeded. One of the workmen tapped the arrester sharply with a stick to clear it, when the whole contraption fell off and the sparks came out with a rush, starting a brisk fire that was soon beyond control. In another camp the workmen tell how friction between links of a heavy log chain sent off a spark that set a fire going.

Such are some of the stories that are told to investigators. They are usually accepted as accurate, chiefly for the reason that carelessness in logging operations in such an extremely dry season is almost inconceivable. The loggers themselves are the first and heaviest losers whenever a fire gets well started. Officers of some of the big logging concerns have come around more to Governor Hart's point of view with in the last day or so, and there is more willing talk of suspending work if the dry spell should be protracted for another week or if new fires should break out in the vicinity of the larger camps.

"Set" Fires Discovered.

Investigators of the Washington Forest Fire association have discovered evidence of fires "set" by incendiaries in several cases. In one locality two "set" fires were put out before any great damage had been done, but a third fire was started and was soon out of control. This is said to have been a favorite trick of the "wobblers," who would set fires in order to get work at good hourly pay in fighting them. Whether these latest incendiary fires were started for such a purpose or in idle malice has not been determined.

In addition to the accidental and incendiary fires in the vicinity of logging camps, the burning of slashings is another major cause of this season's trouble. For fires that have spread from slashings everyone



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blames the weather. It is unlawful to start a slash fire in this state between May 1 and October 1 without a special permit; but permits have always been generally granted throughout May, with reliance on certain rains in June. This practice was followed this year, but June brought no rains.

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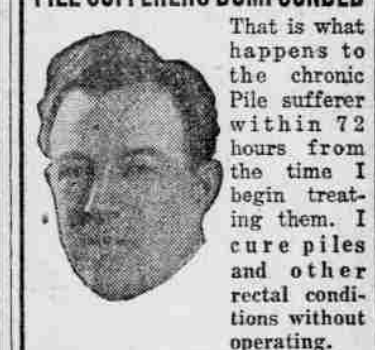


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