

Our area's number one industry sharpens its axe



Ponderosa forests provide timber for lumber mills

By Phil F. Brogan
Bulletin Staff Writer

Central Oregon's top industry is sharpening its axe. That industry is lumbering. It is No. 1 in a region bounded by national forests, the Deschutes, Ochoco and Fremont.

It is an industry that seasonally employs some 3,500 persons in the three Mid-Oregon counties, Crook, Jefferson and Deschutes, and adjacent parts of Klamath, Lake and Grant.

However, it is an industry in which the dollar does not turn as easily as it did in earlier years.

Logging and milling costs are mounting. Price of stumpage is high. Equipment charges are increasing. New products furnish tough competition.

Mill management finds it necessary to trim costs, or step out of the picture. To make ends meet and provide the necessary margin of profit, new innovations are being introduced, new methods adopted, new forest practices tried.

In all these efforts to trim the dollar costs, the great need for accelerated forest research stands out.

Research need is accentuated under the sustained yield program. Only a certain amount of timber can be cut annually on a federal forest. It is up to the millmen to make the best of the stumpage available.

Incidentally, the sustained yield picture of the 1,587,695-acre Deschutes National Forest is bright. The allowable cut at present is 136,000,000 board feet.

Thirty years from now, and far beyond those three decades, the allowable cut should be the same, foresters say.

But in the meantime there will

be an increased demand for forest products.

Population growth will require doubling timber production before many years, and will greatly accentuate the need for improved management practices.

It will also mean that the entire tree be utilized—wood, bark, foliage and chemical extractives, with lumber under one roof from the time a log enters from the mill pond until the product is loaded aboard railroad cars, but salvage of some of the waste of earlier years.

This salvage operation includes

the shipment of former waste to a pulp plant in Washington.

One of these modern plants is the big Brooks-Scanlon, inc., operation in Bend. Several years ago it modernized its Bend plant at a cost of several million dollars.

A system of modern logging roads has been provided. Over these forest routes rolls a fleet of trucks.

Also in use in the woods is equipment that would have amazed loggers of the high-wheel era, and of the days when teams snaked logs out of the hills.

New methods have not only

reduced costs, but they have expedited operations.

Logging trucks and roads have made possible the salvage of huge amounts of timber that would have been lost a decade or so back. Consider the Aspen Butte fire of four years ago.

That fire blazed through nearly 20,000 acres of timber. It killed trees holding millions of board feet of lumber. To save that timber, quick salvage was necessary.

A salvage sale was arranged, the fire-scarred trees were felled and moved to the Tite-Knot plant in Redmond through use of a fleet

of trucks.

Timber that would have been lost was saved. The economic picture of the area was helped.

Machinery developed in recent years has made possible the logging of areas by-passed in earlier decades because of its inaccessibility. That timber was not even included in the area's earlier economic picture.

What of the future of the lumber industry in Central Oregon? In some parts of the area there may be some dark spots, but generally the future looks good.

Research, now gaining strides,

is the key to the future.

The day is rapidly nearing, timber scientists say, when the entire tree will be utilized. That will include wood, bark, chemical extractives and even foliage.

Already timbermen are taking an inventory of old stumps covering areas logged in a century or more. Those stumps hold resins which are increasing in demand and value as southern sources diminish.

A test of Deschutes resins, stored in stumps nearly half a century old in places, was made several years ago. The stumps were harvested just east of Lave Butte south of Bend and shipped to a Klamath Falls pilot plant. Available information indicates that the yield of resin from the Deschutes stumps was high.

Researchers also recognized the great need for more work on the control of insects and diseases that destroy billions of board feet of timber each year in the western states.

However, the timber loss from such sources is not as high as in earlier years. It is now possible quickly to move into a bug-kill area and remove the trees, just as it is possible to get fire-killed timber to the mills.

Improved access is the factor that makes salvage of bug-killed timber possible.

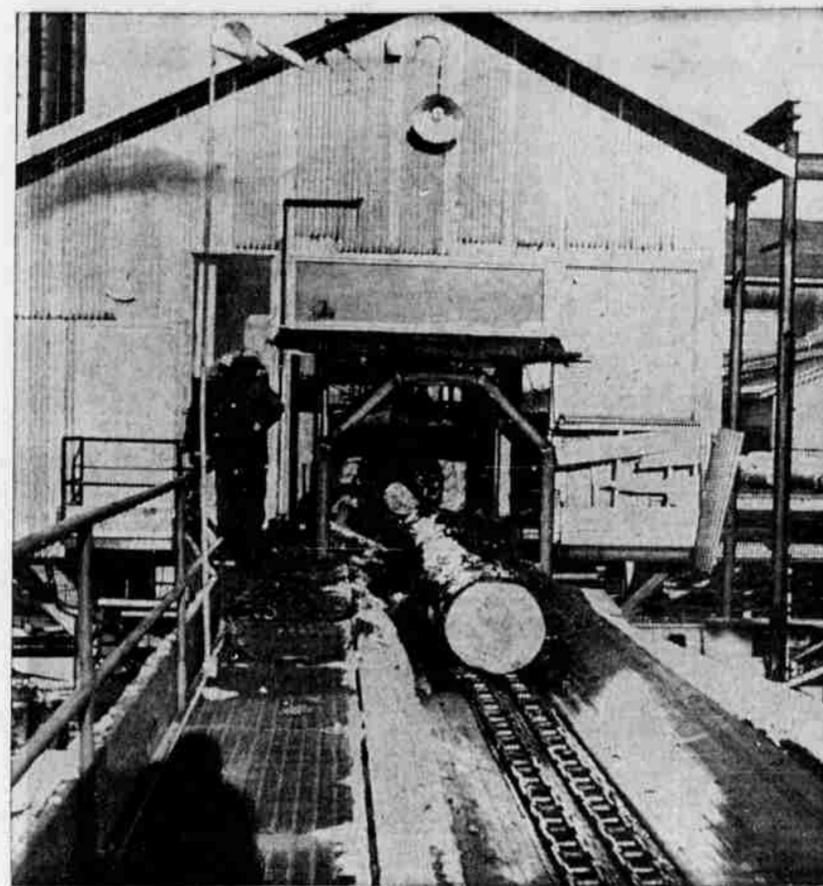
Forest product research is not confined to the growing of more timber, the full utilization of timber now available and the protection of woodlands from insects and fire.

Research now includes work on promotion of wood for new and different structural purposes; investigations to find uses of the potentially valuable quarter ton of bark that is harvested along with each thousand board feet of logs; residue utilization including composition board and pulp, seasoning studies and other items.

Current investigation in forest management is concentrated around forest regeneration and new growth management.

Near Bend is a pine nursery which seasonally produces millions of tiny trees, for use locally and in other forests of the Pacific Northwest. Replanting of burned-over areas is being speeded.

Central Oregon federal woods are managed jointly for wood, wildlife, water and recreation. All are vitally important to the area.



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