

Philippine Forest Concessions

WHILE there are 200,000,000,000 board feet or merchantable lumber standing on the 60,000 square miles of Philippine public forests, in 1913 there were milled the small total of 80,000,000 feet, of which less than one-eighth was exported. Major Ahera, the insular director of forestry, believes there is an export market awaiting the establishment of milling enterprises, which would take 300,000,000 feet yearly, mainly of four woods—lauan, apitong, guipo and yacal. These trees grow to a very large size, a large number are found on a limited area and their extraction affords an attractive enterprise for a modern logging and milling operation.

These public forest lands in the Philippines are not sold, but are developed under a license system. Yearly licenses are ordinarily given small operators for limited areas. The larger tracts are offered in the form of 20-year exclusive licenses, which provide for the removal of timber and minor forest products without affecting the title to the land.

At present 11 such exclusive licenses, popularly called concessions, are in operation, representing American, British, Chinese, German, Spanish and Filipino capital. A recent timber concession was granted to a Chinese company that will find no difficulty in disposing of its products through its connections in China, while the British and German interests find their markets for Philippine woods in India and Europe, as well as in China.

The United States Forest Bureau now has available a number of tracts, ranging in size from 35 to 300 squares miles, with one or two of much larger size, awaiting applications.

Aid to Investigators.

A person considering such an investment is afforded every opportunity for investigation. The Bureau of Forestry desires each applicant or his authorized representative to visit the tract personally in company with one of the foresters, or that he have an experienced lumberman do so, in order that he may see the stand of timber, the facilities for haulage and transportation, the location of mill sites, and ascertain for himself the local labor supply.

The concessions themselves cost nothing; the charges being in the form of stumpage fees, payable upon removal of the product, and running from \$1 to \$5 per thousand feet. When an application, complying at least with the minimum requirements as to the size of the mill and the annual output, has been received, the tract is advertised for a period of four months. In awarding the concession preference is given to the bidder offering to install the most complete and effective plant and giving the best security for performance.

Capacity of Mills.

The concessions are given for tracts large in proportion to the capacity of the mills installed, in order that the future condition of the forest will not suffer. The amount of the annual production stipulated takes into consideration both the present amount of over-mature timber and the amount annually maturing, and in other ways the regulations seek to conserve the forest wealth while rendering available the mature timber with the fewest possible restrictions.

One of the important elements is sufficient capital to install machinery capable of handling the large hardwood logs, for which some of the earlier plants proved hardly adequate, and to permit a proper seasoning of the product. The Philippine Government requires that the concessionaire give a very modest security in proportion to the amount of raw material placed at his disposition.

Certified Check Required.

When a bid is submitted, a deposit of a certified check, usually for \$5,000, is required, and then after the award is made, the equipment on the ground and the concessionaire about to begin operations, the certified check may be replaced by a satisfactory form of bond.

One of the important functions of the insular Bureau of Forestry is that of making available to investors the fullest information, and lumber men visiting the islands will not only secure general data from its headquarters at Manila, but will supplement this in the various localities by the co-operation of the forestry men in the field.

The Bureau of Insular Affairs at Washington has general descriptions and maps showing the location of a number of the tracts available, which will furnish preliminary data to those who may be in a position to be interested in developing this most promising field for hardwood lumber.

Protecting the Forests

WHILE community interest in preventing loss of lives and resources through forest fires has been pretty well taught in recent years, and most people also know that fires in the Pacific Northwest have been greatly reduced by organized patrol systems, few realize the extent of the machinery maintained every Summer by the various protective agencies. An army of fully 2000 trained forest firemen is employed in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana throughout the most dangerous months, besides many men serving voluntarily in connection with other duties and emergency labor hired on large fires.

Of this regular patrol force, the majority is employed by timber owners' patrol associations and by the Government on the national forests. The Gov-

ernment also contributes about \$30,000 a year to the states mentioned to assist in protecting the headwaters of navigable streams outside the national forests, which, with the state appropriations, provides nearly 200 men under state control.

In the beginning of this movement a few years ago, patrol and fire fighting were the only considerations. It soon became apparent that here, as in any business, proper equipment and system add to both economy and efficiency. Rapid development is being made of facilities for finding and handling fires. Thousands of miles of trail and telephone lines have been constructed, special tools invented, and men trained as specialists in different lines of fire preventing and control. For example the burning of logging slashings, to remove hazard later, is largely entrusted to men with particular experience in this line.

Among the most interesting developments is that of lookout stations on high peaks, where men have no other duty than to locate the first signs of fire by means of special instruments and telephone the exact bearing to headquarters from which instructions are sent for its control. Cross-bearings reported from different lookouts are intersected on the map so the fire can be located with great exactness, however distant. This year experiments are being made with forecasts of dangerous dry winds, telegraphed forest officials by the Weather Bureau, so every

precaution may be taken before their arrival.

These perfections in the modern science of forest fire prevention are saving the people of the Northwestern states millions of dollars annually in resources, property and lives, and their cost is insignificant when regarded as insurance. They are, however, less important than care not to start fires in the first place and the greatest contribution is made by the settler who is careful in burning slash, the camper who puts out his fire before leaving, the smoker who never drops burning matches or tobacco, and the logger or railroad who keeps spark screens in good repair.

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