

Chief Forester Advocates Adding To Federal Forests

WASHINGTON, Dec. 17 (AP)—Instead of decreasing its forest holdings, as is often suggested, the federal government could advantageously acquire an additional 75,000,000 acres, says Leon F. Kneipp, assistant chief forester.

Kneipp is retiring from government service at the end of this year after 47 years of continuous service, during the last 20 of which he has been in charge of land purchases for the forest service.

He challenges the view that timber land purchases have seriously depleted local tax revenues. The government has acquired through purchase, trade or donation, about 22,000,000 acres.

"Major circumstances," he told a reporter, "indicate that of the forest lands now in private ownership, approximately 133,000,000 acres should be acquired by public agencies; 8,000,000 acres by municipalities, 50,000,000 acres by the states and 75,000,000 acres for national forests."

"All federal acquisitions by purchase and exchange," Kneipp told a reporter, "have been through agreement with the land owners, hence it can be assumed that the agreed values were the highest that could be realized and represent the full worth of the properties at the time they were acquired."

"On that premise, the total value withdrawn from taxation through federal acquisition has been \$88,467,398.

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seems to be that, if the lands were relinquished they would at once be devoted to productive uses by private enterprise, would become taxable and would contribute their equitable share to the costs of local government.

He described that premise as "distinctly vulnerable."

In the western states, he said, there are 154,000,000 acres on which the annual precipitation is less than 10 inches and 589,000,000 acres on which it is between 10 and 20 inches.

"The impracticability of farming where the minimum precipitation is less than 15 inches has been frequently and tragically demonstrated," he observed.

The reclamation bureau, he said, estimated that only about 20,000,000 acres more can be irrigated.

Furthermore, he added, "a lot" of land under federal ownership lies in 12 western states above 8000 or 9000 feet elevation, where its productive capacity is "negligible."

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