Timber Conservation Plays Vital Role In Klamath's Economy

By TED DURMENT
Weyerhaeuser Timber Company

In something under 20 years, popular thinking about forest conservation has changed radically. Time was when conservation was not even considered, since timber was cheap, known to be uneconomical to protect, and was often in the way of settlers who preferred to farm edible crops.

Early in the century a few far seeing individuals began to see that something in the way of conservation must be done to protect the forest against the ravages of time, man, and disease. There was a growing feeling that in time timber would be depleted. Fire, rapid cutting without consideration of regrowth, and uncontrolled insect damage were among the problems. Not much money could be expended on these problems—timber values were low and to extend any but small sums on protection was throwing good money after bad.

As early as 1908 local timber owners organized for protection against fire, and by 1910 owners in both Lake and Klamath counties had joined for this purpose. In 1911 Oregon law made fire protection compulsory.

At the time Weyerhaeuser Timber Company's operation began (1930) at Klamath Falls, forests were protected from fire by methods best known to that day. Communications were by telephone instead of radio; railroad tank cars of water were used almost exclusively instead of the more modern and mobile tank trucks of today. Roads were neither so numerous nor accessible.

Yet another fire problem remained, that of public support. How successful modern protection has become is due to public understanding. Gaining of this understanding has taken time. The necessity of being careful with camp fires, matches, cigarettes, and unrestricted burning has been forcefully brought home to the man in the street through Keep (Your State) Green organizations.

Protection against fire is, however, but one facet of the broad concept of forest conservation. Selective logging and sustained yield have become identified in the public mind with modern forestry. In 1930 selective logging as practiced at Weyerhaeuser's local branch was confined largely to leaving standing trees under 10 inches in diameter. Today selective logging is done by actual marking of trees to be cut with a view to leaving a percentage of healthy trees to restock the land and at the same time remove mature trees and unhealthy ones.

In 1940 a professional forester was charged with the task of developing a permanent staff, and under his direction to apply the best forest practices known. The charge is valid today for still newer and better forest management methods are now known and forestry is not static. Along with the progress made locally, foresters throughout the nation have continuously discovered better practices, and with methods tried, proved, or discarded according to local circumstances, the public has been made aware of the desirability and necessity of forest conservation.

Probably the foremost reason for this awareness has been the establishment of Tree Farms—privately owned timber lands managed to protect the forests against fire, disease, insects, destructive grazing and to practice methods tending to improve the growth of the timber stand. The Tree Farm system of private timberland management had its inception on the West Coast in 1941 when a small town editor offered "Tree Farm" to a lumber industry seeking a better way of telling its forest management story to the public. Today there are 14,073 Tree Farms in 46 states covering over 48 million acres.

The acceptance of the Tree Farm principle has been due largely to the appeal of the term itself. It was something which captured the imagination of people—they could pin it down in their minds without thinking of the less understood "forest management" and "silvaculture." They could picture, over a long term, a succession of crops, and they could visualize the role of the private timber owner who was harvesting regularly and paying taxes

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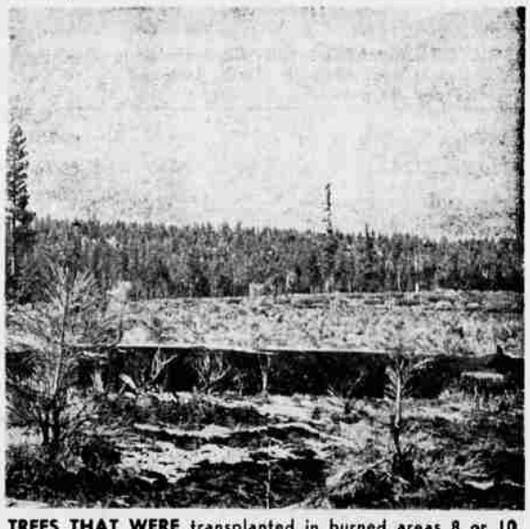
CRUISING by use of a prism is shown by foresters George Kilen and Fred Gerhke, both of Weyerhaeuser Timber Company, is one method of determining volume within given years. —WTC Photo

NURSERIES RAISE PINE TREES from seed. Two-year-old seedlings are planted in burned areas where natural reproduction cannot take place. —WTC Photo



TREES THAT WERE transplanted in burned areas 8 or 10 years ago are visible in foreground. Trees in background are of all ages and are from natural reseeding following selective logging. —WTC Photo

FORESTERS sometimes plant seed directly on burned areas. Problem here is that survival may not be high because of rodents which eat seed and because the sun may become too hot. —WTC Photo

DATA ABOUT TREE GROWTH, timber volume, soils, terrain and much other pertinent information is gathered by IBM machines. The assembled material being recorded here is looked over by WTC Branch Forester Tom Orr. —WTC Photo