



LOOKING LIKE A PAUL BUNYAN SIZED CORNFIELD, this thicket of small stagnated pine trees on the 2,500-acre tree farm of John Collins, Mitchell, was thinned by bulldozing evenly spaced lanes through the overcrowded

stand. The unusual thinning operation has produced a new spurt of growth in such once-dense thickets. Collins harvests mature timber in the back-ground on a selective basis.

—AFPI Photo

Thinning Pays Off For Ranch In Ochoco Area

MITCHELL (Special) — A tree farmer near Mitchell is experimenting with an idea for thinning dense pine thickets that may revolutionize pine management.

John Collins has several hundred acres of scrawny, stagnated pine trees so dense that their growth has practically stopped. To get the most thinning the quickest way at the lowest cost, he has gone to work on his woods with a bulldozer.

The results are proving to be nothing short of phenomenal.

Some of the trees in Collins' suppressed stands are 45 to 50 years old, though his fingers touch when he cups his hand around their skinny trunks. The thickets — so dense they look like "dog hair" — need thinning out like a carrot patch in order to get growth going again.

Clearing right-of-way for a fence line five years ago, he ran his bulldozer through one thicket. The trees he toppled ever made more room for those that remained, and they soon showed a spurt in growth.

"Within the next couple of years, the response in growth really showed up on trees close to the edge of the swath," he said.

Today, some of these "released" trees are growing 400 to 500 per cent faster than before.

Broadening his experiment a little each year, Collins has now cut parallel lanes through some 100 acres or so of "dog hair." From the air the regular rows of trees look like a Paul Bunyan-size cornfield.

"I'm taking out about 75 per cent of the trees in these thick patches," he explained. "I'll still have to come back and thin out the poorest ones of those that remain, but the big part of the job

will have been done. And meanwhile, those pines are getting a little more 'breathing room.'"

How to thin his trees economically is a big question for Collins, a rancher-tree farmer who has some 2,500 acres of trees on his 5,000-acre spread. While thinning with a power saw would cost some \$35 an acre or more, Collins estimates that his effective bulldozer technique costs only about \$4 or so.

"They say the Indians used to burn this pine country regularly to drive game and to open up game pastures," he said. "It was crude game management and cruder forestry, but fire had the effect of thinning out the trees. Those that survived had ample growing room."

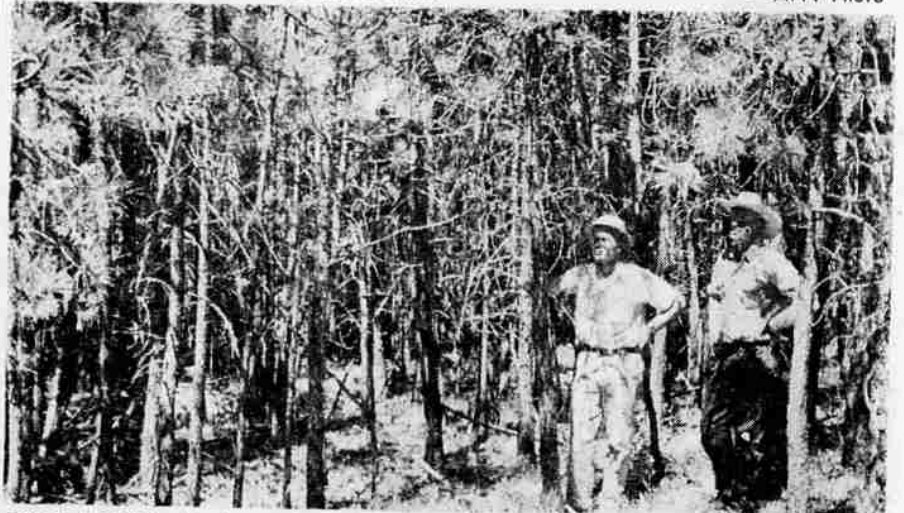
All that changed with the coming of the white man, Collins points out. Forest fires are being held to a minimum, but markets haven't yet reached the point where many landowners can afford to thin their young reproduction economically by standard methods.

"If we're not going to manage the forests the way nature and the Indians did, we're going to have to find a way of thinning trees mechanically," he declared.

Collins figures his bulldozer trails provide several advantages.

"The trees are not only getting more light and moisture, but those alongside the swath I cut get pretty well pruned," he observed. "The trails create a firebreak effect and they'll make excellent skid trails when this timber matures and is ready for harvesting."

"The down trees also help to protect the grass that is getting a start in the cleared strips. There isn't used to be much grass in those dense thickets, but eventually this land will support both



"DOG HAIR" is the forester's term for overcrowded thickets of trees whose growth has stagnated from lack of room. Here such a stand is inspected by Gail Thomas, left, forester for Western Pine Association, and John Collins, Mitchell rancher, on whose property the stand is located. Collins is thinning experimentally on such plots by cutting lanes through the trees with a bulldozer.

—AFPI Photo



NATURE'S WAY of "thinning" the forests is shown to Gail Thomas, left, forester for Western Pine Association, by tree farmer John Collins of Mitchell, Oregon. Collins suffered an 80-acre lightning fire in dense thicket of overcrowded pines. Collins is thinning such thickets as this on his 2,500-acre spread by bulldozing evenly spaced lanes through the trees.

—AFPI Photo

timber and cattle."

Collins, his pretty wife, Sherla, and their teen-age daughters, Patricia and Barbara, have lived on the ranch for some 12 years. Their timberlands were inspected in 1955

by Gail Thomas, district forester

(Continued on Page 3)