

Sub-Committee Outlines Best Timber Land Use

The following report of a sub-committee on land use, as prepared by the committee of which Glen Hawkins is chairman, tells a good many details about so much of Columbia county land which is best suited for the growing of timber. The report was presented last Friday at the Outlook Conference in St. Helens. The report is worthy of presentation here.

INTRODUCTION

Logging on a liquidation basis in any county having a large stand of virgin timber has always ended in maladjustment of the county economy. The "cut out and get out" policy inevitably results in reduced income to the citizens, a migrant population and a threat to the solvency of the government through the reduction of the tax base.

The return to the highroad of financial solvency on a basis comparable to that enjoyed during the era of a vast storehouse

of timber is a condition that cannot be achieved overnight. In fact, log production and resulting prosperity enjoyed during the heyday of liquidation will never return. Liquidation was overcutting and the prosperity resulting therefrom was transitory. The land does not have the capacity of continued forest production equivalent to early day logging. There must be a proper balance between the growth and the harvest. This is the ideal to be achieved but it requires time. Forest growth is a slow process.

Certain land programs and policies have been established which, if followed, will grow in importance as the years go by and the result will be a gradual betterment in the welfare of the people of the county. Continued adherence to a definite and progressive forest policy is necessary to improve the balance between the human and physical resources of the county.

HISTORY

Prior to the turn of the century Columbia county was almost completely covered with high quality timber. Rail and water transportation and manufacturing plants within a radius of a few miles, placed the county in a strategic position in log production. Some of the earliest logging in the Oregon country was in Columbia county. The county saw the transition from the old hand logging through the ox team, donkey engines and railroad transportation into the modern caterpillar logging and truck transportation. This was the period of timber liquidation which resulted in abandoned lands, tax delinquencies and a threat to financial insolvency in governmental activities.

Columbia county, through the force of circumstances, has gone through a period of readjustment. It has been faced with critical financial situations but has succeeded. The era of timber liquidation has ended. Forestry in the county now becomes forestry of the future for it is a county of second growth timber of varying ages. Future forestry income lies in second growth. Whether this income is

to be stable or transitory depends upon the forest land owner and the public agencies. The future looks bright for forests are now regarded as a crop and are being so managed.

LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERN

The history of the land ownership pattern in Columbia county is similar in many respects to that of all counties which at one time contained a larger amount of merchantable timber. In the early days nearly all forest land was in private ownership, but coincident with logging came land abandonment, continuing on an ever increasing scale as logging progressed. During the late 30's the county found itself the owner of large areas of forest land. But by the beginning of the present decade a change became apparent. An active market developed for lands carrying a stand of merchantable or near-merchantable second growth. By degrees this market expanded to include all classes of forest land. These new purchasers were in forestry on a permanent basis. Thus came about one of the essentials of modern forestry—stabilized land ownership.

It is unlikely that the county will again be the owner of any large acreage of forest land but some tracts of limited area may pass to county ownership. There should therefore, be some policy relative to the disposal or management of these lands. The county has three courses which it might follow. These include (1) sale to private individuals or to companies, (2) retention in county ownership and (3) transfer of title to the state forestry department.

Private Ownership. It is recognized that private ownership is most desirable. Sales should be made on the best terms possible from the county standpoint and only under conditions which give reasonable assurance that such lands are to be dedicated to permanent forest production.

County Ownership. The county may decide to retain title to lands because of location, lack of available purchasers, a desire to cooperate in a timber management program, recreation, watershed protection, experimental areas or some other reason. Whenever the county decides to hold forest land on a permanent basis, such forests should be dedicated as county forests by county court action. The lands cannot then be alienated without a vote of the people.

State Ownership. Where the county does not desire to retain title to those lands that will not go into private ownership, such lands may be dedicated to the state of Oregon for the use and benefit of its board of forestry. The state accepts the responsibility of protection and administration and returns 75 per cent of the gross income to the county at the time of logging.

In a discussion of the land ownership pattern, mention should be made of the desirability of publicly owned watersheds. Title may rest with the municipality, county or state, providing the area is primarily and permanently dedicated to the use of the municipality. Where such areas have not already been acquired, action should be taken as soon as possible.

PROBLEMS OF LAND USE
The problem facing Columbia county in land use is the allocation of lands according to their adaptability to farming, grazing forestry, industrial and recreational sites.

Twelve per cent or 50,000 acres of Columbia county is improved farm land, from which the farmer is receiving a part or all of his income.

Eighty seven per cent or 362,000 acres of Columbia county are potential timber forest lands. From these facts it is evident that Columbia county's economic future is going to be dependent to a large extent on the efficient development by individual and private industry of these potential timber growing lands.

The growing of timber is no longer a hit or miss affair; it has become a scientific operation the same as dirt farming. With the passing of the large virgin timbered areas, we have seen the rise of technical forestry and the technical forester has become the tree farmer of our acquaintance. His problems and the problems of the dirt farmer are much the same. He is affected by winds, rain, drought, and fire.

Scientific experiments have shown that grazing can be an integral part of tree farming. The results of grazing cattle and horses have been very good, on the other hand, tests have shown, unfortunately, that sheep and goats are harmful to a new forest crop.

Much planning is needed before a decision is made on which lands should be set aside for the growing of timber. Economic forest management requires the forest area to be in a comparatively large block as free from broken small ownerships as possible. When it is necessary to settle within a forest area the location should be picked for its accessibility by roads, power and transportation. Isolated settlement can become an expensive venture to local as well as county budgets through the added expense of long school bus runs, added road costs, etc.

REFORESTATION
Reforestation in Columbia county is a minor problem. The soil conditions, topography and climate are ideal for the growing of timber. Practically all of the timber growing acreage is restocked with very minor acreage that will need replanting. This county is recognized as the finest timber growing county in the

State of Oregon. The productive capacity of its lands are exceptionally good with slightly more than ninety per cent the acreage being Site II and Site III and Site V or the poorest growing conditions.

MANAGEMENT

Since Columbia county and private industry are the largest owners of timber growing acreage it is only natural that the farm woodlot and small land owner will look to them for advice and help in the proper development of their wood lands.

Private industry is approaching the tree farm development in a scientific manner. Roads are being built into even the remotest areas, the idea being to be able to drive to within fifteen hundred feet of any location. These roads are a permanent installation that will be maintained perpetually. Fire trails are being built as a precautionary measure. Telephone lines are being installed so that service may be had from any area.

Salvage logging operations are following the big logging shows, harvesting pulpwood, shingle bolts, and short merchantable logs. This is not only a source of revenue but it is also a precautionary measure, reducing future fire hazards by clearing the ground of inflammable debris.

In the larger stands of second growth thinning operations are being carried on, selectively. This cleans up the forest and gives the remaining timber a chance to expand much faster.

The county owned lands are not getting the attention due an asset of their potential value. The more accessible stands are being disposed of. The usual procedure is a slashing of the area for the pulpwood or tie timber it contains, leaving a dangerous slash as a menace to remaining stands and the denuded land reverting back to county ownership.

Any county so dependent on timber resources for its economic well being should study its problem scientifically and set up a program for the development of county owned lands which will be a source of income perpetually and an example of efficient management to the small land owner. This will mean the installation of trained foresters but the ultimate returns justify the expense.

MARKETS

We are particularly fortunate in Columbia county from a marketing standpoint for our timber products. There is already located in the county one of the largest pulp and paper mills of the northwest. Our vast water frontage and main line railroad systems give us a ready outlet for our timber products.

PROTECTION

The primary requirement of any forest program as a standard of protection whereby there is reasonable assurance that fire losses will be reduced to a point

upon the productiveness of the forests or any of its uses, either where they will have little effect economical or social, that contributes to the welfare of mankind. Adequate fire protection depends upon a number of factors and includes effective laws and intelligent administration; adequate finances; cooperation of land owners, operators and public agencies, and recognition and acceptance on the part of the public of its responsibility in a state forestry program. The sub-committee desires to emphasize the following points:

1. Endorsement of centralized administration of forestry activities in order to definitely fix responsibility for protection and suppression. The state is to be commended upon taking direct administrative charge of protection in Northwest Oregon.

2. We strongly urge that the state legislature carefully consider the needs of forest protection in the state as well as the county and make adequate provisions for financing a strong state forestry organization.

3. Public education in forestry matters is an essential part

of all forestry. The Keep Oregon Green association has been accomplishing outstanding results along these lines and the work should be continued.

4. Close cooperation between the forestry agencies and the farmers in order that the latter may suffer little inconvenience and unnecessary expense in land clearing, consistent with good protection practices.

Columbia county owns several good park sites which should be improved and publicized so they can be found and enjoyed.

Picnic spots are being improved along the Nehalem by the Grange and private industry and will be available to the public use.

RHEUMATISM and ARTHRITIS

I suffered for years and am so thankful that I found relief from this terrible affliction that I will gladly answer anyone writing me for information. Mrs. Anna Pautz, P. O. Box 825, Vancouver, Wash. Adv. tf

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