

JOHN WEEKS--HIS MONUMENT

By Richard E. McArdle, Chief, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, at Annual Conference of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, Crawford House, N.H., October 6, 1961. (Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Weeks Act.)

When I was a student in forestry school the Weeks Law was only about 10 years old, but it was one of the legislative enactments we were required to know about in some detail. I never dreamed then that someday--tonight--I would have this opportunity to pay my respects to its author.

As you have arranged your program, others with first-hand knowledge have told you of events leading up to enactment of the Weeks Law. It remains for me very briefly to report to you on accomplishments made under its authority.

These achievements have been substantial. There are people here tonight who can take a lot of solid satisfaction in what has been done and in what will still be done in the years ahead. For, as we all know, though Mr. Weeks steered this significant legislation through Congress, many others had a large part in designing and enacting it into law.

The Weeks Law is farsighted legislation in natural-resource conservation. Its concepts and programs have stood the tests of time--half a century of time. The programs started by this law have grown and spread across the Nation. It is one of those laws on which major national programs have been built--programs that have endured over many years.

No one in the Forest Service refers to "The Act of March 1, 1911 (36 Stat. 961)." With us it has always been simply "The Weeks Law." This is our way of honoring the memory of a man who accomplished much for forest conservation.

I doubt if John Weeks himself ever sought a memorial of any kind. The people of this part of the country characteristically are more concerned with getting any necessary job done than they are with building monuments to themselves. Yet what a monument he left! His memorial is all around us, written across the face of the land, North, East, South, and West.

It is here in the colorful White Mountain National Forest of New Hampshire--Weeks Law land, every acre. Out in California, some 3,000 miles away, there is a magnificent 14,000-acre, one-billion-board foot redwood forest--a forest saved for all the people under authority of the Weeks Law. In Minnesota, in the Superior National Forest, you'll find a living memorial in the Boundary Waters Canoe

Area--nearly a million acres of forest with sparkling lakes and streams, unique among all public forest lands, and almost all of it acquired under the Weeks Law. In the Appalachians, in the Deep South, in more than two-score States, there are National Forest areas established or substantially increased by authority of the Weeks Law. Although most National Forests were created from the public domain, some 20 million acres of these public properties were purchased or otherwise acquired because John Weeks' law made it possible to do so.

The Weeks Law made it possible to begin still another forestry program of national significance. The three major responsibilities of the Forest Service are National Forest administration, research, and State and private forestry cooperation. I've told you how the Weeks Law has profoundly affected one of these three major activities--the National Forests. The Weeks Law also started cooperation in forestry between Federal and State governments. We now carry on this cooperation under authority of several other laws. But the Weeks Law started it.

One of the provisions of the Weeks Law is authority for the Secretary of Agriculture to cooperate with appropriate agencies of State governments in the prevention and control of fire on privately owned forest land. Back in 1911 only 11 States had any semblance of organized protection against the ravages of forest fire. Total State expenditures for this purpose were then only about \$200,000. Today, 48 States and the Forest Service cooperate in prevention and control of fires, and State expenditures alone are in excess of \$47 million.

Back there in 1911 State agencies had only about 61 million acres under some form of organized protection against fire. By 1960 the area under organized protection by State agencies had been increased to 403 million acres. Only 32 million acres remain to be included in the protected area. Total acreage burned each year has been substantially reduced, and this accomplishment is even more impressive when we remember that today there are many millions more people in the woods and consequently millions more chances for fires to get started.

I'm sure that all State governments sooner or later would have established some kind of forest fire control organizations. But I'm equally certain that most foresters believe the Federal-State cooperative program tremendously speeded up the process of getting organized. And I'm just as certain in my own mind we'd agree that many an acre of forest is alive and green today because John Weeks and his congressional colleagues made it possible for us to join forces to fight a common enemy.

Now let me do a little bragging. It wouldn't matter if a State Forester were giving this speech. He'd be certain somewhere to do just what I'm doing. The cooperation in fire control that the Federal and State governments have built up over all these years is probably the finest example of such cooperation anywhere. I mean that exactly as I've said it. Pick a State Forester at random and he will say it almost in the same words.

As the years went by we expanded our cooperation through other legislation, Federal and State. One of the first was tree planting. In 1911 I doubt if trees were planted on more than a few hundred acres. Last year close to one and a half billion trees were produced in State nurseries and used to start new forests. Another expansion was in the field of education through Extension Foresters in the Land-Grant colleges. Still another was in employment of professionally trained foresters to provide technical assistance in forest management to owners of small forest properties. The Smokey Bear Forest Fire Prevention Program, with which I'm sure you are all familiar, is jointly sponsored, financed, and run by the State Foresters, the Forest Service, and American businessmen as represented by The Advertising Council. We've come a long way since John Weeks said, in effect, "Why don't you fellows get together, pool your resources, and get on with the job?"

If John Weeks were here tonight I rather think that long before this he would have interrupted me. My guess is--and I doubt if it's too much of a guess, at that--he probably would be suggesting that there is small percentage in looking backward; the big need is to look ahead. What's done is done, and if done well, we can build on it. What's really urgent is the job that has to be done today to get ready for tomorrow and all the tomorrows.

Let me put it to you this way: Where is your food tomorrow morning coming from? I'll bet that every one of you is thinking, "Why, right here, where we ate tonight." That isn't what I meant.

The food you will eat tomorrow morning will not originate here. Except for what may come from the sea, everything you will eat comes from the land.

All your clothing, all of your shelter, all of the fuel to warm that shelter and to cook your food, and all of the raw materials that industry uses to make the things we must have to make life more than just bare existence--all of these essentials come from the land. What we do with the land, what we do to it, will determine precisely whether we and our children and their children will have these necessities of life in abundance.

In the first half of this century our population doubled. In this last half it is doubling again. Soon we will have twice as many stomachs to fill, twice as many bodies to clothe, shelter, and warm, twice as many people needing the many things that industry makes. To be sure, we buy these necessities of life in the supermarkets, the department stores, and elsewhere. But originally they came from the land, from natural resources. Except for what we get from the seas around us, there is no other place to get them.

Our productive land base is not increasing to match up with the increase in number of people. With ever-increasing speed we are taking land out of production for highways, reservoirs, urban expansion,

national defense, and for other uses. The needs of more and more people will have to be met from less and less area of productive land.

I do not say that no land should be diverted to these other purposes, which are also essential uses of land. I do say that we must try to get the people of this country to understand the situation while there is yet time to do something about it. When the Weeks Law was enacted fifty years ago four-fifths of our people lived outside the cities. We were essentially a rural Nation. People lived close to the land, and they understood the relationships between land the necessities of life.

Today, exactly the reverse is true. We are now essentially an urban people with nearly four-fifths of us living in cities. We do not live close to the land and we do not understand well that what we must have to live comfortably, in fact to live at all, depends on natural resources which are products of the land. Our people need to understand this essential fact of life. With widespread public understanding of the need, we shall be able to take the action needed to keep the land productive.

What I've said about all land applies with special emphasis to forest land. There is need for people generally to understand our forest land situation. One reason is that forest land traditionally is thought of as surplus land--land available for any other purpose. We have no surplus forest land, not any more. Another reason is that correcting a mistake in forest land use cannot be done overnight. It requires many years, often half a century, and the process cannot be greatly speeded up. We must try not to make any mistakes in forest land use. We must avoid unwise diversions of forest land to other uses. And people need to understand that forest lands have some special advantages; with careful planning forest land can be made to provide us with multiple uses and services. Why get only one or two uses when we may have more?

Fifty years ago John Weeks laid a good foundation for wise use of forest land resources. We have built on that foundation. The thought I most want you to take away tonight is simply this: We still have a lot more building to do. Let's look forward, not backward. Let's get on with the job. Somehow I have the strong feeling that if John Weeks were here he'd emphasize that same point.