

USE OF THE NATIONAL FORESTS OF THE WEST FOR PUBLIC RECREATION

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With three able men, each handling this subject from his own viewpoint, in advance of my position on the program, I have entertained the feeling that the recreational field of the public Forests would be very completely covered without my contribution. I have therefore hesitated to prepare a formal paper upon this subject, and in lieu thereof will merely submit a brief memorandum covering a few of the aspects of this topic, which at the present time stand out as being of sufficient importance to warrant mention.

The rallying cry of "use," as later modified by the slogan that each tract of land within the National Forests should be put to its highest use, is being further modified, until we are beginning to realize that in some instances the highest use may include what many practical men would consider non-use. As Rock Creek Park is being put to its highest use at the present time, while maintained as a place for the benefit and enjoyment of all the people of Washington, as it stands a perpetual invitation to enjoy God's sunlight and fresh air and nature's abundant beauties, so for a number of years it has been dawning upon us that many areas within the National Forests will similarly, in the fullness of time, be put to their "highest use."

When the public-spirited citizens of Multnomah county, Oregon, expended approximately a million dollars in the construction of a scenic highway through the gorge of the Columbia River, they found that at a number of points their road crossed Government-owned lands in the Oregon National Forest. At the same time the forest officers in that district found that the greatest value of these areas consisted in the benefit which might be derived from them by the people of the city of Portland and other residents of Oregon, and, in fact, people from every State in the Union, in connection with the enjoyment of the public highway. This self-evident truth, which before the construction of the road would have been scouted as a visionary dream, was immediately recognized by every one. It resulted in the Secretary of Agriculture formally pro-

claiming 13,873 acres as the Columbia Gorge Park Division of the Oregon National Forest, classifying it as chiefly valuable for public recreation and use in connection with the use of the scenic highway, and solemnly dedicating it to that purpose.

Two years ago Supervisor Charlton, of the Angeles National Forest, decided that \$2,000 of the fund of \$10,000 contributed by the county for road construction within that Forest should be expended in constructing a public road up a certain canyon. At that time a small summer resort, operating under permit and paying an annual rental of \$25, was established at the head of the canyon, and was accessible only by trail. After the road was constructed, Mr. Charlton told some of the newspaper men of Los Angeles that in this canyon, along the road, were a few places suitable for summer homes. Immediately he was flooded with applications. He thereupon decided upon a systematic survey of the canyon in order to determine its actual possibilities in the way of summer home sites. As a result, 250 suitable sites were surveyed and platted, and at the time I visited his office, less than six months later, 226 of them were already under special use permit.

The construction of a reservoir in the high Sierras has put a new lake on the map. Huntington Lake, in the Sierra National Forest, is an artificial lake resulting from a dam constructed by a hydro-electric power company, and is only one of many such monuments which give the lie to the charge that you can not secure development of water power under Government regulation. Supervisor Redington had sufficient imagination to see the beauty of the lake even before the dam was finally completed and the body of water actually in existence.

District Forester Du Bois reports that already there is a keen demand among the residents of San Joaquin Valley for summer homes on the shores of Huntington Lake, and the Forest Service has authorized the expenditure of approximately \$1,500 in order to furnish an adequate supply of domestic water to the area. It is believed that within five years there will be a permanent summer colony of two or three thousand people enjoying the healthful outdoor advantages of this public property, and bringing back to their homes in the San Joaquin Valley the strength, courage, and vigor of the mountains.

On the shores of Lake Tahoe the Federal Government owns only two fractional lots of land, amounting to about 26 acres. Last summer a careful survey and examination was made of this area and an 80-foot strip along the lake front was reserved for common property, a bathing beach established, and a public camp ground provided for. One street of the most desirable lots was laid out along the lake front. Forty-six

lots were surveyed, each lot measuring 75 by 150 feet. These are retained for summer homes to be established under Government regulation. At the present time there is a halt in the development of the recreation plan, for the reason that a bill has been introduced in Congress directing the Secretary of the Interior to issue a patent to this tract of land to a Nevada corporation. It appears that 16 or 17 years ago the State of California attempted to select the lands in question. Later on the State sold them. Some time after the sale was made the attempted selection was canceled by the General Land Office. However, the State continued to accept the money from the former purchaser, and finally deeded the land to him, regardless of the fact that its attempted selection had been canceled. Now comes the Overland Trust and Realty Company of Reno, Nevada, stating that it holds title as assignee of the equities of the previous purchasers, and requests that the land be deeded to it without further consideration. It is difficult to see where this corporation has any claim upon the land, either in law or equity. They say that the Woolworth building is sold over a hundred times every year to men with long whiskers, but such sales are not taken seriously by the owners of the building. It is not believed that Congress will give serious consideration to the claim of the Nevada corporation, but that, on the contrary, in the future we will find a little strip of Government land on Lake Tahoe serving a high and worthy public purpose. At the present time a portion of the site is under consideration as a location for a summer home for girls, under the direction of a benevolent organization of the State of California.

These are only a few examples of what is being done along special use and recreational lines in the National Forests. You all know about the recreational folders that are being issued from time to time for different Forests as rapidly as the data can be compiled and as funds are available for publication. This summer for the first time, and as a direct result of the stimulus received from the act of March 4, 1915, which authorizes term leases for a period of thirty years, each National Forest district is undertaking a few recreational reconnaissance projects. A definite procedure has been tentatively established and the form of report determined upon, together with a method of survey, and even the details of monumentation have been definitely determined. The work is only in its infancy. So far as the Branch of Lands is concerned, I believe that in the future the recreational use and development will be our most important line of work. There was a time when precedence was given to boundaries. During that time the National Forests of the West assumed their present general form. This was followed by a period when precedence

was given to claims work. Thousands of fraudulent claims were defeated, until now the questions of land titles within the National Forests are comparatively few and simple. This was followed by a campaign of Forest homestead work, as a result of the passage of the act of June 11, 1906, and it in turn was succeeded by the broader phases of land classification. Now I believe that the big work of the future is the work of occupancy. What may be the limits of its ultimate possibilities only the future can tell.