

Our Eastern National Forests

Record Steady Progress in Acquisition Under the Provisions of the Weeks Law

By PHILIP AYRES

WHAT are the reasons for the purchase of forest land by the federal government in the East? Purchases are being made continuously throughout the Appalachian Mountains from Maine to Mississippi. They affect the daily life and, to some extent, the future prosperity of all citizens. Adequate forests are essential to the permanence of our industries and the health and vigor of our people. A nation dependent upon others for its natural resources cannot remain independent. Italy, without coal, and stripped of forests, affords an illustration.

The eastern portion of the United States is in a position somewhat analogous to that of Italy and other countries devoid of forests. We are not as badly off as others whose civilization is older, but our primeval woods are gone, and our second-growth is far from keeping pace with our consumption. Taking the country as a whole we produce only one-fourth of the timber that we annually consume. There are said to be only six states east of the Mississippi River that produce annually as much timber as they use. The result is that vast quantities of lumber and other essential forest products are imported at great expense into our eastern country from the Pacific Coast through the Panama Canal.

The supply of timber on the Coast, like that formerly in the Appalachian region, is dwindling. The Canadians assure us that they cannot supply the United States from their side of the border for any length of time. Other countries, such as Russia and Brazil, have forests that we can use in the United States provided we desire to make diplomatic political advances, and pay still greater freight rates. Even now the cost to the Eastern States of transporting timber supplies from the western coast probably exceeds fifty million dollars a year. This amount, if expended annually upon the acquisition and forest management of land in the eastern mountains, would not only provide a timber supply in perpetuity, but also it would protect the headwaters of navigable rivers on both sides of the Appalachian chain—the Ohio, Cumberland, Tennessee, and the network of streams that flow from these mountains into the Atlantic from Florida northward to Maine.

Realizing the economic importance of this situation, Congress has appropriated \$19,335,860 to June 30, 1929, with which the Federal Government had acquired on that date 3,605,185 acres at an average price of \$4.91 an acre. This sum was authorized by the Weeks law signed by President Taft in 1911, and subsequent legislation.

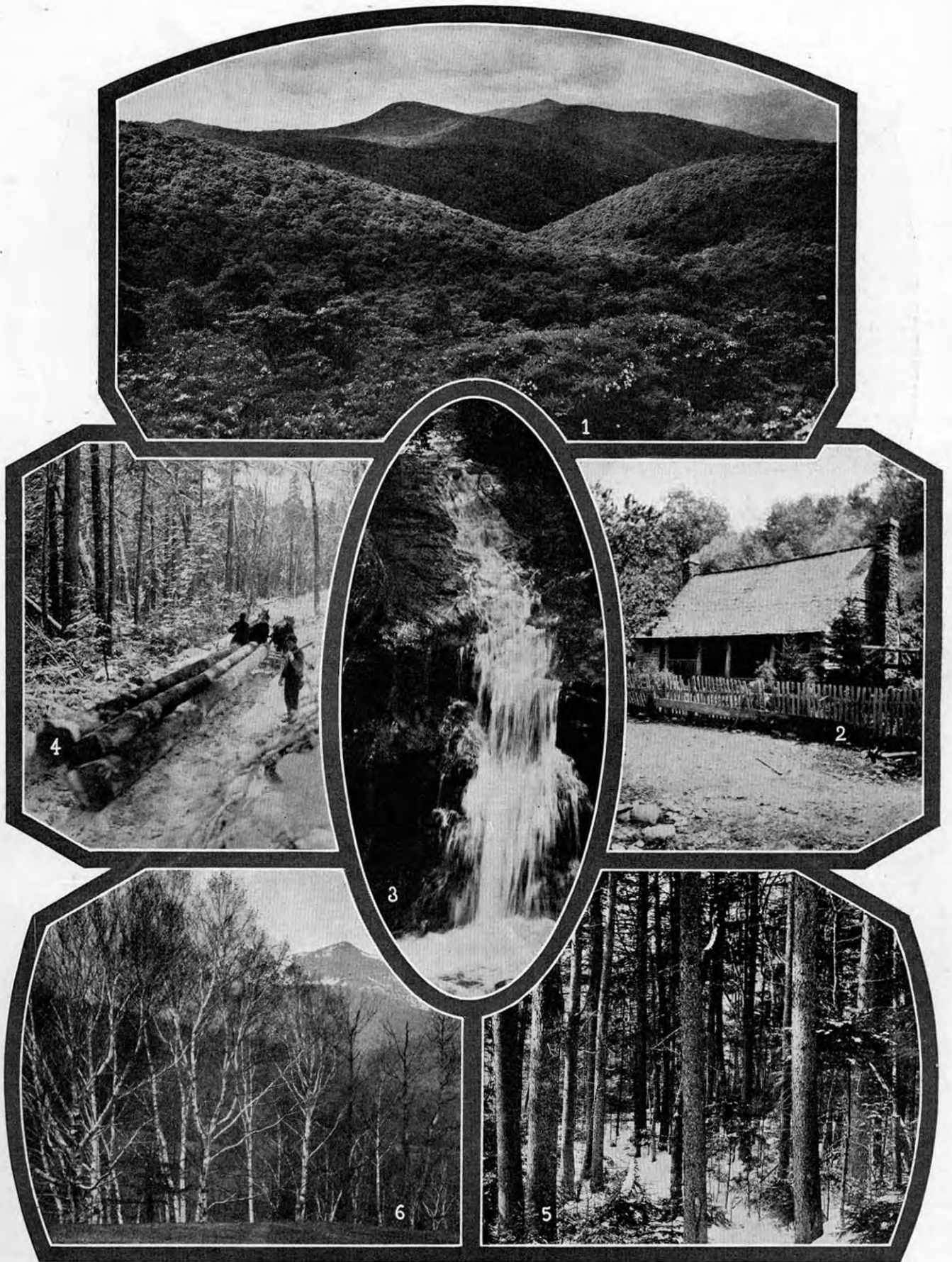
The work of acquiring land and placing it under National Forest administration has been done with intelligence and vigor by the United States Forest Service, under direction of the National Forest Reservation Commission as provided by

the Weeks law. The Commission is made up of three members of the Cabinet—the Secretaries of War, Interior and Agriculture with two senators appointed by the President of the Senate, and two representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House. The present membership of this Commission is as follows: Patrick Hurley, Secretary of War; Ray Lyman Wilbur, Secretary of the Interior; Arthur N. Hyde, Secretary of Agriculture; Senators Henry W. Keyes, of New Hampshire, and William J. Harris, of Georgia; and Representatives Willis C. Hawley, of Oregon, and James B. Aswell, of Louisiana. This Commission has given statesmanlike consideration to the task in hand.

Purchases have been made in fourteen states and cover an area of 3,568,749 acres, distributed as follows: Virginia, 602,067 acres; New Hampshire, 482,848 acres; North Carolina, 382,706 acres; Tennessee, 381,535 acres; Pennsylvania, 344,607 acres; West Virginia, 312,391 acres; Georgia, 265,728 acres; Arkansas, 258,816 acres; Michigan, 184,253 acres; Alabama, 103,791 acres; Florida, 93,826 acres; Minnesota, 77,815 acres; South Carolina, 44,884 acres; and Maine, 33,482 acres.

These areas acquired during a period of nineteen years constitute only about 20 per cent of the areas needed, in the opinion of the Geological Survey, to regulate the flow of navigable streams rising in the Appalachian Mountains. At this rate, the original program adopted in 1911 will be consummated in the year 2010, a record not creditable to the people of the United States. In 1900, when the first plans originated, the total area now contemplated could have been had, it is asserted, for less money than already has been expended on one-fifth of the property. The National Forest Reservation Commission repeatedly has recommended that not less than \$3,000,000 should be expended annually for the acquisition of these forest areas, and now announces a policy of \$5,000,000 a year as essential to the forest welfare of the country, in order to carry out the original plans. The American Forestry Association has sponsored bills of \$5,000,000 a year repeatedly. The Senate on three occasions has passed bills authorizing expenditures of this sum. But each time the Administration and the Bureau of the Budget have cut down the figures.

In addition to wood, water and soil protection, our Eastern National Forests are more and more providing another national essential—outdoor recreation. Already millions of people are annually visiting these forests in the eastern mountains. It is estimated that 2,600,000 persons entered the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire in the summer of 1929. Here roads and trails are protected, beauty spots are left uncut, wilderness (*Continuing on page 483*)



IN OUR EASTERN FORESTS

- (1) Laurel time in the Land of the Sky—showing Big Bald, in the Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina. (2) A typical mountain home in the Southern Appalachians. (3) The beauty of falling water—Conestee Falls, in North Carolina. (4) Logging in the White Mountains in the days prior to federal ownership. (5) Primeval timber types in New Hampshire. (6) Looking through the birches in the White Mountain National Forest toward the Presidential Range

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areas are set aside in order to afford examples of primeval life. But beyond these, and with no complaints, the forests in the White Mountains are cut, sold and regrown on a scale that makes the forest more than self-supporting, including all of the costs of maintaining the recreational areas.

Are forests needed along the Appalachian chain? Let every citizen feel that it is his task to spread public opinion and secure the reestablishment of well-stocked forest growth, not only in the eastern Appalachian Mountains, but also throughout all of the great states east of the Mississippi River. Four-fifths of the population of the United States lives east of the Rocky Mountains; four-fifths of the remaining old-growth timber of the country stands west of the Rocky Mountains. We cannot go through another great emergency like the World War without importing timber either from a foreign country or from the far West at a great expense of time and of money.

One hundred and fifty million acres of National Forests in the West, reserved largely by Presidential proclamation, are a splendid tribute to American foresight, but they are insufficient to meet the industrial needs of a great nation. The beginnings of National Forests in the East are likewise a tribute to national intelligence, but action is too slow. It is pusillanimous in proportion to the need. It is our duty and our privilege as American citizens to demand that Congress more speedily provide the East with National Forests adequate to the social and economic needs of its people.

growing of a second on the same land. But on the National Forests the government is committed to the policy of growing successive timber crops, the American people having recognized that assurances of a sustained supply of timber are a matter of national public concern. National Forest lands will always be retained in public ownership and they have been dedicated to the production of timber. In Alaska the measures needed to keep these lands productive have already been formulated. The paper industry will not be allowed to expand beyond the point where its yearly wood requirements would exceed the average annual amount of tree growth in the region, curbs are placed on the amount and kind of the cutting operations, the requirements to insure reforestation of the areas cut over each year have been set up, and the new forests will be protected until each in its turn reaches merchantability.

Every encouragement consistent with the public interest is now being given by the government to the early establishment of this industry in Alaska on account primarily of its important bearing on the local development of the southern coast of the Territory. There is reason to believe that a start will be made in the industry here within two years.

These Alaska forests, free of many of the complications and problems that too frequently discourage or prevent the practice of forestry over extensive areas, offer an excellent opportunity to create a great, permanent, forest industrial center.

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