

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Secretary

We are here to mark the 50th Anniversary of a law--the Weeks law--to celebrate forestry progress under that law and consider how this progress affects our present and our future. This meeting, I am glad to know, is sponsored by the North Carolina Forestry Association which is also in its 50th year. To the Association--my heartiest congratulations and my best wishes for even greater success in a field vital to the country's welfare.

This observance highlights the fact that forests and their products have helped to build this great Nation from the day colonization began. It is apparent that forests will continue to play a vital role.

Just as forest utilization was of early origin, so also was the principle of forest conservation. Most early day conservation measures were regulatory. To be sure, there were some sporadic attempts at forest management and research in the early days, yet it was historically correct for Gifford Pinchot to remark that in 1891, just 70 years ago, not one acre of land in the United States was under scientific forestry management.

In those early years a number of attempts were made to introduce and pass conservation legislation to establish forest reservations, other than those which had been created out of the public domain.

But it was not until 1911 when John Weeks was finally successful and legislation bearing his name was passed. One can say with accuracy that it represented a culmination of the interest first expressed in western North Carolina some 30 years earlier.

The Weeks law established some national policies. It made possible purchase by the Federal Government of land to be added to the National Forest System. It provided for cooperation between the States and the Federal Government in the protection of forests from damage or destruction by fire.

What has happened during the 50 years since that law was enacted? Some 20 million acres of land have been purchased and included in the National Forest System. There are, as you of course know, more than 100 National Forests comprising some 160 million acres which were created out of the public domain land of the West. But I am talking now about the 48 National Forests lying east of the Great Plains--National Forests that we, the American people, bought under the authority of John Weeks law. A wide variety of situations characterizes these

Remarks of Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman at observance of the Weeks Law 50th Anniversary, Asheville, N. C., September 26, 1961, 1:00 p. m., (EST).

✓ National Forests for they are distributed from Maine to Texas and from Minnesota to Puerto Rico. (Four are in North Carolina--the Pisgah, Nantahala, Uwharrie, and Croatan) Varied though these public estates are with respect to physical characteristics, altitude, latitude, plant and animal life, they are alike in one respect. They serve the people well. Trees have been planted on more than 2 million of these purchased acres. Timber improvement measures have been applied on large areas and many miles of roads have been built giving access to recreation and other resources. Recreation facilities have been developed to accommodate millions of visitors. Research and demonstration areas have been established in all aspects of forest management. Wildlife habitat improvement measures applied on thousands of acres have materially improved hunting and fishing. Forest fires, insect epidemics, and tree diseases are being curbed.

The intensive protection and management given these properties is reflected in abundant production of resources and benefits. Their carefully managed slopes provide water for many communities, for hydroelectric power, and for rapidly expanding recreational use.

The forest fire cooperation feature of the Weeks law and later legislation which expanded this provision (the Clarke-McNary law of 1924) have produced equally great benefits. The number of States participating in this cooperative program has increased from 11 in 1912 to 48. The area of State and privately owned forest lands accorded systematic fire protection has increased from 61 million acres to more than 400 million. Fire losses and damage have been materially reduced.

Of even deeper significance, the fire cooperation feature of the Weeks law established a principle, one which has been materially amplified in the conservation field and applied to numerous natural resources. Cooperation involving the States, the Federal Government, and individuals, is now, through the media of additional legislative measures, applied to tree planting, to woodland management, to primary processing of forest products. That principle of cooperation has been extended to soil and water conservation, to farm management, and to other features in this field of natural resources conservation--taking care of the soil and of the products, resources, benefits and values it yields.

John Weeks and his colleagues visualized astonishingly well the benefits that would accrue from this legislation in terms of improved timber stands protected from fire and logging excesses and streams running steadily, clear and clean. These, in themselves, were lusty offspring worth every bit of the protection and care they have been given. But there are other elements of Multiple Use--other important offspring--that have come to share with timber and water a proper place ^{in Va} here in North Carolina. ~~It will intrigue you as it does me to realize that~~ John Weeks, with all his foresight, couldn't possibly have visualized the growing importance of wildlife and recreation in the life of this State and of the Nation. Here are extra dividends, dividends that may even

outweigh--in value and significance, the other resources and their use as the years and our population continue to crowd us.

Let me spell it out. One of the current vogues is analyzing what is happening to the population of America. The soaring 60's and the year 2000 are popular subjects, but I wonder if most of us really understand the staggering impact the future growth of our people will have upon the natural resources of this country.

Within the last 15 minutes
~~Since I began these remarks~~ the population of the United States has increased by about 100 persons. This country has 8,000 more people than it had yesterday at this same time. If present trends in growth continue, we will need to provide for more than twice as many people in the next 40 years as we do now. This tremendous increase in population can only mean that there will be greatly increased needs for natural resources, particularly wildlife and recreation.

Ask you to remember this: The area of land on which these resources can be produced will not increase. As a matter of fact, that area is getting smaller and will continue to shrink. More and bigger highways, urban expansion, housing developments, airports, and other physical structures made necessary by our ever-increasing population are taking land out of resource production at rates estimated to exceed 1 million acres per year.

But, enough for statistics although they need recounting to set the scene for our future needs. The most important thing I have to say to you today is what the National Forests can offer the people of North Carolina and all Americans in the years ahead.

I don't have to tell you what a tremendous attraction these public forests in North Carolina provide for you who live nearby and for your visitors from every other State in the Nation. The National Forests are a powerful magnet pulling, in ever-increasing numbers, hunters and fishermen, picnickers, campers, hikers, and other outdoor enthusiasts of every kind. Certainly you must realize that here is a tremendous potential for a business opportunity in wildlife and recreation that has few equals throughout the country.

And here we must follow through after 50 years of noteworthy achievement. In the light of present-day demands, we are going to move forward in every field of resource development including wildlife and recreation.

Specifically, here is what the Department's Forest Service plans, in these two fields, for the National Forests in North Carolina during the next ten years:

Working with the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission we plan--through stream improvement and stocking--to make fishing better on 250 miles of trout streams; to improve the hunting opportunities on

100,000 acres by plantings of food and cover. To further help the hunter, we are going to build 100 miles of special access trails.

To serve all recreationists better we plan to construct 3,500 new units for family picnicking and camping, complete with fireplaces, tables, and other necessary facilities.

There are some 30,000 acres of land that have outstanding scenic values. These will be set aside as special attractions for the forest visitors.

These plans impress me and I am sure they impress you. But as of this morning I have added a major project--one that might well become a leading attraction in this part of the Nation.

This morning with Forest Service Chief Dick McArdle I had the pleasure of seeing an area that I feel has great national historical value. I am referring to the site of the first forestry school in this country in the beautiful Pink Beds.

Here, over 60 years ago forestry education had its start in this country. Here, scientific forestry was first applied on an appreciable scale under the direction of Gifford Pinchot. A portion of Biltmore Forest became part of Pisgah National Forest--the first National Forest unit established under the terms of the Weeks law. Near here is the first tract of land purchased under the authority of that law.

From this small beginning the professions of forestry and conservation and the concept of good forest land management has taken hold across the Nation.

These events of great historic significance should not be lost. Therefore, I am directing the Forest Service to develop plans for a Cradle of American Forestry museum and Visitor Information Center at the Pink Beds on State Highway 276. I know the American people will expect a type of development commensurate with the importance of this area and the things that happened here over 60 years ago. I intend to see that this comes about.

These developments and goals for the National Forests in North Carolina will serve to keep your State in the forefront of forestry progress in America. And, in view of a very special event which occurred just last Thursday, no better time nor place could have been devised for what I am now about to tell you.

✓ As I was preparing for this visit with you, the President sent to the Congress a new Development Program for the National Forests--for all National Forests. This action confirms the President's determination, as stated in his message on Natural Resources and Agriculture to the Congress earlier this year, that the Nation's forest resources will be developed to meet the present and future needs of America.

I am sure that you will share my pleasure in knowing that--with hoped-for Congressional approval--we will be able to move forward on these National Forest fronts throughout the country, not only here in North Carolina, but everywhere else: ✓

1. To broaden and intensify recreation resource management.
2. To accelerate the harvesting and management of the timber resource.
3. To make the necessary adjustment in our road and trail program to provide the multiple-purpose roads we need.
4. To acquire needed tracts within National Forest boundaries, especially those having recreational values.

To be more specific, this program will mean:

*28,000 new campgrounds and picnic sites, and the development of 4,000 other recreation sites including swimming, boating, winter sports, and public service sites.

*Improvement of 1.5 million acres of game range, 7,000 miles of stream, 56,000 acres of lake area. The program calls for the development of 2,000 wildlife watering facilities, 400,000 acres of wildlife openings, food patches, and game ways.

*Establish erosion control and stabilization on 1.3 million acres, 22,000 miles of gullies and roads while constructing 570 pollution control and flood prevention projects.

*Acquisition of 500,000 acres of land essential for recreation development, use and access, including protection of outstanding scenic areas and wilderness.

*Increase forest fire protection to approximately two times the present level, including construction of 11,000 miles of fire-breaks.

*Construction of 79,400 miles of multiple-use purpose roads and 8,000 miles of trails.

These are only a part of the overall ten-year program for the Nation's forests, but they do indicate the size of the job we are willing to undertake. I believe it answers the question which has concerned each of us as to whether the National Forests are going to produce their full share of the Nation's needs for timber, water, wildlife, forage--and by no means last or least--outdoor recreation.

Now we have come full circle--from yesterday, to today, and beyond. It has been a pleasure for me to take part in this celebration. If we build as well for the future as John Weeks and his contemporaries built for our present, we will indeed have served well. ✓

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