

PURCHASES MADE UNDER WEEKS LAW

NATIONAL FOREST RESERVATION COMMISSION HAS BEGUN TO APPROVE PURCHASES OF TRACTS OF TIMBER LAND FOR THE APPALACHIAN NATIONAL FOREST RESERVE.—BIG TRACT IN NORTH CAROLINA ON WATERSHED OF SANTEE RIVER BOUGHT.—COMMISSIONER LANE, OF THE INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION, ANNOUNCES OPINION IN THE "DURHAM CASE" THAT MAY HAVE EFFECT ON THE PENDING TAP-LINE CASES—OTHER WASHINGTON NEWS.

Washington, D. C., Dec. 14.—The National Forest Reservation Commission, at a meeting held December 9, authorized the purchase under the Weeks law of a group of ten tracts of mountain land aggregating 18,500 acres in McDowell County, North Carolina. The tracts range in size from 100 to 10,160 acres. Some are well timbered, some partially cut over and some entirely cut over. With the exception of one tract all are purchased without timber or mineral reservations. On one tract of 2,500 acres the standing timber is reserved by the owners and will be cut under regulations already agreed upon with the Department of Agriculture. These regulations are so framed as to leave upon the ground a considerable stand of young timber and insure its protection from fire.

All of the tracts are contiguous or nearly so and will form, when acquired by the government, an area large enough for administration purposes and for the demonstration of methods of practical forestry in this portion of the Southern Appalachians.

On Watershed of the Santee River.

All of the tracts are situated on the watershed of Catawba river, one of the most important tributaries of the Wateree river, which, with the Congaree, forms the Santee, a stream of great industrial importance, and with its tributaries is navigable for 250 miles in the State of South Carolina.

Action was taken by the commission only after careful consideration of all the questions involved. The Forest Service had made a careful examination of all the tracts and presented information on the character and value of the land and timber. The Geological Survey presented a report showing that Federal control of the lands in this district may be expected to prevent excessive soil wastage and erosion, which is likely to ensue if such control is not established. It is further held by the survey that the prevention of excessive erosion will tend in the direction of promoting and preserving navigability of the Catawba River within the watershed of which the district lies.

In taking favorable action upon these tracts the commission was unanimous in the conclusion that it had selected one of the most favorable localities of the Southern Appalachian region for the application of the Weeks law, the purpose of which is the protection and control of the watersheds of navigable streams.

Other Forests Examined.

Other tracts of timberland have been examined by the Forest Service and the Geological Survey, and will soon be brought before the commission for consideration. It is emphasized that no tracts will be approved without the most thorough consideration; first, as to their location, considering the purposes of the law; and, second, as to the prices which are to be paid. The commission reaffirms the announcement which it made early in the summer, that it will not pay any speculative prices for land, and will not purchase any land which will not conduce directly to the purposes of the Act.

The commission consists of the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, Senator Gallinger, of New Hampshire; Senator Smith, of Maryland; Representative Lee, of Georgia, and Representative Hawley, of Oregon. Further meetings will be held in the near future to take action upon tracts which are already under consideration.

The deal for the Genette tract of 34,000 acres in Northern Georgia has finally been closed, the owners having proved their title after long delay.