The State a Forest Producing Agency

Fred B. Trenk

Maryland Department of Forestry

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/amesforester

Part of the Forest Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation

Trenk, Fred B. (1927) "The State a Forest Producing Agency," Ames Forester: Vol. 15 , Article 7. Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/amesforester/vol15/iss1/7

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ames Forester by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Early American forest history is a record of federal aggressiveness. The seventies and eighties were marked by the hue and cry of a few far-seeing conservationalists, directed principally at the federal Congress; the nineties witnessed the enactment of basic forestry legislation; and the first decade of the twentieth century saw, under the ardent conservationist, Theodore Roosevelt, the thorough intrenchment of a virile federal forestry organization. Surely, it would be surprising to the present day student of forestry had its history been otherwise. Vast areas of publicly owned timberlands, imminently subject to selfish, if not generally unscrupulous appropriation, needed primarily the protection of a public agency, and by very virtue of these lands remaining unprotected, the forestry idea was able to make but little headway, elsewhere. It is not surprising, then, to note that there was a general tendency to wait until the Federal government set its house in order first, as regarded this important matter, before State and private institutions generally turned attention to cut-over and forested lands. There were a few notable exceptions, but the nation as a whole logically looked to the Federal government for the initial moves. New York and California took the lead among the States by each organizing a public forestry agency in 1885, Maine followed in 1891, New Hampshire in 1893 and in 1895 Pennsylvania enacted a law creating a Bureau of Forestry.

Federal legislation in 1891 and 1897 providing for the creation and administration of National Forests, was followed by a vigorous interest on the part of the States in protecting and developing their forest resources, whether State or privately owned. Michigan, Connecticut, Maryland, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, are only a few of those which were pioneers in the development of State forestry organizations, and so effectively has their work, as well as the work of other States, been carried on, that Col. W. B. Greeley, Chief of the U. S. Forest Service, made this
significant statement in opening an address to the Society of American Foresters, meeting December 19, 1926, in Philadelphia: "It is a mark of progress that the Forest Service is taking a less and less important position in American forestry." Doubtlessly, the Colonel had in mind also, the increasingly effective work of private corporations which now engage technically trained foresters, but other recent addresses and reports clearly indicate that the Chief Forester was referring especially to the important part the States are playing in developing the practice of forestry.

In the 1926 Report of the Chief Forester, and in an address made by him to a meeting of State Foresters on October 15, 1926, in Washington, D. C., he has pointed out in unmistakable terms that much is going to be expected of the States. Quoting from the Report of the Forester:

"To meet this need—calls for united effort by the Federal Government and the State organizations. Forestry is both a national and a local problem, but even the national problem requires for its successful working out, a localized as well as general attack. Each State must have a flourishing forestry movement of its own, based primarily on its individual needs and directed to the realization of a program adequate to its specific situation."

"The time has come for the states to grapple in earnest with that part of their problem which can only be met through public forest ownership."

These ideas are further enlarged upon in the address to the State Foresters.

"For many reasons, a vigorous extension of State forest ownership is desirable. It should be designed primarily perhaps to fill in the gaps where farm forestry and industrial forestry can not be reasonably anticipated. But it may well combine with this function the administration of areas where timber growing is of special urgency to maintain established manufacturing communities or other community interests, and of areas adapted to demonstration of the best and most profitable forest management."

"I believe that the population, financial resources, industrial interests, and public sentiment in the great majority of the States, particularly in the eastern States, are able and ready to support a large expansion in State forest ownership. —And while we go full stream ahead in developing fire protection, forest taxation, and other encouragements to industrial and farm forestry, I doubt if there is any single item in the whole program that will give greater strength or greater public appeal or a more specific focusing point for
Loblolly Pine in Maryland. Although privately owned, this stand is being handled in a most creditable manner through the influence and assistance of an active State Forestry Department.
public action than State forest ownership on a generous scale."

These are not new ideas; similar ones have been voiced by State and Federal men in times past; but with the recent enactment of the Clarke-McNary Law, based as it is so largely upon State and Federal cooperation, it would appear that the States are, indeed, entering upon a new era of splendid opportunities for achievement of great goals.

What are the fundamentals of a proper State forestry organization, capable of exerting maximum influence under the new order? The writer would be foolish, indeed, to attempt here the presentation of a model State forest law. Conditions vary so in the several States that a "model" law has no significance. Rather, what do we find in the basic forest laws of those States which are taking the lead? Because of the discussion that is to follow, it may not be inappropriate to indicate the bare essentials.

A fire protection and the fighting system is, of course, a primal requisite. Fire protection for industrial timberland, farm timberland, State timberland, and laws to increase the effectiveness of the protective system, are part and parcel of the organic forest law of the outstanding States in forestry development.

If material progress is to be expected in a tree planting program, a State forest nursery is indispensable and fortunately, no fewer than 29 States are equipped for this feature of service.

The acquisition and administration of State forests is one objective of every energetic State forestry department; it is a feature of the work which adds stability to the organization; and it is frequently the source of most tangible benefits.

A means of rendering personal assistance to the small woodland owner in solving his forest management and marketing problems, especially in those States where much of the forest land is owned by farmers and small operators, is a feature the value of which can hardly be overestimated. A State forestry department, unable to give direct assistance to owners of timberland, would find it difficult to really spread the practice of forestry within its confines.

Direct relationship with State Extension Foresters, working under Section 5 of the Clarke McNary Law, should by all means be established and maintained. This, of course, is more a matter of policy than of law, and many States, even before the enactment of the Clarke-McNary Law, had Extension Foresters working with and through the State Agri-
cultural Extension Service. The object of such cooperation is for the obvious purpose of avoiding friction and duplica-
tion of effort.

Many other matters may be handled by a State forestry department, but these few, it would appear, are fundamental. The planting and protection of roadside trees, for instance, are taken over by some States, but surely, this work is not fundamental. Over State Parks that are essentially State Forests, the State forestry department may well have control; in the so-called “manicured forest parks,” it is of doubtless expediency.

A study of the forest laws of the several States reveal clearly that they have made no mistakes in striking at the fundamentals. We have seen that their influence upon forest practice is constantly on the increase. Let us consider briefly the practical reasons for these gratifying results.

The greatest need of our forests today is protection from fire, and beyond a doubt, it shall continue to be the outstanding need for many years to come. Individually, the timber owner is virtually helpless, but with public cooperation, he has a chance. More and more, the States are being looked to as the public agency best suited to organize and maintain a protective system, primarily because they have demonstrated that they can organize and maintain such a system. The Federal government recognized this when it passed the Weeks Law in 1911, and again, when it passed the Clarke-McNary Law in 1924, providing for federal funds to be administered by the States, if the States would appropriate an equal amount. The funds were meagre, indeed, and if they were to count for anything, every dollar had to be judiciously invested. Thirty-one States now cooperate with the government in this work; because of the efficiency of the States in handling their fire-protection funds a high degree of protection has been given to State and privately owned lands; and as a result, the masses are being taught, in most direct and practical ways, the absolute necessity of forest fire prevention. Without efficient State organizations, it would be difficult to conceive of any worth-while protection being given by the Federal Government upon any but National Forest lands; while to expect effective private cooperation, except by large forest land owners, is to postpone fire protection to a most indefinite future.

Forest planting is constantly growing in importance in the several States. From July 1, 1925, to June 30, 1926, approximately 50,000 acres of land were reforested by State-grown nursery stock. The terms upon which this stock was
sold varied from free distribution to prices as high as $16.00 per thousand. Where free distribution was practiced, charges were made for packing and crating. During the same period of time, according to the Annual Report of the Chief Forester, 11,5655 acres were planted by the Federal government. When one compares these acreages with the tremendous acreage needing artificial reforestation, they appear insignificant, indeed. But there is a psychology associated with the planting work being done in the States, that, should the Federal government increase its planting program fifty fold, the States would still have a distinct advantage. The explanation of this lies in the fact that most of the planting being done with State-grown stock, is on private lands. Here is the process of reasoning the writer has consistently observed, in his work with private land owners engaged in forest planting. The first question the planter asks is, "How soon may I expect any returns from this planting?" If he has planted loblolly pine, he will be told that between the 16th and 18th year, at least 40 percent of the trees should be removed, and from this thinning he may expect from five to seven cords of wood; and it is pointed out further, that as a result of this thinning, his

Forest growth in the Allegheny Mountains. The steel lookout tower from which this picture was taken is an integral part of a State-directed forest fire protective system, affording value protection to mountain forest and farm woodlot.
trees will grow faster, and the ultimate date of maturity will be hastened. All of this interests him, because it cost him something to establish this stand of trees. The chances are ten to one that this man has a block of timber growing on his lands. If thinning and improvement cuttings in his plantation, for which he has to wait not less than 16 years, are going to be a real benefit to him financially, and will hasten the date of maturity of this plantation, why will not immediate attention to the timber already growing, be an advantage. This process of reasoning is so simple and so conclusive that practically none miss it, and as a result, we find our forest planters becoming our best forest managers, too.

The second question the planter asks, is "How can I best guard against losing my plantation by fire"? Of course, fire lines are provided, but these are not always efficient. We have to admit that here is a hazard he must risk, with some species over a longer period than for others, but when we ask him how and when he burns his brush, if at all; how frequently he burns over his woods; how careful he is of throwing away lighted matches while gunning in the fall of the year, the matter of being cautious with fire takes on an entirely new meaning for him; and we find our forest planter becoming an enthusiastic forest protector. These are not just theories; they have been observed time and again in contacts with private land holders engaged in forest planting. Who will not agree, that compared with planting a few large areas, in which private citizens in the community have little personal interest, or worse yet, may hold some animosity, this is not the more efficient use of forest planting stock?

Approximately 10,500,000 acres of forested land are State owned, and of this area not more than 5 percent is devoted exclusively to State park purposes. Thirty States share in this ownership. As with forest planting, this, in the sum total of publicly owned land, and land which ought to be publicly owned, is quite insignificant. But let us note several encouraging features. In the first place, this area is being substantially increased every year, and a number of eastern States in particular, are taking steps to float bond issues which will tremendously increase the acreage of their holdings. In the second place, a large percentage of the State forests approach the ideal from the standpoint of being demonstration forests. There are several reasons for this. Compared with National Forests, they are smaller and in general, they are more accessible. Farmers and timber owners in the vicinity of them have an opportunity to ob-
serve forestry practices to an extent that would never be possible on large National Forests. Moreover, because of the smaller division of the political unit, there is a sense of pride in State ownership among the citizens of a State that is rarely or never found in Federal ownership. In consequence, not only does a “demonstration forest” mean more, but there is a more active interest throughout the State in the welfare of the resources which it owns.

In only a few of the States were acquisition and management of forested lands the basic purposes for the creation of a State forestry organization. In many of the States, the rendering of professional advice and assistance to small woodland owners was considered of great importance, if for no other reason, because it could be inaugurated at once, and was independent of large State appropriations. Some may argue that it is an unjustifiable use of State funds to send men at public expense to private homes and places of business throughout the State, to tell people what they ought to do. But when one stops to consider that every State-designed plan of management, when followed out, results in a demonstration forest, whether the owner wishes it or not; that the owner pays for the labor of carrying out the plan, whereas the State would have to pay the labor costs if the land were State owned; that by virtue of these improved forestry practices, forestry is really making definite progress in the State; and that lastly, in most instances, a nominal charge is made for the service of the forester, or part defrayment of his expenses is required, the skeptic will have to admit that this really is an extremely efficient way of advancing forestry practice. The writer does not have figures on the amount of this work done in other States, but in Maryland, over 6 percent of the privately owned woodlands have been examined in detail, and a management plan has been prepared and submitted to the owners of every tract examined. Nearly one percent of the total forest area of the State has been measured and marked for cutting, the type of marking applied depending upon the silvicultural system called for in the original management plan. This, it would appear, is putting forestry on a mighty practical basis. The Forest Service could hardly be expected to ever render this service; the possibility of either the State or Federal government owning these lands is so remote as not to be worth considering; while to ignore these woodland owners entirely is to lose out in applying forestry on the very lands which, by virtue of their being permanently retained in private holdings, are doubtlessly the most productive.
Finally, with the enactment of the Clarke-McNary Law, providing for Extension or Farm Foresters, the means of multiplying many times the effective work of State forestry departments is available, while the forestry departments, in turn, can multiply many times, the effectiveness of the Extension Foresters. It has been recognized from the time of the passage of the law that these two agencies must work in closest harmony. An ideal arrangement, the writer believes, is for the Extension Forester to be a member of the State Forester's staff. Duplication of effort will be avoided; demonstration work and most of the educational work may

Natural reproduction in Loblolly Pine.
be handled by the former, while personal service work and administrative details, as well as forest policy, may be handled by the latter; and as a result, it will be literally possible to bring forestry home to every woodland owner in the State. Whether or not he adopts it, will depend upon the salesmanship abilities of the foresters.

We have been considering some of the practical reasons for the prestige of State forestry organizations. Let us conclude by noting some pertinent factors, which, it appears to the writer, militate strongly in favor of far greater development within the next few years.

The enactment of the Clarke-McNary law has, indirectly, augmented the purchase of forest land in one or two states, and beyond a doubt, it will find a similar reaction in others. It is based on a growing opposition to centralized Federal authority, and as more and more of the States recognize that if they don't do something, a Federal Bureau will, possibly even to the embarrassment of the State, there will be a stimulation of State acquisition of forested lands. Fortunately, the Chief Forester, Col. W. B. Greely, in the address to the State Foresters already referred to, has stated definitely that no attempt will be made to acquire holdings in States where existing forestry agencies do not thoroughly welcome the Forest Service. One State has already registered its opposition to the encroachment of the Forest Service within its borders, and largely in deference to this wish, one Weeks Law purchase unit was abandoned. Sooner or later, other States will take the same vigorous stand, and in turn, they shall assume more of the responsibility of timber production.

A definite trend in market conditions, particularly in the East and South, points to a situation that will be highly favorable to the owners of comparatively small timber tracts, both public and private. It is the matter of group marketing of forest products, stimulated largely as the result of installing small but well equipped mills throughout forest producing communities and regions. As long as huge quantities of virgin timber are available, specialized users are going to rely on this source for their raw materials. To them, a large and trustworthy supply of material is indispensable. As virgin stands are depleted, the problem of adequate sources will become more acute, and the demand for raw materials will have to be met by second growth forests. And the ownership of second growth forests is far more broken up than the ownership of virgin forests. The comparatively small owner will be called upon to fill the gap, and the way
to fill it to the secure advantage of the large users, is for the latter to establish small, well equipped mills to work over the material purchased in a community, or possibly a whole county. This will furnish an outlet for merchantable timber most eagerly sought by the small timber owner today, and the ownership of State forests will assure a stability for these mills which would otherwise be lacking.

The tax situation can not long be neglected. The Clarke-McNary Law provided for an exhaustive study of this situation, but regardless of the findings of the commission, the ultimate application and administration of an equitable tax law is strictly a matter of State jurisdiction. The logical agency to administer a forest tax law is the State forestry organization, and as more States enact such laws, the greater will become the duties, and no less the opportunities, of the several States.