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Ames Foresters and the Emergency Conservation Program

G. B. MacDONALD
Director of the E.C.W. for Iowa.

"I should like to take this opportunity," Professor MacDonald remarks in connection with the following article, "to pass out a word of encouragement to the Ames foresters, especially those engaged in the Emergency Conservation program, and to commend them on their participation in a movement which may have results in the future far beyond what we can now see."

DURING the latter part of March, 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt initiated a movement which will probably show its affects in conservation activity through many decades. The Administration is making use of the difficult economic situation as an opportunity to set ahead conservation work while providing at the same time substantial relief for the needy.

From an administrative standpoint the E. C. W. program presented some real problems. The urgency of a quick setup made it important to draft the aid of many agencies, and the President and Director called into action various Federal branches—the Labor Department to mobilize the young men to be employed, the Army to organize the camps and clothe and feed the men, and the U. S. Forest Service and National Park Service to plan and supervise the work of the vast army of conservationists. This also required the cooperation of many state agencies, notably state park and forestry departments and local conservation bodies.

The result is a splendid example of what may be accomplished through unselfish, concerted action in a common cause. In a few weeks’ time nearly fifteen hundred E. C. W. camps were in action from the thickly populated sections of the East, across the plains to the rugged national forests and parks of the West. More than three hundred thousand young, unmarried men shouldered the saw and axe in this conservation army and went to work with a brighter outlook.

In the organization of the Emergency Conservation Work the Federal and State authorities had many problems to consider, since few had anticipated a conservation avalanche of this proportion and few were fully prepared with adequate plans, personnel, and equipment. The program, however, was built largely
around the national forests and parks, as well as those of the states. In addition the President made provision for soil erosion work on private lands—a line of activity which is of vital importance in many parts of the country. In fact the program was of such magnitude as to tax the ingenuity of Federal and State agencies alike to get an orderly program quickly under way.

Perhaps it is a little early to attempt to predict the results which may accrue from the program during the following years. However, some possible results might be suggested:

1. One of the most important results is the increasing "conservation mindedness" of the people. The E. C. W. program has focused attention on many phases of needed conservation work, to which the general public has given little thought in the past.

2. As a result of this it is believed that the conservation programs of the future will be given more nearly the consideration due them when compared with other phases of our national and state activities.

3. The program is crystallizing the definite need for national planning to cover all angles of conservation work in order that we may have an orderly and adequate program for protecting and developing our national and state resources.

4. Closely allied to this is the overwhelming sentiment for classifying land areas in order that these may be put to their proper use. The present economic situation has naturally speeded up the need for retirement of submarginal agricultural lands to other uses. These lands will be taken over for forests, parks, game preserves, and grazing areas.
5. Through the E. C. W. program the national and state forests will be improved and developed in two years’ time to an extent which otherwise would hardly have been possible in two decades. These take the form of improvements in fire protection, building roads and trails, thinning dense stands of trees, eradicating insects and disease pests, and many others.

6. Among the lasting benefits of the E. C. W. program are the extensive developments in the various state parks. Many states with park areas previously have never had funds for their proper improvement. At the present time the states are not only developing the old state park areas, but are also acquiring additional lands for recreational purposes. If the state park develop-

![Image of Silver Lake](21-2)

*Courtesy The Iowa Engineer.*

1934: The shore of Silver Lake. Conservation Work has left its mark.

ment in other states is comparable to the Iowa program, it is believed that the effects of this work will be felt for many years. The state park activities, in addition to ordinary work such as the construction of roads, trails, and buildings, includes the building of artificial lakes in lakeless regions. These will provide a recreational resource, the value of which is difficult to calculate.

7. One of the less spectacular but yet important results of this program is the reclaiming of badly gullied soils. The value comes not only in the rehabilitation of the land actually worked on, but also through the education of land owners in handling their soil properly.

8. Another benefit from the program should be mentioned. This is the aid and training which the enlisted men, as well as the supervisory personnel, have received. Many of the men employed have an entirely different view of conservation possibilities since
joining the E. C. W. forces.

The Emergency Conservation program coming at the time it did—when many foresters and other technical men were out of jobs—has furnished at least temporary employment to hundreds of foresters all over the country. The foresters from Iowa State College have been playing a real part in the emergency program, as the records show that 105 are now employed in various capacities in 17 states. Although many of the positions now held by foresters will be temporary, the program, in stimulating a broader and deeper outlook on our conservation problems, should be the means of opening up additional positions both through more intensive work and by the enlargement of the field of activities.

The Ames foresters, the same as others, in anticipating opportunities in the future, should keep in mind that forestry has a very close tie-up with other conservation work such as parks, wild life, and land utilization—especially submarginal agricultural lands. It is therefore believed that in anticipating future possibilities a broad and substantial foundation should be laid. In this way the forester may be in a better position to adjust his future course of action.

Many persons have speculated on the future or possible continuation of the E. C. W. program. This will probably depend upon the results to which we can point on the first of April, 1935. If the many foresters and others in charge of the program can show some real accomplishments in conservation, in addition to the unemployment relief afforded, then perhaps it may serve as a permanent organization to absorb some of our unemployed who are always with us, even in good times.

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Courtesy The Iowa Engineer.

The C.C.C. camp at Spencer, Iowa.

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