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The C.C.C. in Wisconsin

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THE Chequamegon National Forest was established in November, 1933. Its present area of 372,734 acres is located for the most part in Ashland County, Wisconsin. There are 11 Civilian Conservation Corps camps in its four ranger districts.

But for the Great Divide, which is a low range of hills between the Mississippi and St. Lawrence watersheds, the Forest is a rolling glaciated country dotted with innumerable lakes and swamps. Most of the land on the Forest has been destructively logged, leaving large unbroken areas of dense slash and thus creating an acute fire hazard. Where fire has been kept out of these slashes, however, excellent stands of reproduction are being established. On the other hand, slash areas of this type which have been burned have seeded into aspen, paper birch, and fire cherry. The unburned areas containing reproduction may be divided into three broad timber types: mixed hardwoods and hemlock type, pine type (jack, Norway, and white pines), and swamp forest type (black spruce, cedar, tamarack, or a combination of any of these).

The work in the camps has been quite variable and may fall into the following nine classifications, each of which will be briefly discussed. They are (1) fire suppression, (2) truck trail construction, (3) fire hazard elimination, (4) telephone line construction, (5) timber stand improvement, (6) planting, (7) mapping and cruising, (8) Ribes eradication, and (9) rodent control.

Probably the most important activity of the C. C. C. camps was fire suppression. Because the 1933 season in the Lake States was an unusually dry one, numerous fires were reported. The fire season started in the middle of July and lasted until the middle of September. The fires varied in size from a few acres up to one of about 8,000 acres. The latter lasted about a month and was finally stopped only by the assistance of a series of rains.

Many of the men in the camps had never seen a forest fire, and to them fire-fighting was something new and fascinating. But continuous fire-fighting, combined with long, monotonous hours, gradually impressed upon them the seriousness of their job. This
impression will remain with many of these young men throughout their lifetime.

The Chequamegon National Forest contains large blocks of inaccessible land. In any forest it is desirable to be able to reach a fire in a minimum amount of time. Thus with the establishment of this Forest, truck trail construction was of vital importance. Many trails have been contemplated, and the construction of such trails was on the programs of most of the camps.

Where there are large, continuous areas of fire hazard obviously it is necessary to break up those areas. Such is the case on the Chequamegon Forest. Consequently many of the camps are engaged in hazard elimination along roads and truck trails and in the construction of fire lines. Hazard elimination consists of removing all dead and down timber 100 feet on each side of the transportation routes and the felling of all dead snags, which are likely to throw sparks, along a strip 300 to 500 feet on each side of such roads. Fire line construction consists of clearing a strip 50 feet wide at strategic points and felling all snags within about 300 feet.

No fire control system is complete without adequate telephone lines. Thus many miles of telephone lines were built through the Forest. The lines were ground return, but are being converted into metallic circuit systems.

The large tracts of second growth timber furnish suitable areas for timber stand improvement. These types of cuttings may be classified as gleanings, thinnings, improvement cuttings, and liberation cuttings. Stumps are cut low—not to exceed the diameter of the tree, and a maximum height of 12 inches. The limbs are lopped off and in some cases piled and burned. The trees cut are for the most part used for fuel.

Many areas have been burned over and are not restocking. Hence artificial restocking must be depended upon. Both spring and fall planting was practiced. One C. C. C. camp planted three million trees last fall. On good planting chances with few rocks the trees were planted in plowed furrows. On poorer chances the area was “scalped” or spotted prior to planting. This consists of clearing with a mattock a patch about 18 inches square where the tree is to be planted. Scalping may be done prior to planting or at the same time. In most cases the Michigan planting bar was used. Norway and white pines and white and Norway spruce were most extensively planted. The spacing was six by eight feet.

The working area of each camp is to be mapped and cruised. Forest and soil type maps are being made and a five percent cruise of the timber is being taken. All section corners are being posted and lines are being run. This work is done by the technicians with the assistance of a small crew of C. C. C. men.
The fact that large areas are being planted to white pine makes the eradication of *Ribes* necessary if these trees are to be kept free from white pine blister rust. Consequently *Ribes* bushes are pulled and grubbed out in the swamps adjacent to the areas being planted.

The damage caused by porcupines and rabbits is quite serious on some areas of the Forest. Porcupines are causing considerable damage to second growth stands, and large numbers of trees are completely girdled by them. Consequently "porkies" are killed on sight. Rabbits have become so numerous that they are epidemic. Their damage to plantations of spruce is so great that poisoning is warranted.

If the work accomplished by the C. C. C. men on the Chequamegon National Forest is representative of the work done throughout the country, it is the writer's opinion that the President's forestry program is a success. The fact that there has been a large amount of work accomplished is not the only reason why this program is successful. It is a success because it has furnished thousands of homes with a payroll, which though small is helping many of these families to live without other assistance. It is a success because it has given employment to some 300,000 young men, many of whom had never had the opportunity to earn wages by honest, hard work. It is a success because it has made forestry a topic of considerable discussion. To foresters and to the forestry profession the program is a success because it has made possible more intensive forestry practice.