The C.C.C. in Iowa

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FORESTRY in Iowa? Yes, many of us were rather doubtful about the possibility of applying forestry to the "Corn State." But Iowa, like the other states, was called upon by President Roosevelt to lend its natural resources, either existent or hoped for, to give employment to the needy.

Naturally we can’t picture a forestry program in Iowa without the able hand of G. B. MacDonald at the helm. Iowa is greatly indebted to him for its share in the Emergency Conservation program, for this sharing means that the 25-year Conservation Plan for Iowa is being culminated in a much shorter period than was anticipated.

In this program six definite lines of work are followed. The basic problem in conservation—soil erosion—is met with thousands of dams of various types to save valuable farm land from being washed away. These eroded areas are further improved by tree planting. Spots of scenic interest are preserved and improved; wild life is protected. The landscape in general is en-
riched. Then along recreational lines swimming, boating, pic-nicking, and camping areas are established. In addition, artificial lakes and state parks are developed to cope with the increasing recreational needs. Diseased and ill-formed trees are cut out and park areas are developed by constructing trails, bridges, and cabins. Finally we have that matter of controlling the insects that threaten plant life. Spread of disease is checked by the aid of a systematic forest survey.

The effects of the Civilian Conservation work are far reaching and should be considered from various angles. The whole program is essentially of a forestry nature, and forestry should benefit greatly. One achievement is making the public forestry-minded. This is inevitable, for we have in the C.C.C. some 300,000 families represented in addition to the supervisory staff. This together with the publicity that the C.C.C. program is receiving is bound to create a forestry-minded public.

We cannot stop with the material benefits that forestry itself derives from this program. There is the personnel, also. This forestry and conservation program has provided work for thousands of jobless men. They are receiving invaluable training under the most wholesome conditions. The many jobless are taken from the streets and put to the constructive work of improving the land.

It might be fitting to consider Iowa’s 25-year Conservation Plan as the forest policy for the state of Iowa. Essentially this plan calls for wise use of Iowa’s natural resources. In years past it has been evident that the park areas and resources for hunting, fishing, boating, and swimming fall short of the demand. These needs were presented to the authorities in Washington, and the “pipe dream” of the Board of Conservation and the Fish and Game Commission is now rapidly becoming a reality. With the two periods of work about completed, we can see readily how erosion control; balanced utilization of surface water resources; conservation of woodlands; preservation of wild life, game, and fish; and development of state preserves and state parks are becoming a blessed reality in Iowa.

The C.C.C. program was started for the purpose of creating needed employment for young men during a critical period. The men need the forests and forests need the men, and so we have these men put to constructive work throughout the land. Posterity will benefit in that it will have a more beautiful country to live in and a conservation-minded public, which means better citizens.

This act of the President has done more than merely provide work for the unfortunate. Those of the enlisted men with the ability of leadership are encouraged and given more responsible
positions over their fellows. The various sorts of work under way have enabled men to find for themselves the work in which they are most proficient, whether it be filing saws, running a steam shovel, or swinging an axe.

The public is interested to observe how these boys work. If we stop to consider, most of the recruits have really not been employed in any sort of work before: The depression came before they were of the working age. On the whole these boys are good workers and can be depended upon.

The C.C.C. boys get something besides field experience: They are given schooling in the various lines with which their foremen are familiar. These studies are forestry, botany, landscape architecture, stream improvement, and public speaking. The Army teaches English, spelling, and arithmetic. The classes are all fairly well attended, and the students show an active interest. Field trips provide further stimulation.

At the outset many were skeptical of the success of such an undertaking as the Civilian Conservation Corps. But now it is evident that this country has an organization which would be a great benefit if it were put on a permanent basis.

Iowa's initial allotment was 16 camps scattered about the state. Fourteen were forestry camps, and two were park camps under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. The primary locations of the forest camps were as follows: Keosauqua, Albia, Chariton, Shenandoah, Creston, Spencer, Mt. Pleasant, Bunch, Iowa City, Atlantic, Oskaloosa, Des Moines, Winterset,
and Boone. Park camps are located in the Palisades State Park, Mt. Vernon, and Backbone State Park, near Lamont. These camps are not permanent, but are subject to transfer from their original location, depending upon the allocation of the work. Winter camps have been established at Cresco, McGregor, and Decorah.

Iowa has a total of approximately 3,200 young men enlisted, or an average of about 200 men per camp. The supervisory staff consists of 150 men. Iowa receives no definite allotment but gets its share of the $250,000,000 which is provided for this extensive program.

Although Iowa is principally an agricultural state, it lacks none of the beauty that belongs to heavily forested regions. It is the chief aim of the Board of Conservation and the Fish and Game Commission to develop what natural resources Iowa already has and to create additional natural attractions. Thus Iowa, like the other states, is greatly indebted to the Civilian Conservation Corps, for it is a means of attaining the goal of greater beauty and prosperity.