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Surveying Iowa's Forest Land

OLIVER L. OLSON

"I HAVE observed, as no doubt you have, that things go forward through the influence largely of two classes of people; first that class which we may call the experts, men who have gained their full share of knowledge. . . . That other class I may designate as the enthusiasts."—Dr. Edward C. Elliott, president, Purdue University.

A quite detailed forest and waste land survey has been made in the state of Iowa through the influence of a man who is both an expert and an enthusiast.

Prof. G. B. MacDonald has striven enthusiastically for many years to promote conservation and forestry-consciousness in Iowa. Now, largely through his efforts, the State has a chance to review its conservation lessons.

For some time there has been in progress a forest census of the United States, but individual states have not been able to get Federal appropriations to aid in a reconnaissance of their forest capital, and likewise have been handicapped in carrying out their programs of conservation.

Professor MacDonald, however, saw an opportunity for action upon the advent of the Civil Works Administration. He immediately wired Washington to get approval for a state tree survey to be made a C. W. A. project and in the meantime conferred with the governor concerning his plans and the proposed work. On Dec. 15 permission was granted to use 150 men. An office was set up in Ames, and schooling for workers began on Jan. 1. The men were working on their districts by Jan. 4.

The personnel of the organization consisted of 11 supervisors, the office force, and the field men. E. W. Potter was in charge of the head office until he received a J. F. appointment in March; then L. E. Hicks was placed in charge.

Several forestry students dropped classes during the winter quarter to acquire practical experience, and a little money to continue in school the spring quarter. Glenn Ball, Harold Barber, Kenneth Brinkman, Allison Cecil, Dick Dilworth, Harold Efnor, A. M. Harmening, Clark Holscher, Glen Johnson, Ewald Maas, Gail McElhinney, Albert Mehlin, James Overby, Jules
Renaud, Amos Smelser, and George Wilhelm are Ames foresters who have worked on the project.

In carrying out the forest and waste land survey the men were assigned to counties. The survey was made by townships, and each section mapped as a unit. The completed maps were collected in the office and compiled into a composite map.

Information gathered falls into three categories: nature of the forest cover, extent and speed of erosion, and possibilities for game-protective areas.

Seventy counties, comprising in general those along the chief river valleys and the northern and southern boundaries, were surveyed. The data are being compiled in such a manner as to be of value to the general public and to State and Federal forestry agencies. Some of the maps and plans have already been sent to J. N. Darling, better known as "Ding," of the Commission of Wild Life Restoration, and head of the United States Biological Survey.

Iowa now has an inventory of its valuable hardwood forest cover, windbreak and shelterbelt plantings, and fish and game rendezvous, as well as a statement of the number of acres of land badly eroded and the number of additional acres seriously endangered.

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*Courtesy State Board of Conservation.*

*Where forest meets farm in Iowa.*