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Forestry Benefits from Land Use Planning

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LAND planning has become in our country the proper thing to do. Planning for land use is not a new procedure in many sections of the nation. The name only is new. We have adopted various means of designating specifically the use of areas of rural land. For many years there have been areas quarantined to prevent spread of animal or plant diseases; game preserves are older than some of the states; herd district areas were early formulated on the open range; more than half a century ago areas of land were set aside for their natural phenomena and reserved for public use; and, of course, all of us are accustomed to the forest areas being established for the growing of timber.

OUR modern use of the word "land planning" refers to something a little more specific. We are interested in this generation in some sort of planning which will give to land its highest use not as a unit set apart and distinct from all other uses in the region, but rather as a use necessary to the economic and social perpetuation of the community as well as the maintenance of the resource value inherent in the land. Our modern efforts are leading quite directly to some type of zoning for land use.

In forestry we are interested to know what effect zoning may have upon the use of land for the growing of timber. There are many factors, some of them evident in most communities, hindering the working out of a long-time forest management plan. These factors root back in the formative periods of the nation, in the development of attitudes and of the pioneer.

The ownership of land and its use, as an economic problem, has carried and still carries with it many interesting and often conflicting social attitudes. The squatter, the homesteader, the real estate agent, the conservationist, the state's rightist, the federalist—to mention the major groups only—each brings to
the solution of the land-use problem his own peculiar approach. From the time of the settlement by the colonists, throughout the formation of the nation to the present national problem of land-use and abuse, those various philosophies have been in conflict in the passage of the many homestead laws and the huge public-land grants. The land policies which developed out of the conflict created the heritage, with its problems, which we face in this generation.

UNDER a free-for-all scheme of land-use and the accompanying unsound economic conditions, sustained yield on privately owned land, and public owned land for that matter, has suffered. The demand for land cleared of timber and of possible agricultural value; the constant surging outward of the wave of frontier settlers; in short, the almost insatiable desire for land

The author while at Iowa State.
by man has kept before us the philosophy that all land is potential agricultural land, and that timber must go. Hence, the public attitude toward land-use has precluded sustained yield of timber land, such a crop as timber being but a passing of the old to make place for the new.

We are prone to glorify the pioneer in any field of human endeavor, and particularly the pioneer who "develops" land. This sentimental desire to perpetuate the individualism of the frontier days is quite apt to cloud the approach to our land problems. The early pioneer went where he chose and asked nothing but the land that he claimed by his labor. Today the counterpart of that early pioneer is the settler on the fringe of land development. He demands and secures more than land. He asks for the roads and the schools and other social services which are recognized as a fundamental part of our social fabric. It appears to be necessary that we redefine the pioneering spirit. We must keep its fine challenge for endeavor, its lure to try unchartered areas, and its willingness to legislate in new fields of human intercourse. At the same time we must abandon the blind allegiance of the pioneer to the philosophy of individualism and nationalism. The new pioneer should be dominantly social in his outlook on life.

Often, the pioneer and his family become an economic and social burden on the community as a whole, because the land does not return a revenue to the public treasury sufficient to offset the expenses incident to the upkeep of the services the new settler receives. The incident may be illustrated in the following:

School Costs: In 1935, e. g., the State of Idaho was burdened with the upkeep of 241 schools in which the pupils in attendance were less than 10 in each school, at a cost of $144 per pupil. Three pupils in one district were in school at a public cost of $335.19 per pupil. There were seven school districts in Idaho with only four pupils each and the cost was $245 per pupil. Of the 214 schools listed, only 39 had as many as 10 pupils. Do not conclude that such a situation is peculiar to Idaho. In Wisconsin (1929) isolated schools were located where the cost was over $300 per pupil. (Wisconsin has a zoning law now.) The classic case in Oregon is that of the school costing $1,800 per year to maintain. It served only one family living on a ranch, advertised for sale at $800. Good business would have dictated that the county buy the farm and save $1,000 the first year.

Road Costs: It is not uncommon for a prospective resident of
"The right of individuals to settle on land and in turn demand of society all of the accustomed social services is challenged."

the itinerant type to deliberately choose cheap and undeveloped land in preference to higher priced land in a developed community which is already served by a road. The new settler boasts that he can get the road to the cheaper land free once he has settled on the land. There are instances of roads of two or more miles in length being maintained exclusively for the individual farmer living at the end of the road. Often, almost the only cash income to the settler is the money which the county pays him to work on the road which serves only his ranch.

A Specific Liability: The individual owner or settler on land in isolated localities is quite frequently a definite fire risk. His indiscriminate clearing of land and burning of brush have brought detrimental results too well known to need elaboration. This same individual may be a potential timber thief. In fact, there is ample evidence that the itinerant settler is prone to cut timber when and where he chooses, and often it is his sole source of money revenue in the winter season.

Quite generally recognized essentially as a game poacher, the attitude of the locality favors him in that the settler in outlying regions is expected to live off the country. He is not wasteful of his game, yet the seasons mean little in his scheme of things.

A Social Burden: Any one of the states west of the 100th meridian has within its border rural relief areas—sore spots, they may be called—which point definitely to the unrestrained operation of what we fondly call the pioneering spirit—rugged individualism—"carving a home out of the untamed wilderness." Society bears the burden.

These factors, which work against any plan of sustained yield,
can be eliminated, and many others at least partially so, by a controlled and directed use of unsettled or sparsely settled areas. All thinking citizens agree that something is wrong with our land economy. As a result of such instances as those listed above, public expenditures are being scrutinized.

The evils of uneconomic and unwise taxing units which grow out of unplanned private ownership of land, as well as public land, are evident. That land, which does not produce a sufficient revenue for taxes to offset the costs of government and public services demanded by those residing on the land, or the owners of the land, can be thrown into bold relief. It will be seen that the costs of government and public services for the community, shared by the people on relatively non-productive land, are pyramided on other lands. Such an approach to land-use must of necessity, it seems, result in the reorganization of local taxing jurisdictions. We may expect that boundaries will be shifted, jurisdictions empowered to tax will be enlarged, settlements gradually will be centralized, and, in some instances, personal, group and even party ambitions will be thwarted.

Into such a situation comes rural zoning and, to a degree, definitely invades the domain of private ownership of land and limits the owner by a type of regimentation in the use of that land. In the first place, the right of individuals to settle on land and in turn demand of society all of the accustomed social services is challenged.

Secondly, under rural zoning land partakes of the nature of a public utility of much the same status as other public utilities.
Then its control in the interest of the public good follows. Society has come to recognize social values in land. These values are present in land whether in public or private ownership, but thus far the values have not been shown in the balance sheet of the private owner, for no other reason than that they have not been readily sold.

A good example: A value of $500 per acre has been placed upon certain national forest areas for watershed protection in order that irrigated lands in eastern Washington may profit by such a use. A similar estimate of as much as $1,000 per acre has been made for forested lands in the Santa Barbara National Forest of California solely because of watershed values. In order that such values as these and others may be realized, our land economy has, up to the present at least, demanded a relatively large public ownership. It is to be hoped that under rural zoning all of these values may be guarded and made available under a reasonable and planned private ownership.

WITHOUT the expenditure of large sums of money or the immediate transfer of families to new situations at much public expense, a reasoned land-use may be made possible. Of course we can not eliminate, entirely, the submarginal farmer. Such a one is the product of a system beyond the reach of rural zoning. The submarginal farmer still may be existent in localities of 100 percent super-marginal land, but the submarginal farm will not become necessarily a part of the economic structure of our land-use.

Zoning of rural lands is a flexible program. Future uses of land are not determined for all time. Present day uses are established. After the ability of the land to bear the social costs involved in the change to some other use has been assured, legitimate development and expansion in land-use is to be encouraged.

Finally, zoning is definitely set against the resale and resettlement of abandoned lands, the clearing and settlement of new land with questionable social results, and the perpetuation of present unsocial uses. We confidently may expect that timber as a crop on land, to be harvested regularly, will be protected against encroachments from other land-uses, and that society will look upon forest land as zoned for such a use with the same approval that it now gives residential or business zones of the urban centers.
WHENEVER the conditions which hinder long-time management of forest lands are altered, sustained yield will become an economic possibility and a definite social asset under rural zoning. Land better suited to growing timber will be kept for such a use, which is fundamental in any long-time management plan for forested land. Unplanned settlements in timber regions, carrying the customary demands for social services, will not be permitted. Values in timbered land, which up to the present have been possible of realization for the public in the United States, largely under public ownership, will be made operative under private ownership. The heavy costs of small taxing jurisdictions found in school districts, road districts, and county governments, which forest land now bears and which are a large factor in prohibiting sustained yield, will be absent. “Stump ranches” as a by-product of lumbering will become a phantom of the old days. Forested lands, either in private ownership or in public ownership, or combined in one unit under a cooperative agreement for management, can be subjected to a planned scheme of cutting and reforesting, definitely assuring a continuous return for owner and public alike and a measured contribution to the support of communities dependent upon the timbered areas.

Much of the wastage, to which we have become accustomed in the Northwest, will be without justification, for forced liquidation largely will pass. The local governmental costs, which are the chief burdens upon land in forcing liquidation, will be drastically reduced. Mendicant areas of land will be eradicated. Timber as one of the chief crops on land will be recognized and therefore can be husbanded in the public interest under sustained yield, and on privately owned land.

UNDER present economic conditions, the lack of sustained yield on a very large percentage of timber land in the Northwest is a corollary of tax delinquency. Tax delinquency can be eradicated, either by reducing expenses or by shifting the burden. Both ends must be attained if long-time management is to be realized. Timber producing land is not to be relieved of all taxes, but by reducing expenses through zoned development, settlement and use of land, the future is more nearly assured, through a lessening of the tax assessments.

Timber producing areas, regardless of the type of ownership, under rural zoning, will become, naturally, and normally it seems, part of larger units supporting specific groups of people. Such a condition was well described in "Employment and Na-
tional Resources," by Benton MacKaye (1919). Although approached from the point of view of labor, MacKaye showed how residential areas, truck lands, grazing plots, site land for sawmill, business blocks, schools and for other purposes, and agricultural blocks of land combined with the timber land in just as specific locations, might be united to support, in comfort and contentment, laborers, skilled workmen, craftsmen, business men and professional men, in one community dependent upon and specifically a part of a planned land-use, to which we here apply the term, rural zoning.

The Future: Under the operation of rural zoning we may expect positive results. Rural zoning is not negative. Land better suited for other uses than forest growth and located in satisfactory economic units is definitely dedicated to such uses. Under such a plan agricultural development on areas of sufficient size to justify the investment of time and capital would be encouraged. Likewise, areas for watershed protection, wild life propagation, and recreational resources would be indicated. Conflicting approaches to a reasonable land-use are mingled in a flexible plan that effects changes in present uses and prohibits unwise future uses. Rural developments, often forced upon society at high cost as a direct result of the small, un-economic agricultural units, are changed, and land better suited for the growing of timber is kept for that use and assures sustained yield as an economic possibility. Forced liquidation will pass almost entirely from consideration, mendicant areas of land disappear, land and timber partake of the nature of utilities and tax delinquency on such land will become a rare occurrence.

Rural zoning will not be a tool in the hand of the unprincipled to impair or limit private property rights. The operations are all in the public interest. Zoning is a dedication of land to its present highest social and economic use, and such a procedure points assuredly to continuous revenues from managed timber lands, either wholly private or wholly public, or united under one unit plan.
IN SUMMER

There's a fresh wind blowing through the pines
Of a forest that's far away,
And its coaxing voice in the waving tops
Is calling to me today;
Calling me from the noisy town,
With its wearying hurry and work,
To the side of the stream and fern-fringed pool,
Where the speckled brook trout lurk;

To the depths of a canyon, cool and dim,
With the shade of a thousand trees,
Where the steady rush of water hums
A song of content, and the breeze,
Pine-laden, blows softly and whispers to me
Of sunsets and soft summer rain—
Ah, the dream is so sweet, it is hard to awake
To the roar of the city again!

◆ ◆ ◆

Young slipp'ry elm was poplar with a certain clinging vine,
He liked to cedar lovelight in her buckeye's when she'd pine.
Said he, "If I can have a date I know I'll fall fir yew.
I'll spruce all up and meet you on the beech at half past two.
He elder palm and said to her, "Oh, willow marry me?"
I'll balsam, yes, and cry for you, if you'll be my Christmas tree.
Her coconut fell on his shoulder as she vowed she'd be his wifey,
Poor slipp'ry learned too late, that his clinging vine was poison ivy.

—WESTERN FLORIST.