Private Forestry and Suggestions for Its Advancement in the Lake States

E. B. Hurst
Iowa State College

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/amesforester
Part of the Forest Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/amesforester/vol36/iss1/9

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ames Forester by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Private Forestry and Suggestions for Its Advancement in the Lake States

E. B. HURST

MATERIAL used in this article represents thinking on the subject of private forestry by a cross section of technical foresters and executives in the forest industries of the Lake States. The number and type of replies received indicated increasing interest in forestry on the part of management.

No attempt will be made to give facts on growth data, timber requirements of industry, or other factors in reference to private forestry, since these subjects are separate studies in themselves. The object is to show general progress to date, and workable ideas suggested for the advancement of private forestry in the region.

Private forestry differs from public forestry because it must become self-supporting in a minimum amount of time. It also must be geared in long range terms to meet the individual problems as well as the future wood requirements of the industry concerned. For this reason it is difficult to make any one set of recommendations for the practice of forestry by a private industry. However, the survey revealed fundamental facts, the most important of which come under the following headings.

Progress To Date

Industrial forestry got underway in the Lake States in 1926 when a paper mill launched a large scale program. Within a few years several more paper mills and one sawmill inaugurated programs. At this time there was little fire protection, no legislation had been enacted to revise timber tax laws. This was also a transition era and a period of unstable financial conditions among wood using industries.

There are approximately 50 million acres of commercial forest land in the three Lake States. Of this amount about 42 per cent is in public ownership, 58 per cent is privately owned under various classifications. Industry holds 2 million acres under some phase of forest management, on which 60 million trees have been planted, mainly by paper mills. In Wisconsin 417,000 acres have been certified as industrial forests by the State Conservation Department.

Industrial forestry has made its greatest strides in the past decade. At the present time industry employs approximately
Fig. 1.—A machine planted field on a plantation of the Mosinee Paper Mills Company. Tree planting machines are used on industrial forests wherever machine planting conditions exist.

Fig. 2.—White Spruce 3-0 seedlings planted spring 1938. Picture taken January 1947. Typical example of spruce underplanting which is being carried out by the Consolidated Water Power and Paper Company. Because of repeated fires years ago, the growth of the aspen has been retarded. Reconversion of poor popple sites into valuable spruce stands is an important phase of Consolidated's forestry program. In the meanwhile, spruce trees will benefit from the cover crop of aspen which in its present condition is of questionable value as a merchantable timber crop.
135 foresters in the Lake States. The total number of foresters to be employed by industry will be predicated to a great extent on the amount of forest land that wood using plants can obtain under satisfactory conditions for forest development. The present status of this question is not too satisfactory because of inflationary prices, the poor quality of land available for forestry, and because of large units in public ownership, especially in Wisconsin.

Cooperation

Industrial forests are founded, developed, and maintained to harvest continuous crops of trees. But a well managed forest, whether it is owned by industry or a unit of government, in the long run confers the same benefits to the public in providing recreational facilities, watershed protection, regulation of stream flow, a source of permanent woods jobs and a host of other valuable by-products. Because of this relationship of forestry to our natural resources there is a need for cooperation and a better understanding on the part of the public on the problems of private forestry.

We have heard considerable about what the forests mean to the public but there can be added emphasis on the dependency of the public on forests. Leaders of conservation movements, leaders in public agencies, can accomplish much in bringing about an understanding of the economics of private forestry. Ownership of forest land gives a feeling of security to the community in which a permanent mill is located as well as a sense of stability to the mill itself which can plan for the future and its place in what may be a highly competitive market.

In factual minded America the sooner it can be shown that forestry can pay its way, the better it will be for the forestry profession.

Research

An interesting sidelight turned up in the survey when several recommendations were made that research applicable to private lands be conducted by public agencies on public lands, that is, large scale experiments on a commercial basis with accurate cost information. Many recognized the fact that research in the Lake States is making good progress both in the field and in the laboratory. Publishing the results of fact finding studies by the Lake States Forest Experiment Station has been effective in presenting data in an easy-to-follow form.

Industry will continue to assume its responsibility in exploring new uses for wood. Progress made by paper mills in the greater use of aspen, the setting up of an industrial laboratory
in Minnesota, the building of a $400,000 plant in Wisconsin by 13 paper mills to convert lignin into Torula yeast, an appropriation by the Michigan Legislature for forest products research, and the continued large scale work being carried on by the United States Forest Products Laboratory and the Institute of Paper Chemistry are a few of the significant items that stamp the Lake States as being one of the most progressive forest regions in the nation in the matter of research and development.

The need for an exchange of factual information on woods equipment and logging operations is a research field in itself and needs to be broadened. This extends from the starting of new forests to the delivery of the forest products to the wood using industries.

Advisory councils such as have been set up by the Northern Wisconsin Forest Research Center have proved helpful in attacking specific forest research programs on a priority basis. Research in the field and research in the laboratory will open up new opportunities for the employment of foresters.

Forest Fire Protection

The prevention and suppression of forest fires is a basic requirement for good forestry which will probably never reach a point where all that can be done has been done. In the survey recognition was given to the advancement made in forest fire protection methods, especially in Wisconsin and Michigan. Replies from Minnesota were more insistent upon stepped-up effort along this line. Most industries with large forest holdings were willing to enter into cooperative forest protection programs, but the mere fact that the holdings are large does not mean that more and more of the responsibility for fire protection should be assumed by the private owners. Forest fire protection is a public responsibility because forests have to be protected from the public who cause 99 per cent of the forest fires.

Reforestation

With the passing of legislation in Minnesota in 1947, seedling trees will now be available to land owners in all three of the Lake States where there is a great interest in tree planting. Because Wisconsin is the worst burned-over state, the largest replanting job will have to be done there. Private industry in Wisconsin has made good headway in this and has planted 37 million trees since the first industrial forest got underway back in 1926. At the present time progress in reforestation is limited primarily by the number of seedling trees available because nurseries have not reached prewar capacity. Two industrial operators maintain their own forest tree nurseries and a third is setting up a nursery.
Fig. 3.—The National Container Corporation, Tomahawk, Wisconsin, started replanting old fields in the late 1920’s. Some of these plantings will be ready for thinning in a few years time. The above photo shows an abandoned farm field six years after planting with 2-0 red pine stock.

Fig. 4.—The above photo shows a tract of state owned timber after a 30 per cent cut had been made in it two years previously. Selective cutting is carried out on state and federal owned lands. Cutting rights are received following bids at timber sales.
Forest Taxation

High taxes on forest lands are not quite the problem they were a few years ago, but high taxes are at all times a threat to owners of large tracts of forest land, which must be held for a long period of time. There is no question that annual taxes on forest land must be kept at a low rate to justify the expenditure of large sums of money for forestry development. Local units of government benefit most when timber is harvested under planned forestry programs for this means a continuous and not a one-cut source of employment for local people. The mature crop can bear the cost of taxes better than the young growing crop, which is of unknown value and constantly subject to loss by fire, insects and disease.

Large areas in public ownership in many sections make it difficult for the local government to meet its expenses without taxing private property at a high rate. Public lands should contribute to local government's tax coffers at a reasonable yearly rate on an acreage basis the same as private owners. This is a big problem in many sections of the Lake States.

Foresters In Private Industry

Nationally, there has been considerable discussion on how foresters can be trained better for private industry. The following is a summary of what foresters in industry in the Lake States think on this particular subject.

The curriculum now in effect at most forestry schools is better adapted to the training of foresters for public employment than for private. Public agencies are also better equipped to provide more specialized training for their particular field of work than private industry. It was suggested by foresters in the field that this shortcoming might be overcome by broadening the basic training in forestry schools and by requiring five years of forestry or specialized courses for the undergraduate. The fifth year of training might be spent in applied forestry in the field in the region where he expects to be employed. The system prevalent in Canadian schools of requiring four months of field employment during undergraduate years, working for government or private companies, does much to give the new forester varied experiences before graduation.

The experience of private forestry, especially industrial forestry, has indicated beyond question that the problems involving private industry must be better understood by the teaching profession. Until this has been brought about new foresters will be handicapped to some extent when entering the field of industrial forestry.

Ames Forester
Many replies emphasized more field work to augment the following courses: timber cruising, survey work, the handling of men and field office work. An important point was recently arrived at by one forestry school when the results of a survey among its graduates were tabulated. It was found that most failures in the field of forestry were not due to a lack of technical knowledge, but to a lack of ability to get along with people. For this reason it was significant that the survey recommendations include more training in report writing, public speaking, economics, accounting fundamentals and public relations.

**Future Forestry In the Lake States**

The future prospects for employment in private industry in the Lake States look very good if technically trained men can adapt themselves to the work, and there is no reason why they cannot do so. More companies are using foresters in connection with logging, the purchasing and maintenance of mechanical equipment and pulpwood buying. Because of the large areas of commercial forest land, the concentration of an important segment of the paper-making industry and the nearness to good markets, the demand for home grown timber in the Lake States will continue in the future.

With this combination of economic factors, plus the byproduct of a highly developed recreational forest use, the Lake States have as good or better a future as any region in the United States for the expansion of a sound industrial forestry program.