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RECREATION ON THE NATIONAL FORESTS IN THE LAKE STATES

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It is rather difficult in the forestry profession of this country to consider recreation as anything but a commercial problem financed by companies or individuals and entirely outside the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. It is painfully difficult for some of the profession to even consider it among the more seemingly important factors pertaining to the science of Forestry. That anything relative to recreation should be considered on a par with other forestry matters that have been held in the limelight for so long is almost inconceivable.

But nevertheless with startling suddenness a new phase of forestry has been introduced. It has leaped unheralded out of a clear sky, bounded well ahead of important problems and now stands well to the front demanding recognition, and what's more, receiving it. And it is being groomed and coaxed and coddled in an effort to urge the ambitious youngster to regulate its pace and thus allow time in which plans can be formulated for its care in the future. So sudden has been this introduction that Forest Officers have been completely bowled over and they are still gasping and out of breath in their efforts to keep abreast of this popular movement on which all eyes are turned for the present.

Foresters in the past never dreamed recreation would ever gain such prominence and upon looking over the numerous publications pertaining to Forestry and Conservation only a very short sentence or paragraph ever dwells on the future recreational possibilities of the National Forests. Aesthetic value is often found and reference is made to "inroads upon forest resources marring the beautiful scenery". Aesthetic value and scenery are still prevalent but engulfed, and are naturally subheads to be considered and cared for under their abductor—recreation.

It has only been during the last four years that recreation in District 2 has been given any great amount of consideration. It was found that the public was using the Forests to such an extent that adequate plans must be made to cope with the situation and care for the number of annual visitors. So the plan has almost been forced by the people of the Nation, and the members of the Forest Service are adapting themselves accordingly. The most energetic of the tourist world have ventured to National Forests for their
vacations and were overwhelmed with surprise to discover admirable playgrounds open to them without restriction. Places where they could feel free to come and go and remain as long as they wished, where a wonderful vacation could be had at a small cost, where aesthetic value and scenery were plentiful and all mixed in with invigorating air and healthful and enjoyable exercise.

The Lake States Forests, especially the two in Minnesota, have become in a comparatively short time noted recreational centers, situated as they are in northern Minnesota, in a most healthful locality known for its bracing air, cool nights, ideal summer days, numerous lakes, and an abundance of fish and wild game. In fact, their vast recreational resources allow them to stand out by themselves in the eyes of recreation seekers already familiar with those forests.

The Michigan Forest situated partly in the upper and partly in the lower peninsulas of Michigan has the good air, cool nights and ideal summer days, but the scenery and abundance of fish and game and numerous lakes are lacking in comparison to those in Minnesota. It has the advantage, however, in that any part of the forest can be reached by automobile, and this one fact is causing the tourist travel to increase yearly for it has been proven over and over that where people can travel by auto there they will go in preference to places more remote and containing more advantages from a recreational standpoint. It has also the historic AuSable River and numerous trout streams and a few beautiful lakes, and people are taking much pleasure in coming to this forest year after year and casting for trout and camping along the streams and small lakes.

The Minnesota Forest has developed a very stable recreation business. Beautiful islands have been surveyed and elaborate homes have been built thereon and large numbers are spending their summers on beautiful Cass Lake where shores are wooded with virgin stands of pine and where bathing, boating and fishing are the best and where roughing it can be resorted to by those who desire and where comfortable summer homes can be had by those less venturesome.

But now in spite of the growing popularity of the Michigan and the established advantage of the Minnesota, the Superior Forest must be given first place among the Lake States Forests and probably outranks the remaining Forests of District 2 in recreational resources. Before the tourists opened their eyes to this great playground it had been looked upon casually as a region of hardships and limited possibilities. This opinion is reversed now. The Superior is to be developed and a recreational plan is being formulated where-
by the best points of the forest will be displayed and the tourist thus allowed to enjoy the best the Forest contains. It is this Forest that has caused forest officials to stir their hair with unusual vigor and start their thoughts along a new channel. And how willing were these same forest officers to grapple with this new intruder and gallop along with it until the youngster was under control. I should not say "under control" because it isn't, but the officers are thinking and planning and at the same time acting. Thus by acting along with thinking and planning, recreation has been introduced and far-reaching results have been accomplished.

A stop for lunch on a portage on one of the many lakes. Superior National Forest, Minnesota.

This is very evident from the fact that this Forest is now being written about by its worshipers and is being advertised in the literature circulated by commercial clubs and other organizations in the near vicinity of the Forest. Writers have visited the Forest and taken numerous pictures, have seen the wild game, the beautiful lakes and tested the fishing and found them all good and worth while, and now articles are being written and these stories will reach people in every part of the United States. Moving pictures have also been
taken on the Forest and will be shown everywhere. With this effective advertising and the more convincing fact that each visitor becomes an ardent booster the future status of the Superior as a "Playground of a Nation" is assured.

The Minnesota is also receiving nearly as effective advertising as the Superior while the Michigan is just reaching that point where its recreational possibilities are becoming noticeable and will receive proper attention in time. The most pleasing and encouraging feature about this large movement is that the public is heartily cooperating and is helping push the work along and furnishing the necessary funds for this convincing advertising, thus making the recreation project grow immensely.

Why did this great movement come upon us so suddenly? For various reasons. The outstanding one over all others is perhaps the fact that out of doors enthusiasts are tired of crowded, luxurious and otherwise hotels and resorts, where magnificent sums are paid for a week or two weeks' period, at places where elaborate gowns, dress suits, flannels, bridge and tea parties prevail. All tending to curb the desires of a real out of doors person and preventing him from enjoying the satisfaction and pleasure to be derived from wet feet, soiled clothes, sunburn and whiskers, doing his own cooking, catching his own fish, building bough beds, living in a tent, seeing the wild things of the Forest and thus allowing him the opportunity of forgetting the cities and farms and business and enjoy nature and a vacation in the proper way. People are wanting their own cabins in the woods, log or otherwise, and they desire them built away from the world on a lake or stream. People want real vacations these days, that is, the more venturesome do. They wish to use their own muscles, their own wits, catch their own fish, paddle their own canoe and do their own exploring. They want to get away from the decided routine of hotels and thickly populated beaches; in fact, they want to leave civilization and forget that such a thing exists throughout their limited time of play.

People have found that there are such places as they desire within the National Forests which previously had lain idle wholly undeveloped in the eyes of the playing public. But quite suddenly a very few began to venture into these un frequented regions and found there ideal places in which to enjoy such a vacation as they could find nowhere else. These few went home and returned next year and by their interesting tales of these wonderlands brought more people, and this has been kept up year after year until now, thou-
sands are enjoying the Forests and there is still plenty of room.

The reason therefore for the National Forests to become so suddenly popular is apparent. People have found that the old word "reserve" is not at all applicable to our Forests; in fact, does not exist, and that these big areas are just what they seem and rightfully are, simply great big playgrounds free to all without any restrictions other than care with fire, proper camp sanitation and observation of the fish and game laws, none of which is a hardship, but in fact willingly complied with by the average tourist. They are places where those seeking real vacations find that they can roam at will, camp wherever they please and enjoy the real comfortable feeling of being left alone.

Making a portage on the Kawishwi River. Superior National Forest, Minnesota.

Some will, no doubt, wonder why National Forests should become so popular and receive so much attention when there are such wonders contained in our National Parks. The comparison is as simple as the "Ole Swimmin Hole" and the popular bathing beach and can be expressed in one word—"restrictions". The National Parks have modern hotels, a retinue of guides, horse wranglers and horses, pack outfits and nice trails, where visitors are led about by a regulation guide, dressed in regulation chaps and spurs and traveling at regulated speed, stopping at regular intervals, and explaining in a regulated manner the beauties of the regulated trip. But in spite of the regulations the National Parks are all that the name implies and should be visited and will be
visited by an ever increasing number of tourists year after year. But nevertheless there is a big tendency to leave the regulated and seek the open road, where the tourist can take a map and choose his own route and plan accordingly, away from the crowd. The National Forests are appealing more and more to the people because of the vast areas remaining, as it were, wholly undeveloped and wholly unexplored by mobs of tourists. They are the one place where the real sportsman can get close to nature. Where places can be found, where none or very few people visit, where fish is plentiful and where wild game is still plentiful.

To make this more convincing we will return again to the Superior Forest which has already been conceded "The Playground of a Nation". It has no mountains, but it has water, lots of it, 250,000 acres, not in one body but in numerous lakes and rivers so conveniently distributed over the Forest so that one can take a canoe and travel in any direction and for any duration of time. It is almost impossible to picture the attractions of such a trip. There are no hotels, cottages or other improvements to mar the shore line, only an occasional dilapidated logging camp which seems to add rather than detract from the setting. There are numerous portages around swift water, some of which could be successfully "run" by an expert canoe man. There are narrow streams that continue to narrow and widen, their shores heavily wooded. These streams open finally into lakes of various sizes. These lakes are traversed and then perhaps a portage to another lake, perhaps larger or it might be smaller. The waters are clear and cool, fish are jumping. Wooded islands appear in every direction. Deep bays reach away as far as the eye can see. The air is wonderful and as the canoe is paddled along and an island is passed a moose is seen swimming to a sheltered cove on the main land or to another island. As you travel deeper into the Forest these animals are more common and numbers of them are seen feeding along the waterways. And then at the end of the day camp is made, and a balsam bough bed is prepared. A fish is caught and cooked along with other tempting food all prepared by yourself. After the supper there is that wonderful enjoyment of sitting around a camp fire, smoking and stories, or just being quiet, listening to a moose splashing out in the lake, a beaver flopping nearby and other noises caused by the various forms of wild life and heard so distinctly at night in the Forest. And after a sound night's sleep you prepare your own breakfast, break camp and paddle away on another day of exploring. Perhaps your route is taking you over that formerly travelled by the Hudson Bay brigades and perhaps
you will meet Indians in their birch barks paddling serenely along. At any rate you will have a vacation that will always be remembered with pleasure because you experienced the real enjoyment of doing things yourself away from the world. You will have seen thousands of unexplored bays and islands, beautiful camping spots and bathing beaches. And then the exercise, real honest exercise with the canoe paddle, making portage, pulling up rapids and running the swift water. Is it any wonder that the Lake States Forests are becoming so popular and especially the Superior?

District 2 has added a Recreational Engineer to the District Office force. His work consists of outlining plans for the development of the recreational resources of the Forests in the district. A plan is now being outlined for the Superior and when completed this Forest will be both nationally and internationally known as a famous playground, standing alone in its fascinating situation.

The recreational movement in the National Forests has done what years of propaganda could never have accomplished. For years the Forest Officers have tried to interest the public in their work and the great necessity of adequate fire protection. Many people are now visiting National Forests annually and now have the opportunity to see at first hand what is being done. The Forest Officers are ever on the alert to explain to the tourist the need for fire protection and what the Forest Service stands for, and it is surprising how the people have become friends and boosters of the Service and how earnest they are in their endeavors to prevent forest fires and thus protect their great playgrounds. It results in the study of human nature and obtaining the desired results by operating through those things from which people seek enjoyment.

The insertion of recreation into our Forest Plans has and is accomplishing more for the interests of conservation than any other method resorted to. It has not only converted the local people to fire protection, game preservation and reforestation, but it is acting as a stimulant to increase and arouse interest in the good things that the U. S. Forest Service stands for.