

ILLINOIS FOREST FUTURE

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Illinois needs a definite forest policy on which there is substantial agreement by all the agencies and individuals who are directly and indirectly concerned with the future of Illinois forests. Such a policy should be formulated at the earliest possible date and be published as a guide to future developments. Only on the premises set forth in such a policy statement can the specific activities of all agencies be properly oriented and fitted into a coordinated program for the development of the forest resources of the state. Some of the factors that must be taken into account in formulating a policy and launching development programs follow.

FOREST FACTS

The forest situation in Illinois has been studied from time to time over a period of at least forty years. These studies have resulted in the publication of papers and reports which generally recommended specific programs and in some instances proposed the elements of a forest policy. Some of these programs have been put into operation. As a result progress has been made in restoring and improving the forest resource, but there is still need for broad scale planning as well as detailed study of specific forest problems.

As determined by the Illinois Soil Survey and the Illinois State Natural History Survey, more than fifteen and a quarter million acres, or approximately 42½ per cent of the state was forested originally. This forest resource was invaluable to the early settlers for fuel, and for fence

ing and construction materials, in spite of the fact that often the great volume of timber resulting from clearing the land for agriculture could not be utilized. Only after thirty years of settlement and forest clearing was the agricultural value of the unforested prairie land discovered. Timberland adjacent to prairie areas was at a premium during the period of most rapid settlement. There were no facilities for shipping in timber from adjoining states. Wood to build and to warm prairie farmsteads had to come from areas nearby. Where prairie land sold for five dollars an acre, woodland commonly brought thirty-five dollars.

Now, after one hundred and forty years of forest destruction, the forest area of the state has been reduced from 15½ million acres to 3½ million acres. Much of the original forest land should never have been cleared. There is general agreement that a part of it must be returned to timber if it is to become an asset rather than a public liability. A beginning has been made—reforestation is under way. Further study is required to determine the specific areas of cleared land which should be returned to forest, but 2½ million acres would be quite generally accepted as a minimum. Thus the combined present forested area and that to be reforested is at least six million acres—more than one-sixth of the area of the state. It is essential to our economic and social welfare that this land be made fully productive.

Wood is still essential to agriculture and industry. In 1926 the Na-

tural History Survey stated: "In the single item of lumber Illinois consumes one-thirtieth of the total lumber cut of the world." In the aggregate, wood is not being displaced by other materials. New processes and products create an ever increasing demand for wood in industry. Nearly all of the lumber used in Illinois is now brought in at high freight cost from distant points. There is no assurance that these sources will continue to furnish adequate supplies.

Recent studies indicate that the productive capacity of Illinois woodlands has been quite generally underestimated. Full use of our present timberland would provide more than the annual requirement of the manufacturing industries of the state which in 1940 used 580 million board feet of lumber. Importation of certain species which will not grow in the state would still be necessary, of course. The native woodlands are almost exclusively hardwood (deciduous) species. The open areas available for reforestation include 300,000 acres of sand which is suitable for pine. Our studies indicate that this land is capable of producing 500 to 1,000 board feet of lumber an acre each year. Hundreds of thousands of acres of heavier soils in northern and southern Illinois may also be planted to pine.

Illinois gains relatively little benefit from the employment and payrolls involved in the harvesting, processing, and shipping of the timber which she must import. As has just been indicated, we have in the six million acres best suited to timber production a resource, which, if properly developed and managed, can go far towards meeting future timber needs while furnishing profitable employment to a large number of our citizens. Carefully kept rec-

ords show that sixty acres of well-managed forest of the type that can readily be grown on this land, furnish one man employment in the woods or a primary manufacturing plant for 240 days a year. On this basis, 6,000,000 acres are capable of furnishing profitable employment for 100,000 wage earners directly engaged in the forest industries. If the dependents of these workers are taken into account, this area is potentially capable of supporting more than a quarter of a million Illinois citizens; or of providing supplementary income to a much larger number on a part-time basis.

Among the profitable crops now being produced in Illinois woodland are fuelwood, fence posts, mine timbers and ties, fiber and chemical wood, pulpwood, cooperage staves, handle bolts, veneer logs, and all manner of lumber and timbers for home use on farms and for industrial use. Better management of the existing timberland will frequently treble or quadruple the present rate of timber growth. Even under these circumstances the value of maintaining thrifty forests on land not used for other purposes may not be primarily in the timber crop. The conservation of soil, water, and wildlife are inseparably linked with the maintenance and expansion of our woodland acreage. The importance of forests in meeting the public recreational needs is quite generally recognized. Fortunately the various uses to which forest land may be put are not mutually exclusive. Individuals or the public may own forest land primarily for one purpose, but under a plan of intelligent management, secure several or all of the benefits of forest cover.

WHO SHALL OWN THE FOREST LAND?

Private ownership: Most of the land now in timber, as well as much

of that to be reforested, is now a part of farms. Where this land is associated with sufficient land of real agricultural value it will undoubtedly remain in farm ownership. It should be developed as an integral part of the farms on which it occurs. The outlook for these areas is most hopeful. Experience has amply demonstrated that good management of existing woodland and investment in reforestation will yield satisfactory returns to farmers. The guidance and assistance needed by inexperienced owners can readily be provided by the expansion of programs which already have proved successful.

Unfortunately much of the present woodland and most of the cleared land useful primarily for timber production, though now in farm ownership, is not intimately associated with good agricultural land. Whole groups of farms include little or no productive crop land. There is no adequate source of income from agriculture to support individual owners or the community while timberlands are being rehabilitated and reforested areas are developing merchantable timber. There is no local source of funds for reforestation. Limited areas of this type will pass into non-farm private ownership for hunting and other recreational uses where the funds for maintenance and development originate outside the local community. Other areas may pass to industrial owners who now hold forest land, particularly that which is associated with mineral and water resources. New types of industrial ownership may arise. Industries such as basket veneer mills may acquire timberland to assure their future supply of logs. Industrial ownership for forestry purposes can be encouraged and technical assistance can be provided for this type of de-

velopment. The profitable development of private forestry should be aided in every way possible.

Public ownership: It appears unlikely that private ownership, even with the utmost encouragement and assistance, can solve the problem of our non-agricultural land. A large program of public acquisition, development and management seems inevitable. Even the most zealous proponents of private enterprise recognize the necessity of public ownership of some classes of forest land. This ownership may be predominately federal, state, county or community. All these types of public ownership now prevail in Illinois. The total area which will need to be in public ownership is unknown but an immediate minimum program for each type of ownership is needed.

The principal areas in federal ownership are administered by the U. S. Forest Service, the U. S. Army Engineers and the Soil Conservation Service. The Shawnee National Forest, administered by the Forest Service, now includes 200,000 acres. Present plans provide for more than doubling this area through future purchases in ten southern Illinois counties.

The acquisition of land by the state and its development as state forests are a major factor in the forest policy of many states. In fact many states are meeting their idle land problems primarily in this way.

Three state forests have now been established. Their purchase and development is providing valuable experience to guide future programs. That idle land can be acquired, developed, and administered efficiently by the state for the public good is being demonstrated in many parts of the country. There is ample evidence that, on the basis of lumber

value alone, long-time returns will show a profit to the state.

When New York State was considering a great program for the retirement of submarginal farm land by purchase for state forests, her agricultural economists held that the investment would be justified even though not one penny of revenue ever came to the state from these lands. Their justification was in the saving of human misery and public expense occasioned by the hopeless struggle of those who were induced to purchase submarginal farms and invest their savings in repairs to buildings and in equipment. Under its reforestation plan New York bought 200,000 acres between 1929 and 1934. If all costs including purchase, planting, fencing, protection from fire, insects and disease, and all overhead and supervision costs at the state and district level are distributed over the 200,000 acres, the total investment in establishing this state forest was twelve dollars per acre. The program was financed through the authorization of a bond issue of \$20,000,000 which allowed twenty dollars per acre to purchase and develop a million acres.

Many states have provided that tax delinquent land be forfeited to the state or county or that it be sold promptly at public auction. These procedures have brought much idle land suitable for forestry into public ownership.

Counties, municipalities, and schools may acquire land for forestry purposes. All these classes of ownership are represented in Illinois. Two

or three years ago Illinois gained national recognition for its activity in establishing community forests, but the accomplishment to date merely points the way to larger programs which must follow. The record of the development of community forests in this and other countries deserves careful study as a basis for planning in Illinois.

CONCLUSIONS

Illinois needs a definite forest policy.

There are at least six million acres in Illinois which should be devoted to timber production.

Intensive use of the area available for forestry will furnish profitable employment for many wage earners.

Agriculture and industry in Illinois will continue to require large volumes of forest products.

Existing woodland and plantable areas intimately associated with good agricultural land should be developed and utilized for the production of wood as an integral part of the farm enterprise.

Much timberland and most of the submarginal open land occurs in large blocks where it cannot be included in farms. Limited areas may be held for forestry purposes by individuals and industries.

Public ownership of large areas seems inevitable. Federal, state, county, municipal and school forests all have a place in the picture.

There is need for detailed study of many factors involved in making the potential forest area of Illinois fully productive.