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FORESTS, WILDLIFE, AND RECREATION

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Agriculture

A radio talk by C. E. Rachford, U. S. Forest Service, broadcast in the conservation day program, National Farm and Home Hour, Friday, September 20, 1935, by the National Broadcasting Company and 60 associated radio stations.

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Ever since the mythical days of Robin Hood, wildlife and forests have been closely linked.

True, in the days of Charlemagne and of William the Conqueror, in France and England, this close association also applies to pioneer and modern days in our own country. The conquest of our West is an example in point.

For as industry and agriculture pierced the wilderness -- as forests receded before the ax of settler and lumberman--the natural ranges of many wildlife species receded. And so marked has been this wildlife retreat that almost 75 percent of all western big-game ranges are now confined, it is said, to federally owned National Forests of the West.

Let me give you another bit of information which the National Resources Board report reveals about the close relationship between forests and wildlife. It is this: The number of game animals has increased 100 percent -- between the years 1921 and 1933 -- on the National Forests, but it has markedly decreased on forest lands in general in this country.

Now, the 160 odd million acres of federally owned National Forests, where game has increased so phenomenally, have been managed and kept productive for more than 30 years. But of the 395 million acres of commercial forest lands in private ownership -- on which game has decreased, and is still decreasing -- more than 380 million acres have lacked such management as might, by any stretch of the imagination, keep them productive.

This interesting relationship between forests and wildlife, verified in older countries, indicates that real management of forest and woodland resources contributes very greatly to wildlife welfare. And this is a fact to which due weight must be given in planning the new forest economy. For wildlife affects the happiness and satisfaction of more than 13 million hunters and fishermen; it is a forest resource the total national value of which is estimated by the Biological Survey to exceed one billion dollars annually!

It is, however, but one of many resources upon which forest lands, constituting almost one-third the total land area of the United States, support or exert a major influence. For forests and forest lands provide full-time work -- in normal times -- for 1,300,000 people; they assure supplemental cash incomes for two and one-half million farmers. Forested slopes help conserve and regulate life-giving water for irrigation, power, and domestic use. The presence of forest cover is a most effective means for the control of floods and erosion.

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More than 330 million acres of our forest lands are grazed by domestic livestock; from 144 million acres of western forest lands, some two and one-half million cattle and 12 million sheep -- valued at more than 145 million dollars -- get three to eight months' feed each year. The 160 odd million acres of federally owned National Forests now constitute, as I have said, almost 75 percent of our remaining big-game range. And more than 30 million people annually seek rest and recreation in the National Forests alone. So much for statistics.

These federal National Forests are now located in 37 States and the two territories of Alaska and Puerto Rico. Easily accessible from highway and rail, their timbered slopes, snow clad peaks, rushing streams, and placid mountain lakes afford a rich variety of recreational opportunities. A single visitor within a single National Forest may combine, on one trip, modern hotels and free camp grounds; fishing, hunting, and berry picking; botanizing, mountaineering, and the study of geology. He may travel by automobile, on foot, or with saddle and pack stock. He can follow roads or trails from one federal camp ground to the next, or he may set out for any one of the 68 areas which, -- already aggregating some 10 million acres without roads or civilization, -- are known as Primitive Areas.

Informal and democratic, all these uses are subject to a minimum of supervision. And always, in the National Forests, the visitor may see and enjoy wildlife. For in them, recreation and wildlife are companion resources.

But how, you may ask, do recreation and wildlife fit into the new forest economy? In two ways: first, they help provide rest and relaxation to millions of people; return rich dividends in health and spiritual wellbeing so that we may tackle, with renewed vigor, our every day tasks. Second, they help provide a livelihood for hundreds of thousands of people who live in, or near, forested areas. Witness the \$1,700,000,000 which forest recreationists -- including hunters and fishermen -- spent in 1929 for meals and lodgings, sportsmen's equipment, motor fuel, guides' fees, and countless incidentals.

Now this new forest economy is one of plenty rather than scarcity; of stability rather than instability; of permanence rather than impermanence. It is one which reaches into your city and mine; to towns, villages, and cross-roads communities; to factories in the industrial East and farms in the agricultural Middle West. It extends to every nook and cranny from the Canadian border to the Mexican, from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

For it has to do with almost one-third the land area of the continental United States; its object is to have this vast empire - which is most valuable for forest and allied purposes -- continuously contribute to the permanent support of its fair share of the country's population. And in the accomplishment of this purpose -- which is the objective of our federal forest conservation program -- forest-farm communities can be established and become an integral part of our social structure.

What are these forest-farms and their communities? Where will they be located? If you are interested, tune in on the next -- and last -- of these informal talks on that part of the National Resources Board report which has to do with Forestry in Land Use Planning.

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