

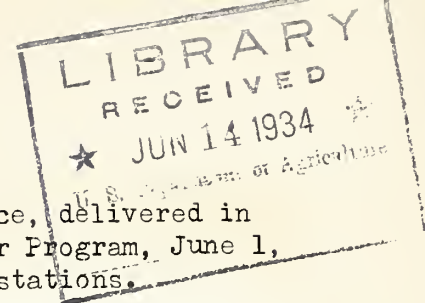
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RECREATION



An Address by Geo. A. Duthie, U. S. Forest Service, delivered in the Conservation Day series, National Farm and Home Hour Program, June 1, 1934, broadcast by a network of 57 associate NBC radio stations.

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When forest conservation was launched a generation ago, its sponsors set up two primary objectives, first, - to insure an adequate supply of timber and, second, - to maintain a forest cover on important watersheds for regulation of streamflow. These two conservation objectives are as vitally important to the public welfare today as they were 30 years ago. And now forest conservation finds itself possessed of a new - a third primary objective born of modern social trends. It is, - to provide adequate outdoor woodland recreation for the people of America.

The phenomenal growth of outdoor recreation during the past two decades is the natural outgrowth of the changes that have come about in our national standards and modes of living. Studies of the social trends since the World War, clearly denote that this new interest in recreation is not merely as an expression of higher standards of living, but it is also an agency of relief from the stresses of modern life. It, therefore, affords the forests a new opportunity to serve the public welfare in a very vital way. This recreation objective sounds a new popular note in conservation. While a conserved timber supply and protected watersheds are beneficial to the entire population, the benefits are indirect and intangible to large numbers of people, who, - therefore, - find it difficult to become very much interested in them. But this new note reaches the ears of millions of citizens who though they may be indifferent to the status of the timber supply and deaf to warnings of flood catastrophies, nevertheless respond enthusiastically to the call to protect and manage the forests for recreation. For it is a personal call to them a call to the forest shaded hills and streams and to the sheltered roads and bypaths, where they will find exhilarating exercise, inspiration, rest and pleasure. The appeal is direct and tangible and it is making the people of the country forest minded.

The growth of outdoor recreation has run parallel to the change of the population of this nation from one that was predominantly rural to one that is predominantly urban. We no longer live the simple lives of our fathers which involved a certain amount of daily physical labor. We are living in a machine age with all its modern mechanical labor saving devices which have taken over those chores that used to be daily duties in every household. Our standard of living has raised, but the tempo of our lives has speeded up also. We have less physical exercise, but greater mental stresses. The tendency, therefore, is to supply the deficiency in exercise, and to find relief from the strain and worries of our highly organized daily routine by some form of recreation.

In the broad range of recreational activities there is none that affords deeper and more lasting enjoyment than those which bring us in contact with nature. There is none which exercises a stronger appeal

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to all groups and classes of people than that of observing scenes of natural beauty. The woodlands and forests with their lakes and streams therefore have become the playgrounds to which the nation is turning for the soul satisfying forms of recreation.

The increase in the use of the National Forests since the War is typical of the national trend in outdoor recreation for that period. In 1917, - the first year that statistics were compiled, - it was estimated that a little more than 3 million people entered the National Forests for some form of recreation. Similar estimates have been compiled yearly since that date, and the record shows a constant rise to more than 35 million visitors in 1933. It is significant that at no time during the period has there been any decrease in the volume of recreational use. The trend has been steadily upward with every indication that it will continue for some time to come.

How to provide adequately for the expected national recreational need is then a question which takes its place with other important problems of conservation and land use planning. Private lands will provide for a part of the demand through the private estates of the wealthy and through those types of recreation that can be commercialized to return a financial income. It will remain, however, for the government, local, State, and national, to furnish recreational facilities for the great mass of the population.

Many cities are now providing recreation camps for their citizens upon State and Federal forest lands. Some have acquired forests of their own. Such provision is sure to grow, and, looking into the future, it is not unreasonable to predict that the time will come when it will be considered just as much a function of government to provide healthful public recreation as it is now to provide public education.

The recreational resources of the National Forests make the largest single contribution to the public needs. Being a public property which is managed upon the principle of the greatest good to the largest number, the public has assurance that this resource will be developed, protected and permanently maintained for the public good. There are 162 million acres of National Forest land, and they contain recreational resources which are unsurpassed for magnificence, adaptability and accessibility for use by the bulk of the American public.

Their resources are freely open to public use without restrictions save those dictated by common sense and decency. Remembering that human occupancy always involves hazards which if not controlled will eventually destroy the resource, it is necessary that rather strict rules be observed in the use of fire, in the practice of sanitary measures and in the curbing of wanton vandalism.

Is it not fair to suggest a code of fair practice by which all who go to the woods for recreation will play fair with the forest, with the wild life, and with the fellow recreation seeker who comes after him?