

Issued By

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Devoted To

The Dissemination of Information Concerning the Forest and Forest Industries of Idaho.

TREND OF THE LUMBER INDUSTRY IN IDAHO

Numbers 1 and 2 of this bulletin have given a rather detailed inventory of the timber resources of Idaho, and indicated the importance of the lumber industry to the state. In this number the forest area, timber stand, and lumber cut by ownership are briefly compared, and the future dependence of the forest wealth upon government and state ownership is pointed out.

Acknowledgement is made to the U.S. Forest Service for much of the data herein presented. The figures given for government ownership include figures for the Indian reservations.

OWNERSHIP OF FOREST LAND

	Acres	
Government	.20,718,736	or 90.3%
Private	. 1,521,451	or 6.6%
State	. . . 700,000	or 3.1%
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Total	. .22,940,187	100.0%

OWNERSHIP OF MERCHANTABLE TIMBER (Over 12 inches diameter)

	Board Feet	
Government	.51,740,000,000	or 61.3%
Private	. .25,000,000,000	or 29.6%
State	. . . 7,700,000,000	or 9.1%
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Total	84,440,000,000	100.0%

From the above tables it will be seen that while the government and state together hold over 93% of the forest land, they have but 70% of the standing timber. This leaves in private ownership less

than 7% of the forest land, but nearly 30% of the timber. This discrepancy is largely due to the poorer character of the government land. Great bodies of it lie at the higher altitudes and consist of barren or grazing land, or lands bearing unmerchantable timber. The later, however, lying as they do at the headwaters of irrigation projects exert an exceedingly important influence on stream flow and irrigation farming. The state timber lands average much above the government lands in point of equality for timber growing.

But of still greater interest is the source of the present lumber cut as shown in the table following:

LUMBER CUT IN 1922

	Board Feet	
Government	. 90,234,000	or 10.5%
Private	. .737,867,000	or 85.8%
State	. . . 32,000,000	or 3.7%
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Total	. .860,101,000	100.0%

From this table it will be seen that while the private owners have less than 30% of the standing timber they furnished nearly 86% of the lumber cut in 1922, the cut of the government and the state combined being only 14%, although these agencies own 70% of the standing timber. This striking discrepancy is due in part to the greater inaccessibility of the state and national timber, partly to the plan of the government, the state also in as far as may be practicable, to cut on a sustained yield basis, and finally in no

small measure to the fact that both escape heavy carrying charges in the way of taxes and interest that the private owner must bear.

How Long Will The Timber Last

It being the announced policy of the Forest Service to cut its timber on the basis of a sustained yield by national forests and subdivisions of these forests; in other words to cut the timber in each community no faster than it grows, the government will be able to furnish a continuous supply of lumber, just as the wise investor who spends only his interest, leaving the principle in tact, is assured a steady income. The state also plans to sell her timber on a gradual scale thus approaching a sustained yield basis.

But present economic conditions are not encouraging to private forestry, hence privately owned timber is not being handled with reference to a sustained yield, and will be cut out as soon as practicable. At the present rate of cutting the privately owned timber will last about 35 years. The young growth that will come into merchantable size meanwhile will prolong the private cut somewhat. On the other hand, the increased demand for Idaho lumber, incident to the growing scarcity of timber in the older lumber regions will tend to increase the private cut, hence the greater body of the privately owned timber will in all probability disappear in even less than the 35 year period.

The government and the state together cannot supply, for years to come, more than a portion of the present cut on a sustained yield

basis. When Idaho's forest lands are all under high class management, the lumber industry will not only be sustained in its present volume but will doubtless be appreciably increased. But all this will come about slowly, and meanwhile lean years in the lumber output are certain.

The decline will be more serious by regions than for the state as a whole. For example, in north Idaho, the bulk of the cut is from a limited territory tributary to Spokane, and the privately owned timber here will go first. Meanwhile the industry will shift to the Clearwater region, a movement now taking place. This territory will thrive for some years, only to suffer reverses when the privately owned timber is gone. Obviously stability of the lumber industry is possible in a given community only when the annual cut in that community is restricted to the annual growth. Regulatory measures to bring about such a condition, though impractical at present, will be adopted in time.

Meanwhile it is most fortunate that the great national forest areas are being managed with a view to permanency in lumber production in all districts. It is fortunate also that the state is putting her timber holdings under such management as will tend to stabilize the lumber business. The private owners are likewise in sympathy with the movement to provide for a future timber supply, and to this end are giving protection to young growth on cut-over lands. The final solution, however, will probably come through the expansion of both government and state ownership of forest lands.