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IDAHO IN FOREST PROTECTION

Foremost of all states in cooperative forest protection Idaho has proclaimed again, in 1924 and 1925, her leadership, first assumed in 1906.

It is now a matter of history how the Coeur d'Alene Timber Protective Association was formed and how the Fallon fire law was enacted, and from those early beginnings nearly 20 years ago, how the proven principles were extended to all Idaho, to the entire northwest and to the nation.

These principles were recognized by the federal act of March 1, 1911, known as the Weeks Law, by which the government was enabled to cooperate in fire protection with Idaho as well as with other states having within their boundaries the headwaters of navigable streams.

The government believes in helping those who help themselves. Idaho helped herself, and so by 1923 she was receiving the maximum possible allotment of federal funds under the Weeks Law, a just recognition of her own efforts as a state and as a timber land proprietor, joined together with other timber land owners, both corporate and individual, in cooperative fire protective associations.

There were limitations in the Weeks Law which prevented full recognition of Idaho's initiative in forest protection. First, only official state expenditures for fire protection could be considered as a basis for the allotment of federal funds. In this particular, however, Idaho more than met the requirements, since the state it-

self appropriated and expended for fire protection about double the maximum federal allotment, and it may be added that private expenditures for forest protection ran far in excess of the state's own aggregate.

In the second place, federal appropriation for cooperative forest protection was scant, and even the small amount available had to be prorated among many states, hence altho warranted by Idaho's excellent showing, additional participation by the federal government was precluded.

Forest protection, particularly in its cooperative aspect as originated in Idaho, was gaining national importance. A study of the situation was needed. In 1923 a select senate committee headed by Senator McNary of Oregon covered the whole nation in an exhaustive research. Idaho's status in forest protection was ably presented by the man who started the movement. Actual conditions were seen at first hand by a trip into Idaho forests. The results were forthcoming immediately.

The Clarke-McNary Act of June 7, 1924, made possible increased federal allotments to states which adopted permanent and adequate forest protective policies, stimulated the protection of cut-over lands, valuable chiefly for timber production, and lands containing young forest growth, and recognized expenditures for forest protection other than state expenditures as a basis for cooperation. Clearly this federal law had as its foundation the Idaho principles of cooperative forest protection.

The fire season of 1924 will long be remembered in Idaho, both for its length and severity and particularly for the unprecedented conditions during the month of May. This season and those just recently past emphasized certain defects in the operation of the original Idaho law by which cooperative protection was first sanctioned. Forest protection was on a voluntary basis, to continue only as long as the forest land owner desired. Slash disposal after logging was only indifferently provided for by law. Control of slash burning and brush burning was impossible outside of the fire districts and inadequately provided for within. "No man's land" was of large extent, and forest fires might burn for weeks or all season long there without action on the part of any agency. The federal act emphasized permanency and it had to be admitted that Idaho did not have a permanent forest policy. Her activities in forest protection, no matter how adequate and commendable for the present, were not designed to meet the conditions required in the production of a crop maturing every century or so.

Foresters, lumbermen, water-users, stockmen, all had been thinking on these questions. Action seemed necessary to meet present and future exigencies. The North Idaho Chamber of Commerce established within itself a permanent committee on forest policy and asked of it the draft of a new state forestry law. The south Idaho commercial bodies were asked to assist by the appointment of a committee to act jointly with the north Idaho committee, since the movement is necessarily state-wide and also since the interests of southern Idaho, while perhaps less apparent are no less directly dependent upon the protection of the forest cover.

The assigned work of this joint committee was completed only after the eighteenth session of the Idaho legislature had convened. The draft of the proposed bill embodied the principles which the State Board of

Land Commissioners and the State Land Department believed essential to the welfare of the state. The measure was thus introduced and became a law upon the approval of Governor Moore March 5, 1925.

The act provides for three essentials of an adequate and permanent state forest policy:

- (1) A cooperative board of forestry with a State Forester as the executive officer.
- (2) Permanent protection for all forest land.
- (3) Adequate disposal of slash after logging.

By this step the state of Idaho, thru her legislature and Governor Moore, has adopted a permanent forest protective policy, the equal if not the superior of that of any state. The Act is worthy of an older state whose foresight comes only after the depletion of her forest wealth, yet Idaho is attaining permanency while she still has billions of feet in virgin timber. May not we, her citizens, be justly proud; may not we be also thankful for a step taken in time to enable Idaho to keep her lead in cooperative forest protection?

The following by E.T. Allen, is quoted from American Forests and Forest Life:

"Our present achievement in the forest-fire line being 50,000 fires and 10,000,000 acres burned over, we are averaging 200 acres to the fire. Each, then, averages two-thirds of a mile in diameter. Lining up the 50,000 so they touch, they extend 32,784 miles; so each year we run ten lines of fire, each two-thirds of a mile wide, across this country from coast to coast; and if we cut out the prairies and farm country, keeping these lines in the woods, it will not take very strong winds to drop sparks anywhere between them.

"This is the handicap we place on every public and private agency we have the effrontery to hold responsible for the perpetuation of American forests."