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IDAHO'S NEW FORESTRY LAW

The forestry bill passed by the Idaho legislature at its recent session and signed by the Governor March 5, marks the culmination of a long time effort to secure for Idaho a law which would give reasonable assurance of permanency in timber production on her forest lands. But at length the effort is rewarded, for Idaho altho among the very last of the timbered states of the union to act, now has one of the most progressive forestry laws yet written. The new law supersedes the old Fallon fire law tho retaining the good features of the latter.

The law is predicated on the belief that if forest fires are controlled the problem of keeping Idaho's forest land in a state of continuous forest production is largely solved. But any forest law calculated to control forest fires in Idaho must provide for three essentials - executive officers to enforce the law, rational methods of slash disposal, and an adequate protective organization for all forest lands, whether bearing merchantable timber, cut-over or burned over.

The law meets the first essential thru the creation of the office of state forester, and a state cooperative board of forestry. The state is exceedingly fortunate in having available as its first state forester, Mr. Ben E. Bush, for many years connected with the state land department. Mr. Bush is a graduate from the University of Idaho, class of 1903, and since then he has been connected almost continuously with some phase of timber business. He is widely known

in lumber and forestry circles, enjoys the confidence of the forest owners of all classes and his appointment has met with state wide approval. His office will be at Moscow.

The general administration of the law is vested in a non-political, non-salaried board known as the state cooperative board of forestry of twelve members, consisting of the governor, as chairman, the attorney general of the state, secretary of the state, state auditor, state superintendent of public instruction, state land commissioner, state commissioner of reclamation, dean of the school of forestry at the university, and four citizens of the state, appointed by the governor. Two of the four appointees are nominated by the timber protective associations, one by the livestock industry, and one by the U.S. Forest Service. It will be noted that the board is representative in character, all interests most directly concerned in the use of the forest having membership on it, thus giving the greatest assurance of an impartial administration of the law. A representative board also enlists at once a larger public interest in the success of the law than would otherwise be the case. Its unwieldiness is largely offset thru executive committees consisting of three members each, chosen by the board to represent it in the field in the administration of previously adopted policies, rules and regulations.

The second essential is accomplished by the slash disposal section. This provides that the slash created incident to logging

shall be piled and burned unless another method of disposal is authorized by the state forester.

The broadcast burning of the slash as has been the practice under the Fallon Act not only defeats any reforestation program, but is a failure as a fire preventive measure. That old logging works on which the slash has been disposed of in this way, have been repeatedly burned over is the rule rather than the exception with the result that any natural reproduction is either impossible or long delayed. Probably the bulk of the cut-over lands of the state is in a non-productive condition as a result of repeated fires.

By piling the slash before burning, most of the young growth left after logging is saved, reproduction is practically assured, and the fire hazard is reduced to a minimum. This method of slash disposal is not an experiment. It is in general use on both government and state lands in Idaho, and in more recent years has been adopted by some of the larger operators.

The third essential is met thru the provision that all the forest lands of the state shall be divided into districts to be known and designated as forest protective districts with a view to giving each district adequate and effective protection, the cost to be borne equitably by all owners, aided by federal funds.

Under the old Fallon Act the state was districted only in part, since all protection of private lands was entirely voluntary. A large part of the cut-over land was outside the boundaries of the officially organized protective districts. These lands were commonly known as "no man's lands", and received no protection whatever. Under the new law all such lands will be included in regularly organized districts. This will be done either by extending the boundaries of the districts already

organized or by the creation of new districts.

By prorating the cost of fire protection among all owners as the new law does, the average per acre cost will be substantially reduced. For example one prominent association finds that the cost per acre for 1925 figured under the old Fallon Law would be 11.3 cents whereas under the new law the cost will be 6.6 cents, a saving of 4.7 cents per acre. This cost will doubtless be still further reduced by additional federal funds which will be made available this year.

The timber protective associations built up under the old Fallon Law will not be disturbed by the new law, but will continue to function just as formerly.

The new law carries many other features which serve to clarify and strengthen the main essentials. The cooperative board held its organization meeting at Boise, March 16 to 18 to launch the new law and it is now in full force and effect. Governor Moore and many others prominent in the affairs of the state have pronounced the forestry law to be one of the outstanding acts passed by the last legislature. It is at once constructive and far reaching.

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President Coolidge in a recent address used these words: "We hold the resources of our country as a trust. They must be administered for the general welfare of all the people, both for the present and for the future. There must be both use and restoration".

Thus is expressed the cardinal principle of Idaho's new forestry law. It is recognized on the one hand that the various industries dependent upon the forests must continue, and on the other hand that in using these forests the economic welfare of the state as a whole must be safeguarded.