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**THE PRACTICE OF FORESTRY
UPON PRIVATE LANDS AS INFLUENCED
BY FORESTRY EXTENSION**

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THE PRACTICE OF FORESTRY UPON PRIVATE LANDS AS
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The word extension may be defined as extending information and instruction beyond the walls of a college. Accordingly, the more specific term forestry extension includes the teaching of forestry to people who are not in college.

I trust that you will pardon me if I confine my discussion to those phases of forestry extension which are being conducted by the extension services of the several agricultural colleges in the country. Not that the agricultural colleges have any monopoly of extension teaching - nor for that matter is it confined to colleges - witness the educational work which the State foresters in many parts of the country are doing.

In the words of a recent report from the Department of Agriculture, this system of agricultural extension "contemplates placing men and women demonstration agents in every agricultural county, to make available to the farmer on his farm and the farm woman in her home improved methods in farming and home making which have been established by research and in a form which they can use." To the extent that forestry has a place in farm management and home making it has a definite place in this agricultural extension program.

Certain agricultural colleges were doing a little forestry extension work even before 1914 when the Smith-Lever law set up a national system of agricultural extension. Between 1914 and 1925 when the Clarke-McNary law became effective 14 States developed definite farm forestry projects. Since then 16 other States have included forestry in their agricultural extension program, and the \$50,000 made available by the Clarke-McNary law has been added to by the States until it has grown to over \$130,000. To say that this makes possible the employment of over 30 full-time extension foresters is to scarcely touch upon the potentialities of this organization. As a matter of fact, channels have been opened whereby these extension foresters may get their message to more than 2,200 county agricultural agents, who in turn are trying to reach the hundreds of thousands of farmers within their counties.

Some one has compared the extension foresters to a group of generals without an army. If there are any such individuals it is because they do not understand the organization of which they are a part. For every county agent is a potential forestry

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leader ready to carry out the extension forester's instructions, provided they fit in with the problems of the county and are sufficiently clear to be carried into effect. This points to the fundamental job of any extension forester who undertakes the initial work in a State, to study the forest problems as they affect the agriculture of the State, and determine those for which a satisfactory solution is available. From among these pick out the two or three phases which are most essential, analyze them, and determine the best means of presenting both problem and solution to the people of the State. But this is not all; unless the extension forester gets the attention of the public whom he wishes to reach, and gets a reasonable number to accept his ideas, he has not succeeded.

It is unfortunate that this paper must be written so near the close of a calendar year, before the reports on the year's activities are available. For that reason statistics of results are limited to the calendar year 1925, the last half of which was distinctly influenced by the funds made available by the Clarke-McNary law. On December 1, 1925, there were 22 States in which extension foresters were cooperatively employed. During that year the outstanding piece of work dealt with forest planting on idle or waste land. Agricultural agents from 188 counties reported 2,317 farm forest plantings on 11,458 acres. In addition, results were reported on projects dealing with woodland care, improvement, and management, the establishment and care of farm nurseries, the measuring and marketing of farm forest products, the preservation of fence posts and other farm timbers, the planting of windbreaks and shelter belts, the control of erosion and the fixation of sand dunes, the planting of roadside trees, and the control of white-pine blister rust. Blister-rust control is usually handled by separate leaders under an agreement which calls for the support and cooperation of the agricultural extension service.

To indulge in a few more figures, during 1925 there were conducted 1,917 demonstrations of the results of forest practices. Most of these were handled by an extension forester in cooperation with the county agent, but it is possible after adequate instruction and experience for the county agent to conduct them without the presence of the subject-matter specialist.

County agents reported that 2,126 farmers were helped with the management of their woodlands, while 1,191 planted windbreaks or shelter belts, and 485 adopted the recommended practices for the control of white-pine blister rust. Altogether, 6,574 farmers were reported as having adopted better forest practices during 1925. This is 1,000 more than were reported during the calendar year 1924. I can not give you the acreage involved, but I think you will agree that we are making progress. The report for 1926 should show material gains, for the number of States carrying on this work has increased by eight, and I think it reasonable to assume that the ability of the extension foresters has increased.

You may well ask how the extension forester conducted his work, and how one man may be expected to have any material influence over the forest practices of the people of his State. In the first place his work is considerably simplified, because it is so largely limited to the teaching of forestry to farmers for application on their lands. The administration of State forest lands and of forest laws, as well as any police power, is the function of the State forester; the teaching of students at the college is the function of the resident professor of forestry, whereas others have assumed responsibility for the research work. As a matter of fact, he can not claim the responsibility for all forestry teaching beyond the walls of the college. His peculiar strength lies in the fact that he is a part of the great cooperative agricultural extension service, and there are available the services of the army of county agricultural agents.

It follows then, that he must convince each county agent that forestry can contribute materially to the agricultural prosperity of his county. The turnover among county agents is such that this primary education must be fairly continuous. Once the county agent becomes a supporter of the work, the extension forester may feel assured that forestry will find a place on the agricultural program for that county. At this juncture the tables are turned - instead of the forester pleading for a hearing, the county agent begins calling for help. This is the beginning of progress. The county agent realizes that there is a need and he looks around for means by which the situation may be presented to the farmers.

I might cite numerous such instances that have happened during the past year - in Arkansas, Iowa, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. I merely mention a few States which have come most forcibly to my attention. In each of these, certain county agents called conferences in which the State extension forester took an active part. Facts were brought out so that the forest situation with its relation to agricultural prosperity for that county might be squarely faced. Available solutions were presented, and upon the background of problem and solution a plan was developed looking forward to satisfactory action on the part of a considerable number of farmers in that county.

At the risk of being personal, let me be more specific. Some time last winter or early spring, the agricultural agent of Schuyler County, N. Y., became convinced that the farmers and tax payers of that county are unnecessarily burdened with idle nonproductive land capable of growing timber if it is planted. Arrangements were made for a conference in his office with the extension forester, one of the State leaders of county agents, and a few others. During the conference these points were brought out: There are not less than 50,000 acres of land in farm ownership now unproductive but capable of growing timber; the simplest and best trees to plant are white pine and red pine; these trees

can be obtained at a nominal price from the State forester; the planting of these lands need not prove burdensome to the farmers, and the returns will justify the efforts.

Accordingly a plan was worked out both psychologically and chronologically, to the end that local leaders might first be selected from among the farmers to help carry the program forward. In June a big county-wide meeting was held, which with the accompanying publicity brought the situation and its solution before the people. This has been followed with fair exhibits, guessing contests, essay contests, all of news value and therefore all receiving attention in the press. Meanwhile the efforts of the farmers who are project leaders are gathering momentum to the end that many farmers may sign orders for trees and agree to plant. The trees will be furnished at the regular price by the State forester. Instructions in planting will be given at meetings during the winter, bulletins will be distributed, and at the beginning of the planting season a few planting demonstrations will be held. Thereafter, the farmers will do their own planting.

As soon as the planting season of 1927 is completed, work will be started looking toward effective action in the spring of 1928. These efforts may continue for several years, or until the county agent and the forester are convinced that forest planting is an established practice, so that they may turn their attention to other more pressing problems.

A conspicuous feature of this plan is the leadership which is developed among local people, the responsibility which rests upon the county agent, and the apparently inconspicuous part played by the extension forester. As a matter of fact, he is there in the important capacity of thinker, planner, campaign manager, and subject-matter specialist. Without him the plan could never proceed, but he is there as a catalyzer rather than a crutch. In this way the extension forester is taking himself out of the realm of an agent, or one who performs a service for some one else, and assuming more and more the role of a teacher.

I have touched a few of the high spots of extension work as it is developing in the several States. It would have been equally pertinent had I described the plan by which a county in Iowa is getting farmers to plant windbreaks and shelter belts, or the one in Maine where instruction in timber estimating is being given to help farmers to be more nearly "woods-minded." But they all follow along the principle of our desire to get the landowners to follow the practices which we as foresters feel justified in recommending.

The way of the extension forester is not smooth, and all of his carefully laid plans do not work out. The success of any extension program is dependent upon the concerted action of many minds, but I am sure that the results cited in this paper justify the efforts. Forestry extension has already had a decided influence upon the practice of forestry on private lands, and as the technique of working through the extension organization develops the influence will be increasingly more satisfactory.