

Union-Camp Makes Contribution

WAYNE, N. J.—Nearly 50,000 acres of one of the most unique and significant wild areas remaining on the Eastern Seaboard will be preserved as a natural wilderness through action to be taken by Union Camp Corporation, a major forest products firm headquartered in Wayne, N. J. The company will donate its entire landholdings in Virginia's Dismal Swamp, with an appraised value of \$12.6 million, to The Nature Conservancy, the nation's leading non-profit, land conservation organization.

Everett M. Woodman, president of The Nature Conservancy, said, "The Union Camp Corporation gift is the largest and most significant land gift the Conservancy has received in its two-decade history of private land conservation." Dr. Woodman indicated that present plans call the Dismal Swamp land to be conveyed to the U. S. Department of the Interior for operation as a national wildlife refuge by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. The Union Camp land lies just 10 miles southwest of Norfolk, the center of the fast-growing Hampton Roads area which has a population of more than one million.

In commenting on this action, the Secretary of the Interior, Rogers C. B. Morton, said, "I am delighted with the plans of Union Camp Corporation and The Nature Conservancy to convey this property to the Department of the Interior. The Department has long been interested in the preservation of the Great Dismal Swamp. In fact, in July of this past year, my Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments recommended that this property be registered as a Natural Landmark. We are particularly pleased that Union Camp has so appropriately recognized the high responsibility to the Nation that goes with the ownership and use of a property which has outstanding value in illustrating the natural history of the United States."

A formal donation ceremony, involving Secretary Morton and Union Camp and Conservancy officials, is planned for next month in Washington.

The Great Dismal Swamp, which has been called one of the East's last wildernesses and a unique ecosystem, has figured in history and legend since pre-colonial times. George Washington and Patrick Henry once owned portions of it. Thomas Moore, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote about it. The Union Camp donation includes Lake Drummond, a nearly circular lake covering about 3,000 acres and with an average maximum depth of six feet. According to Nansemond Indian legend, the depression was created centuries ago by the "Fire Bird"—possibly a meteor.

Commenting further on the announcement, Dr. Woodman said, "This gift by Union Camp, the major landowner in the entire Dismal Swamp, marks the first of what we at the Conservancy hope will be a continuing program to preserve significant areas of the Dismal." Woodman pointed out that many others with holdings in the swamp could follow Union Camp's lead to preserve it, which has been a goal of both local and national conservation groups for almost a decade.

In making the announcement, Union Camp Chairman Alexander Calder, Jr., said, "The Dismal Swamp is a natural wilderness and we're pleased that the company's gift will help to protect and preserve it in its natural state. Our goal is to apply each of our landholdings to highest possible end-use. The historic significance of our Dismal Swamp acreage and its proximity to a rapidly-growing major population center make it a vital asset to be retained for enjoyment and use by present and future citizens while providing an important addition to the national wildlife refuge system."

Samuel M. Kinney, Jr., president of Union Camp, added: "The nation's tax laws, quite properly, encourage this type of action by individuals and corporations. These laws make it possible for Union Camp to donate one of its assets—in this case a beautiful, natural resource—and in exchange receive the benefit of a deduction of its appraised value from taxable earnings over a period of several years. This benefits everyone: future generations of Americans as well as Union Camp shareholders."

The Conservancy's national operations director, Patrick F. Noonan, called the Union Camp donation "a breakthrough and clear evidence adding to the growing testimony of the positive role that industry can play in the preservation of vast areas of natural land."

Initially, Union Camp will donate an "undivided interest" of 40 per cent of its Dismal Swamp holdings. It will add to this percentage over the next three years with the complete transfer taking place in 1975, in time for the following year's National Bicentennial Celebration.

Today's Dismal Swamp is less than a third of its original size. This shrinkage has been principally because of residential and agricultural development.

The present swamp is astride the state line, with 40 per cent in Virginia and 60 per cent in North Carolina. The land involved in the Union Camp donation represents about one-half the swamp's acreage in Virginia. It also includes the Washington Ditch, probably the earliest "monument" to bear the name of the Father of our Country. George Washington and his associates dug the ditch in 1763 to drain the land in the swamp for agricultural purposes.

Union Camp, which owns almost 1.7-million acres in six southeastern states, came into ownership of its Dismal Swamp property when Camp Manufacturing Company, one of its predecessor companies, acquired it in 1909.

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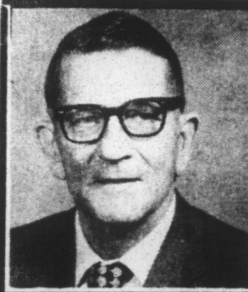
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