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FOREST PAYS OFF IN TREES, GAME, TOURISTS

has shaped Forest Service policies toward grazing, farming and logging on the watersheds which feed the mountain lakes. The Forest Service also is protecting the watersheds of numerous cities (Brevard, Marion and Hendersonville are examples) and industries like the Great Ecusta and Champion paper companies and the Enka Aluminum Corporation.

The Question of Timber
The Nantahala forest, besides ranking high in annual rainfall, also is unique in the variety of native trees to be found in the coves and along the ridges. A man making the trip from the Piedmont to the 9,000-foot peaks on the Tennessee line will observe more different species of trees than he will find on a trip across all of Europe, from the British Isles to Turkey.

In the early 1930's when J. Herbert Stone, now regional forester for the 11 Southern states, was assistant supervisor of the Nantahala forest, the magnificent American chestnut accounted for 50 to 60% of the timber on these mountains.

In those years the blight was just reaching the Nantahala country. Today all the chestnuts are dead. The blight was the most damaging blow ever struck our mountain counties. Even today the whitened trunks of dead chestnuts accounts for 19% of the commercial timber in the Nantahala forest.

Mr. Stone estimates that there are 600,000,000 board feet of saw logs in the forest today. He reports that the growth is running along at an estimated 12,000,000 board feet each year.

The Forest Service policy is to harvest the timber crop as it matures. However, since large tracts in the Nantahala are now understocked, the service is limiting the yearly cut to something like 7,000,000 feet. The remainder (5,000,000 feet each year) is reinvested in forest capital until the Nantahala reaches full production. At the time the annual growth will be cut from the land as it matures.

Heavy Wartime Cut
In 1944, when war demands were heavy, almost 50 million board feet of timber were cut off the Nantahala forest alone. Today the annual cut is running along at 30-40 million board feet, about 7 million in green timber and the remainder in dead chestnut.

Most of the timber is logged by mountain people (a result of a policy to fit forest use into the local economy) and it is logged on a selective basis. Before a tract is cut over, trained foresters mark the mature trees and they also mark the cull

trees which should be removed to permit the maximum production of quality timber.

Recently loggers completed their work on a tract which ran from Wayah Crest down to Little John Creek in the heart of the Nantahala forest. Moving through this tract (on foot and by car), a casual observer scarcely would be aware that the land has been logged. This sort of cutting represents the harvesting of a crop, not the exploitation of a natural resource.

The sustained yield program of the Forest Service insures the native people of steady employment and it also insures that heavy consumers of logs (like the pulp mills at Canton and Sylva) will have a source of supply in the future.

Returns 25 Per Cent
The Forest Service returns 25% of the income from the timber sales to the counties in lieu of taxes. In Graham county 72% of the forest land lies within the Nantahala National Forest. During 1944 the timber sales were large and Graham county realized 16 cents an acre from this rebate. Last year the Nantahala paid an average of 6 cents an acre to the counties from timber sales, about the amount formerly realized in taxes.

Another 10% from timber sales is used for the upkeep of the 250 miles of Forest Service-maintained roads. These roads are heavily used by residents of the county.

In North Carolina, where, according to Regional Forester Stone, we are cutting 8% more timber each year than we grow, this sustained yield program is important. Without it we would continue to dip into our capital instead of living off the annual income produced by our forests.

But the program of the United States Forest Service is only a short skip in the right direction. There are 18 million acres of commercial forest land in North Carolina. Of this only one million acres are in national forests. The state, counties and municipalities own some and the rest (about 16.5 million acres) is privately owned.

Of the privately owned forest roughly 10 million acres are on small farms. Until the individual farmer can be educated to use his forest land properly and to treat trees as a crop, North Carolina is likely to continue dipping into its capital reserve. Mr. Stone says that this educational problem is the biggest headache faced by the Forest Service in the South today.

The Game and Fish Crops
The game and fish produced in the forests also are considered crops and are harvested each year. There are 1,290 miles of trout and bass streams on the Nantahala National Forest. Each year these are stocked and opened to the public on specified days. Last year 12,768 fishermen worked the waters of the Pisgah National Forest. In the Nantahala the number was

smaller (1,536) but 19% of the fishermen in the Nantahala made limit catches against only 8% for the Pisgah.

Working with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources commission, the Forest Service helps manage four areas on the Nantahala (Fires Creek, Standing Indian, Wayah Bald and Santeehan), where annual hunts are held for black bear, wild boar and deer. The forest also provides some raccoon, possum and fox hunting, and there is the basis for some excellent future gunning for grouse.

Except for bear—20 were taken on the Santeehan management area last year—most of the hunting is in the stage where stocks are being rebuilt.

These streams and game areas along with the ALCOA and TVA lakes provide an important attraction for tourists.

It is difficult to evaluate the watershed management work of the Forest Service in terms of dollars and cents. It is even more difficult to guess at the part played by the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests in our tourist industry. But without question these forests are bringing many millions of dollars' worth of tourist business to this state each year.

The forests, along with the Qualla reservation and the Smoky Mountain National Park, embrace an area of something like four million acres (not all publicly owned, of course) and this area contains some of the finest mountain scenery in the Eastern United States. Moreover, the area is within relatively easy reach (200 miles) of some 13,000,000 people. It offers a summer climate vastly superior to that found in the surrounding lowlands.

Tourists are aware of the highly publicized Smoky Mountain Park, but not many visitors appreciate the recreational resources of the national forests. Certainly from the standpoint of accessibility the Nantahala and Pisgah forests offer more than the Smoky Mountain Park. There is one major road through the park while the two forests are threaded by 11 important U. S. highways.

Along the highways in the Nantahala National Forest there are nine picnic areas, one major camping place (with trailer space) and two (Arrowood Glade and Cliffside Lake) combination areas where swimming is available. The same sort of development is found in the Pisgah forest.

The scenic resources of the Nantahala forest equal those found any place in the Southern Appalachians. During June and the front part of July the laurel, pink and purple rhododendron and azaleas wash the mountains in progressive waves of color. Then, along about October, the hardwoods take fire with the first frosts and the Coweets, the Nantahalas, the Balsams, the Snowbirds and the Cheoahs are a roiling, sun-hazed blaze of color.

The Nantahala gorge (place of the noonday sun in Cherokee legend), the Shooting Creek vista, the view from Wayah Bald, the many white water falls—Dry Falls, Bridal Veil, Cullasaja Falls—and the mile-after-mile of twisting mountain roads (try the Winding Stairs) open up a lush, unbelievably green mountain country which is delightful to persons accustomed to corn and cotton for vegetation.

If you prefer the back country, away from the car window sight-seers, then the Nantahala (or the Pisgah) will serve you well. For long walkers there is the Appalachian Trail, which runs from Mount Oglethorpe in Georgia north some 2,050 miles to Mount Katahdin in Maine. And the Appalachian Trail is just one link in the 320-mile system of horse and footpaths which thread the forest. The finest tract of virgin cove

hardwoods in the Southern highlands is located on the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, a part of the Nantahala, in Graham county. This 3,840-acre area was selected after a nationwide search and in 1936 it was set aside in remembrance of the man who wrote "Trees."

The Joyce Kilmer forest can be reached by car but the 101-est itself must be traveled on foot. There are 20 miles of trails. It is a place flooded in fern and laurel and rhododendron, where trees drive upward in 170-foot columns and filter the sun until the light is as soft as forest murmurs. Yellow poplars six feet through shoulder dark hemlocks almost as large along the creeks and on the cupped sides of the coves.

Except for the Joyce Kilmer tract—a memorial to man and to a time which has escaped us—the Nantahala forest does not have an idle acre. Mr. Renshaw and his staff of rangers have put the forest to work. They are building up the sponge-like soil cover which protects the watersheds; they are raising annual crops of timber and of fish and game, too; and they are regulating the harvesting of these crops in such a way that the

yield is a perpetual yield.

The primary resources of Western North Carolina are the same as they were 25 years ago. The difference is that crack professional men like E. W. Renshaw and Herbert Stone have helped the folks in our mountain counties to use these resources wisely.

Talk to men like Floyd Griffin, Graham county's superintendent of schools, or Weimar Jones, editor of Macon County's Franklin Press, and you will learn that the busting of Robbinsville and the brisk business

along the streets of Franklin are a product of a stable economy built slowly on the wise use of natural wealth.

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