

## Forestry in Massachusetts

Dewey Berckhan, Ex. '24

Perhaps no state in the Union has conditions so suitable for the application of scientific forestry or is doing more along forestry lines, than Massachusetts. Here there are no virgin forests. It is a problem of conservative handling of second growth material and the reclaiming of waste lands.

Forestry and the reclaiming of waste lands are usually associated together. Old abandoned farm lands, now entirely unfit for agricultural purposes, may be reforested and made to yield a profitable return in timber, and at the same time build up the soil. This sort of reclamation work may apply to more than one-half of the state of Massachusetts. Hundreds of rocky "run-down" farms have been abandoned throughout the state and it is the reclaiming of this land that the Conservation Department of the state has determinedly and actively set out to accomplish.

### Historical

A brief history of the growth of the forestry program should be of interest. In 1908 a Reforestation Act was passed by the state, under which anyone having an area not exceeding 80 acres in size, might turn it over to the state at the appraised value. The state in turn reforested and administered it. Any time within 10 years after the land had been taken over the owner could redeem the area by paying to the state the initial cost of the land plus cost of planting and administration, with interest at 4%. After 10 years has elapsed the land is unredeemable and is retained by the state. One hundred and eighty-one lots have been turned over to the state in this way. Fifty percent of these areas have been redeemed, the remaining 50% have either reverted or have a few more years of grace. These areas have been taken over in all parts of the state and on all kinds of site conditions. The movement has met with great success and public satisfaction.

In 1914 an act was passed to purchase land for state forests. Five state forests were purchased ranging in size from 1,200 to 7,000 acres. These original five state forests were the Miles Standish State Forest in Carver, Harold Parker State Forest in Andover, Swan State Forest in Monterey, Savoy Forest at Savoy and Otter River State Forest at Winchenden.

Another act was passed in 1921 which authorized the Conservation Department to purchase 100,000 acres at a price not to exceed \$5.00 per acre and to reforest the land as fast as it was secured. Three million dollars were set aside for the purchase and reforestation of the land and 15 years was given as a time limit to complete the project. Within these first three years, 50,000 acres were purchased.



PLANTING CREW AT WORK

In addition to the State Forests and the Reforestation Lots, there are numerous small reservations held by Trustees of Public Lands such as parks and recreational grounds. These vary in size from 75 to 200 acres, and are usually on high points or scenic spots of unusual value for recreation.

### Nurseries and Plantings

Massachusetts also has three state nurseries, located at Amherst, Bridgewater and Barnstable. These nurseries furnish stock for the reforestation of state, city, town and private acreages. The stock on hand this year was approximately 20,000,000 seedlings, mostly conifers, as the work in hardwoods has not been carried on extensively as yet except with poplar cuttings. These have been started and in a few years

are expected to be set out on a State Reservation for pulp-wood production. There are also sub-nurseries on each reservation in addition to the three main nurseries.

### **Taxation**

The system of taxation on this area is of interest. The taxes remain constant for 5 years after the date of purchase. After this the State Tax Commissioner revalues the land. In this way the towns do not lose any tax money.

The latest tax law has encouraged the public to perpetuate the forests. Anyone having woodlots valued on the town tax list at \$25.00 or less per acre and possesses not more than 20 cords per acre with potential promise of a minimum of 8,000 ft. Board Measure of hardwoods, 20,000 ft. Board Measure of conifers, or a proportionate amount per acre at maturity, may register this land at the Assessor's office. From registration time until the timber produces 10,000 ft. Board Measure of hardwoods, 25,000 ft. Board Measure of conifers or proportionate amounts per acre, the land is taxed for the value of the land. When, in the opinion of the Assessor, the timber has reached its prescribed limit, the owner is notified. Two years after this it is taken off the classified list and placed on the general property tax list, providing that the owner has not reduced the timber content. The owner may reduce the timber content at any time and keep it on the classified list. The owner may also have cordwood or lumber from his area for personal use to the value of \$25.00 a year. If he cuts more than this he must pay a tax of 6% on the value of the timber cut.

When the Assessor notifies the owner that he is going to take the property off the classified list and place it on the open list, the owner may protest and refer the matter to the State Forester. The Forester decision is final.

### **Extension Service**

In addition to caring for state property, the Department of Forestry is willing to make examinations for the public. These examinations may be timber estimates, advice on managing timbered areas, aid in controlling infection of disease, insects, etc. The only cost is the examiner's transportation charges. Between 65 and 70 such examinations are made yearly.

### **Protection**

If the state forests are to be maintained at highest efficiency they must be protected from fire. In the last eleven years the fire loss in the state has been cut down 85%. Forty fire lookout towers are scattered over the state, located in

such a way that any point can be seen readily from two towers. Watchmen are on duty from daylight until dark during the fire season. The District Fire Wardens, of which there are seven, erect these towers and look after their upkeep. It is also the duties of these men to build telephone lines, look after the burning of slash, see that sawmills are equipped with spark arresters and see that the mill owners are operating according to state laws and regulations. The activities of these men are directed by the State Fire Warden and they in turn direct the Town Fire Wardens.

One of the outstanding fire protective measures is the new Slash Law which makes it necessary for mill operators to remove the slash on their operations at least 40 feet from the adjoining owners and 40 feet back from highways and railroads.

Insect control is also receiving its share of attention. In an effort to suppress the Gipsy and Brown-tail moth, a Superintendent has been appointed who superintends seven district moth men. Each town has a local superintendent who cooperates with these men and the U. S. Forest Service handles the outlying infested districts and does scout duty. The State furnishes arsenate of lead to the towns at cost. Each town has its own power sprayer and the State has additional machines. The spraying is done 200 feet on either side of the road and orchards and shade trees in the city parks are sprayed. To spray more than this would be prohibitive in cost. Calasome beetles and other parasites have been used to combat the moths.

Blister rust crews are also doing their part to protect the white pine. They destroy the wild currant and gooseberry bushes and thus stamp out the blister rust. The public has also been educated to the fact that wild currant and gooseberry bushes must go if they are to save the pines.

In conclusion, I want to pay tribute to the forestry work in this old state. Massachusetts is small, 150 miles east and west and 100 miles north and south. It is handling a big job in a very commendable manner. The future of the work will steadily move on towards a sustained annual yield policy and be an advanced guard in saving the East from the timber famine that is threatening.