

POST & GAZETTE

THURSDAY, DEC. 7, 1911

HOW TO SAVE THE ADIRONDACK FORESTS

By: Gifford Pinchot

Gifford Pinchot Makes Report upon the Problem to the Campfire Club of America at the Hotel Astor, New York City

At a dinner of Campfire Club of America, held at the Hotel Aster, Gifford Pinchot submitted a report of his investigation of the forest problem in the Adirondacks and made recommendations as to the best method of relieving the present situation.

His report follows:

Forestry in the State of New York is flourishing everywhere except in the woods. This is the essential fact in the present situation. The constitution forbids the practice of forestry of state lands, and scarcely a single tract of privately owned forest, either in the Catskills or in the Adirondacks, is today being cut under the rules of practical forestry. On the other hand, within the last ten years the destruction of forest by fire and band logging has been greater than ever before.

The Adirondack forest is one of the most precious possessions of the people of the state of New York. In conserving water flow and supplying timber as a recreation ground and as a vast sanitarium it is indispensable to the growth and welfare of the state. The purchase of the Adirondack Park is probably the best investment the citizens of New York ever made.

The Adirondack preserve consists of all state lands in the twelve Adirondack (and Catskill) counties and includes about 3,300,000 acres. The Adirondack Park includes only the state lands within the so called "blue line." 1,500,000 acres in area, or about half the total area the "blue line" bounds.

The other half is owned by lumber companies, associations, clubs and individuals. Substantially all of it is useless for any other purpose than to grow trees. The tree

growth upon it however, renders so many and such important services that no similar forest area in the United States is of such high value to so many people.

The object of this report prepared on behalf of the National Conservation Association for the Campfire Club of America is to make it easier for the people of New York to get the benefit of the Adirondack forests and to protect them against waste through misuse and nonuse.

The fires duty of the State toward the North Woods it to protect them from fire. Because of previous neglect not less than a quarter of the whole area has been burned. Of late and especially since the great fire(s) of 1908 good work by the state fire patrol has much reduced the number of fires. But it is not enough that there should merely be fewer fires in the Adirondacks. There should be no fires at all.

The principle of controlling a fire in a forest is precisely the same as that of controlling a fire in a city. The essential thing is to get the necessary fire fighters on the spot without the needless loss of a second. To this end mountain lookout stations have been established through the forest preserve and connected by telephone with villages and towns so that fire may be promptly discovered and fire fighters concentrated upon them with the lest possible delay. The foundation for an admirable organization has been laid, but at least ten additional stations are required.

Every forest office in the Adirondacks should have a list of the most willing and efficient men for fire fighting in his locality and where they can be reached so that in case of emergency he may make the promptest use of the law authorizing him to call men out to fight fire. Organizations of citizens should be formed to supplement the salaried force, and further definite arrangements should be made in advance for gathering men, equipment and supplies without loss of time.

The present cost of fire protection is six-tenths of 1 cent per acre per annum for the property whose average value in timber alone is not less than \$10 per acre. Stated in another way, there is but one fire patrolman on forest lands in the Adirondacks to 100,000 acres. Lumbermen in some of the western states are now spending nearly 4 cents an acre for fire protection on lands of their own which are no more valuable in money and far less important to the community tan the North woods. More than double the present force is badly needed.

The present fire law, which rigidly forbids any burning of brush at certain seasons regardless of the weather, and permits it in certain other seasons equally regardless of the weather, often increases the danger from fire. Burning should not be allowed at any time except under permit and with the personal presence and supervision of a forest officer.

The law now requires that the tops of coniferous trees shall be lopped immediately after felling. The snow crushes lopped branches close to the ground, so that they keep moist, rot more promptly and lessen the risk from fire. Some criticism has been made of the value of lopping tops. From personal observation on land lumbered as much as twenty years ago, where no tops were lopped, and on similar land in the Adirondacks lumbered ten years ago where lopping was practiced, I can assert with confidence that lopping does accomplish its purpose in making the forest safer against fire. Spruce tops honestly lopped rot down in ten years more thoroughly than unlopped tops in twenty and even at the end of six or seven years present little or no material to feed a fire. Fire on acres well lopped is much easier to fight than on unlopped lands, reproduction of the forest is not hampered, and the general effect is entirely good.

The efficiency of a forest force depends less on good laws than it does on good men. In the past the state forest force had at times been composed largely of political appointees and has suffered in consequence. While a great improvement is the force has taken place, I recommend strongly that this improvement be maintained and increased by requiring all members of the forest force to pass a civil service examination before appointment and by giving permanent employment to as many men as possible. Some temporary fire guards will always be required, but men employed during only part of the year take less interest in their work and render poorer service than members of a regular force who expect to follow one line of work during their lives. Without permanent employment the state cannot compete for the best men with other employers and will have to take what they leave. The thorough enforcement of the top lopping law along would require the services during the winter of the larger part of the present force.

The civil service examination for such men can and should be made thoroughly practical by bearing on their training and experience as woodsmen and fire fighters and their local knowledge of the country in which they are to work and by actual tests of physical ability and woodcraft conducted in the forest. This practice, applied in the national forest of the United States, has contributed more than any other single cause to the efficiency of the field force.

*The salaries of these patrolmen are too low. They should be increased from \$60 a month at the present, to \$75 a month with the certainty of seasonable promotion for good work. In every practicable case appointment to higher position should be made by promotion and not by the selection of men outside the present force. **The title "patrolman" should be changed to "forest ranger," for the duties are very much wider than fire patrol alone.***

The Adirondack Park contains not less than 120,000 acres of forest land so completely denuded by fire that action is necessary. In many places all of the forest, but for the soil itself, has been burned entirely away and the bare rock is exposed. There are also about 50,000 acres on which planting are desirable to re-enforce the present sparse

young growth. It is most fortunate that the state is admirably prepared for the planting of trees. Its forest nurseries, under the direction of C. R. Pettis, Superintendent of State Forests, have become models both in quality of the stock produced and in the low cost of growing it, while the forest plantations set out by the state are among the most successful in the country.

During the last few years very little forest planting has been done in the state land, because the sale of seedlings to private owners at cost has taken nearly the entire product of the nurseries. Private owners should be able to buy seedlings from the state. But it is at least equally important that the state should begin on an adequate scale and without further delay its own great task of forest planting. For this purpose the capacity of the nurseries has recently been increased to produce about 11,000,000 young trees a year. At least 5,000 acres a year should be planted up. At this rate, if no more land is devastated by fire, it will still require a quarter of a century to reforest the denuded state lands with the Adirondack Park.

The results of work done on the Webb and Whitney tracts under my general supervision and under the direction of Mr. Henry S. Graves, now Chief of the United States Forest Service, have proved beyond contradiction that forestry is practical from every point of view in softwood logging in the Adirondacks. On both these tracts, whose total area is over 100,000 acres, each tree to be cut was marked, and as a rule sound spruce trees below ten inches in diameter were left standing. Trees enough were left to provide for a second crop, the forest cover was conserved by moderate cutting, simple rules were enforced to prevent waste of timber and injury to young growth in the logging and the tops of felled trees were lopped as a safeguard against fire.

The forest was improved and the work paid. The proportion of spruce trees in the woods is already increased, and the older cuttings are even now ready to produce a cut of spruce as valuable as the first crop. The beauty of the forest is unimpaired and there is abundant young ... logging roads ... lumbered at all.

But in the face of these notable exceptions and of a quarter of a century of explanation and agitation conservative lumbering in the Adirondacks has made little or no progress. The usual destructive treatment of private timberlands today makes it perfectly clear that the general adoption of forestry in the Adirondacks can be brought about by law and in no other way. This is true in spite of the fact that in very few places in the United States is the financial and physical opportunity for practical forestry as good as it is here. Yet nowhere has needless destruction gone further.

It's time to stop playing with the situation. Ostensible efforts at private reforestation, in which tens of acres are replanted for hundreds or thousands that are destroyed, merely serve to distract attention from the main issue. What is needed on privately owned timberlands is the proper handling of the forest and not inadequate replanting after its destruction. The present method if allowed to continue will inevitably result in the

devastation of substantially all the Adirondack timberlands held for lumbering purposed as well as in the burning of large areas of state lands by fires starting in the slash thus caused. And in the end the state itself will be forced to take over these denuded lands and replant them at great expense.

More is done to help the lumbermen by the state of New York than any other state in the Union. The maintenance of mountain lookout stations and the cost of fire patrol are paid for entirely from the state funds. In several western states the lumbermen voluntarily bear these expenses themselves. When a logging crew is requisitioned by a New York forest officer to fight fire on the land of lumberman, that lumberman is reimbursed for the time spent by his own men in protection his own property. State taxes on forest land in the Adirondack s are negligible, while other taxes are generally based on so low a valuation that they do not hinder forestry. Yet, in spite of all of this, these mountain forests, in which every citizen of the state has a real interest, continue to be destroyed without ... hindrance. It is time to stop.

I would not be understood as charging that the Adirondack lumbermen as a body are bad citizens or that they are purposely injuring the state which protects them. On the contrary, many of them are anxious to improve the present unfortunate conditions. For example, Emporium Lumber which owns about 82,000 acres of Adirondack forests has agreed to carry out a plan for cutting, to be prepared by the writer, on an area of one square mile, as a first step toward what I hope will be the conservative logging of the whole tract. As W. L. Sykes, president of the company, well says the difference between conservative logging and forest destruction is that in one case the timberland is an increasing asset, in the other a diminishing one.

One of the most important recommendations I have to make is that the Campfire Club shall invite a committee of the Empire State Forest Products Association to join with a committee of its own in working out the details of practical legislation which shall protect the interests of the lumbermen at the same time that it prevents the destruction of the forests. Mr. F. L. Moore, president of the association, has already expressed his entire approval of this plan. The Conservation Commission should be represented at any such conference by the Superintendent of State Forest. In my judgment a perfectly practicable scheme can be worked out under which the added cost to the lumbermen of practicing forestry as against destroying the forests should seldom if ever exceed a cost of 25 cents per thousand feet of logs cut.

But not all of the Adirondack lumbering concerns are controlled by men of good will. A peculiarly aggravated case of needless and conscienceless vandalism is supplied by the Brooklyn Cooperage Company, a subsidiary organization of the sugar trust. The logging done by this company is more destructive than any other with which I am acquainted in the eastern states and the damage by fire for which its carelessness is said to be responsible will cost the people of New York large sums of money and long years of

time to repair. When requested by the Conservation Commission to take simple and necessary precautions against fire it peremptorily refused to do so.

The Brooklyn Cooperage Company controls by ownership and lease 123,000 acres in the Adirondacks. Unless this organization is restrained by the strong hand of the state every acre of that land will be despoiled of its forest growth and swept clean by fire.

In my judgment, to destroy in this fashion forests whose destruction hurts the state is as much a mark of bad citizenship as for a man in tower to set fire to his own house. There is no more moral right in the one case than in the other. And the time is rapidly approaching when there will be no more legal right either.

I recommend the passage of a law which will require the lumbermen inside the Adirondack preserve to carry out such a degree of practical forestry on their timberlands as will reduce the damage from fire to the lowest practicable point and insure the perpetuation of the forest. In each case the plan of work should be approved and its execution should be supervised by the Conservation Commission through the Superintendent of State Forests, who should always be a trained forester. The state should prepare practical cutting plans for lumbermen at their request and otherwise assist with information and advice and for this purpose a considerable increase should be made in the number of trained foresters now available.

To compel private owners to cease cutting altogether on certain mountain lands which should be kept untouched for the protection of the slopes and of the water supply would be an unfair burden upon them. The private lands of the Adirondacks should therefore be divided into so called "protection forests" on the steep, high slopes which should never be cut at all and the commercially valuable timber on the lower slopes and rolling lands upon which cuttings should be regulated by the state. As rapidly as possible the state should acquire the "protection forests" and look after them.

Section 7 or Article 7 of the New York Constitution is as follows:

The lands of the state, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law shall be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold or exchanged or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber be sold, removed or destroyed.

In practical effect this section does more to limit and restrict the use of the Adirondack Park by the citizens of New York than all the other caused combined. Under it citizens of the state are prevented from constructing cheap wooden camps along the borders of lakes and streams controlled by the state, leaving the wealthy owners of elaborate so called "camps" undisturbed by the proximity of poorer neighbors. The purchase of camp sites on private lands, even if any are still available, is beyond the reach of persons with average means. Such camp sites, I am informed, have sold for as much as \$100 per foot of water front.

The state should lease small camp sites on terms which will encourage the enjoyment of the park by as many people as possible, keeping open, however, not less than one-quarter of every lake and stream for the general public. The use of the state lands by every man; woman and child who can manage to get there should be assisted and made easy in every practicable way. These lessees of camp sites would constitute in effect a large volunteer fire department constantly on guard, to whose personal interest it would be to prevent or put out every fire.

Section 7 likewise prohibits the construction on state land of roads and trails needed to make the people's property accessible to the people. It is well known that roads and trails form an admirable protection against fire. Because of their absence the Adirondack Park is needlessly exposed to the risk of conflagration.

In another way also this section increases the danger of fire on state lands. Substantially all of the recent state purchases consist of logged or burned land, containing great quantities of dead and down brush and timber. The removal of these fire traps is now forbidden by section 7 and the danger from fire correspondingly increased. In some cases, while great quantities of timber are decaying on the ground, green trees are necessarily cut at increased expense to supply the indispensable fuel. Already those who live in villages surrounded by forests owned by the state must pay excessive prices for firewood brought in from private lands.

Under this section the development of water power by storage on state land is forbidden because it cannot be done without killing some trees. Thus one of the principal resources of the state is kept unused without any corresponding benefit to the people.

Section 7 forces the state to hold lands outside of the "blue line" boundary of the Adirondack Park which in many cases are far more valuable for cultivation than as forest. It ought to be possible to exchange those small isolated areas of state land, now merely a burden and expense, for land inside the "blue line" which the state really needs for park purposes. Some extension of the "blue line" is required in order that it may enclose all Adirondack forest lands whose protection is urgently needed for the general welfare.

When section 7 or article 7 was included in the constitution there was good reason for doing so. At that time the recent history of the Adirondack Park contained a malodorous series of transactions in which at every turn the state got the worst of it. Not without cause the people of the state came to believe that the only way to save the Adirondacks from misuse was to forbid them to be used at all.

The situation today is entirely changed. In my judgment the people of New York may now safely trust themselves to administer their own forest property with honesty, sagacity and skill. The State of New York now has a forest department governed by

safe standards of public service and actually accomplishing result of real public value. The supply of trained forester in the United States is fortunately sufficient to enable the state of New York to build up the necessary force under the direction of the Superintendent of Forests. Public sentiment is now generally aroused and informed as to the value of the people's property in the Adirondacks, so that a repetition of the old mismanagement has become impossible. To continue to lock up the Adirondack Park against use will do no good and much harm.

It is not as well known as it should be that Adirondack land may be lumbered and the product put to use not only without injuring the forest but to the improvement of its condition and value. The public mind has been somewhat confused by the unfortunate experiment on the Cornell Lands at Axton. The practice here was directly opposite to that on the Webb and Whitney tracts above referred to. At Axton the logging destroyed the forest cover by cutting clean. It was financially unprofitable, so that money to replant ran short. For the same reason the slash was left on the ground, a promptly accepted invitation to forest fires. Finally the Cornell experiment did not conform to the first principle of true forestry in the Adirondacks, which is to secure natural reproduction from seed trees left standing after cutting only trees carefully selected and marked.

Good forestry on state lands in the North woods demands cutting so moderate as not to destroy forest conditions or seriously disturb the forest cover. Practical forestry in the Adirondack Park should begin slowly and at first should cut not more than 1 percent of the park each year. The first consideration in all cuttings should be to improve the forest. Clean cutting should be forbidden by the constitution. So should cuttings so heavy as to impair or interrupt the forest condition or require the planting of trees after logging. All logging in green timber should be directed to encourage young growth, and all sound spruce trees below fourteen inches and all hardwood trees about eighteen inches in diameter should be left standing.

Before the constitutional question whether practical forestry shall be permitted in the Adirondack Park is submitted to the people for action the Conservation Commission should be called upon to lay before the legislature and the people a full description of the methods of practical forestry which it is proposed to apply and the results these methods are intended to secure.

In a virgin forest as the young trees grow up the old trees die and fall to the ground, this supplying fuel for forest fires. In a properly handled forest mature trees are cut down and the slash disposed of so that an Adirondack forest carefully and properly logged presents no greater invitation to fire than one not logged at all.

The timber in a virgin forest does not increase in quantity because the growth of the young time is offset by the death and decay of the old. But in a well handled forest the amount and value of the standing timber steadily increase. The result of practical forestry in the Adirondack Park will not be to decrease the future supply of timber, but

to husband and increase it. It is not only to the interest but it is the duty of the state to put its forests in the best possible condition to be useful to the people. That cannot be done without the wise use of the ax.

The wise use and more efficient protection of the Adirondacks demand a change in the constitution. Without attempting to use exact legal language I suggest that section 7 of article 7 might well be amended to read somewhat as follows:

The lands of the state, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the Adirondack and Catskill Parks as fixed by law shall forever be kept as forest lands. They shall not be sold or exchanged or be taken by any corporation, public or private and no timber shall be cut on said lands except in accordance with the principles of conservative forestry, nor shall the permanent forest condition of any such land be interrupted, endangered or destroyed by clean cutting or otherwise.

Since the Campfire Club does not desire at this time to take up the question of water power I have to add merely that the principles upon which this part of the larger problem of the use of the Adirondacks should be decided I believe to be these:

First – State development, ownership, construction and control of water power on state lands.

Second – Fair compensation to the state for the use of power this created.

Third – Co-operation with the national government for the complete development and control in the public interest of all power on navigable and other streams within the state.

This report is based on the field work of Mr. Overton W. Price, my associate in the United States Forest Service and the National Conservation Association and myself.

It ends as it began. Forestry is flourishing in New York, everywhere but in the woods. The time is ripe for a change. GP