THE SOCIETY FOR PROTECTION OF NEW HAMPSHIRE FORESTS.

THE WHITE MOUNTAIN FOREST AND HOW IT IS TO BE MADE USEFUL.

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An address at the annual meeting of the Society, Sunapee, N. H.

After speaking of the principle that land ought always to be so used as continually to increase in usefulness to man, Mr. Hall said in part—

The great value of the White Mountains so far as the capacity of the soil is concerned, is for the production of forest, and the forest which it can produce will serve two important purposes. First, it will regulate and make more even the flow of the streams which have their sources in the mountains. It will also doubtless keep these streams purer than they otherwise would be and protect the river courses from filling with gravel or boulders, as certainly would be the case if floods were greatly increased. In any event, there would come serious damage to the water powers of these streams and also to their navigable utility.

The second purpose of this forest will be the production of valuable timber supplies for the industries of New England and the nation. The lands produce an excellent quality of some of the most valuable and widely used woods in the United States, and it will be of distinct
advantage to the community if they can be restored to a high degree of productiveness of these timbers. The removal and utilization of the matured timber on these lands is not incompatible with the protection of the streams because methods can undoubtedly be devised whereby this merchantable timber can be cut and removed without impairing the protective influence of the forest.

The purpose, therefore, ought to be to bring these lands to a high degree of productiveness with the expectation that the timber will be used, in so far as its use is consistent with other important uses which are being, and increasingly to be, made of the mountains. Let us not forget that in its capacity for timber production, this forest is to be a very important asset to the nation.

One other large and important use of the White Mountain forest is to serve in its employment for the recreation and enjoyment of the people. Conditions here are so delightful as to attract each year increasing thousands, not only from New England, but from all over the country. They find in these mountains just the surroundings in which to rest and renew themselves for their labors in their own cities and towns. Used in this way, the White Mountain forest is an intangible but nevertheless a real asset, and possibly one of vastly under-appreciated importance in our national life. Past experience leads us to believe that its use in this direction will increase rapidly in the future. Such being the case, none of the fundamental conditions which make for this use ought to be disturbed in order to be allowed for such a natural development as the future may require. We should look ahead at what may be required, and allow no present plans so to shape themselves as to thwart or diminish the possibility of this use.

We are absolutely certain that restoring the soil to its full volume of timber production will in no way conflict with any requirement in this direction; therefore, we may safely proceed first with the protection of the forest so that it may not be destroyed by fire, and with such measures of regeneration and culture as will stock the land with a full crop of the best kinds of timber. Whether, when timber of merchantable size has been produced, it will be deemed expedient to remove it for the use of the industries, or to let it stand for the enjoyment of those who visit the mountains, is a question more for the future to decide than for the present. It can, at the proper time, be decided for each of the many situations. My personal view is, that inasmuch as the timber can, by proper methods, be removed without vitiating the effect of the forest as watershed covering, so it can be removed without giving offense to the eye of him who desires to see the mountains clothed in a cover of perpetual beauty. Certainly, to the eye of many, a forest under productive culture with its different parts in varying stages of production, maturity and use, is more pleasing than a forest fully produced but unharvested and deteriorating.

As a second measure of increasing the usefulness of the White Mountain forest we may consider improvement of means of accessibility. Already many of the most attractive points are reached by footpaths and the summit of the highest peak is accessible by driveway and railroad. These, while they have sufficed in the past, are not likely to be sufficient to meet the larger demands of the future. Many of the footpaths, especially those made by the Appalachian Mountain Club, are adequate both in location and construction. Others have been laid out with less observance of the principles of correct trail
building. In some places there are unnecessary paths which tend to confuse and mislead the traveler. Still other parts of the mountains which ought to be opened up to the public are not to be reached by paths that can be traveled in safety and comfort. What is needed, perhaps, is a systematic plan of trails for the entire section, making use of those which serve present needs, adding others which may be needed, and abandoning those which serve no needful purpose.

It may not have been considered before that the paths which serve the public for travel in the mountains will not be sufficient for all purposes in the future. The protection of the region from fire will call for trails which can be traveled by horses used for carrying to vantage points supplies and equipment needed in combating fires. Some of the present trails can be so used, but many of them cannot, and in some sections of the mountains where the fire risk is large, such trails are much needed. Inasmuch as the making of the mountains safe from fire is the consideration of the greatest present importance, the government will devote its first attention to this class of trails, and it is not likely for several years to have funds available for the construction of trails which are primarily for the use of the traveling public. The government will therefore welcome the continued activities of those organizations which in the past have built the paths for the use of the public in the White Mountains. It will ask only that it be shown that there is a need for the proposed path and that it be properly located so that it may be of permanent value.

Of roads the government will build only a limited mileage and their purpose will also be to make it easy to get supplies, equipment and men into the mountains to fight fire. They will be built only where trails would be inadequate for this purpose.

If additional railways or highways are built into the mountains it will be, so far as we can see now, by private capital for the purpose of profit. Before the construction of these should be permitted it should clearly be shown that they will serve the public advantageously and that their location and style of construction is such as in the smallest way to mar the natural beauty of the mountains. The Great Architect has been long in fashioning those mountains to their present form, we have but just begun to use them and we know not how many generations are to follow; therefore we must use our best forethought that our plans for present use may disfigure them as little as possible.

A third direction in which the White Mountain Forest may be made to serve the public more fully is by extending to the public the privileges of occupation and residence within it. When the public shall come to need it, what objection can there be to permitting the erection and use of camps and cottages within this forest? They would always be located in the more accessible parts and would generally be grouped along the streams where roads could be constructed without great cost. The amount of land required for such occupancy would be comparatively small, and although it would be land of the highest timber-producing capacity, loss in this direction would be more than offset by having in the forest during the summer months a large number of people who would personally be interested in seeing that the woods suffered no damage from fire. There is small likelihood that the large use of the forest in this way would diminish appreciably its usefulness for stream protection or for timber production.
A fourth way in which this forest may be increased in interest, if not in usefulness, to the public is to make it a refuge for such species of harmless game as are fitted by nature to thrive there. It adds much to the interest of the woods to know that it shelters a variety of harmless wild creatures, which if we are wary we may occasionally get a glimpse of. And on the other hand, there seems to be no objection to stocking these mountains with wild life if care is taken not to introduce species which would be harmful in destroying the stock or crops of nearby farmers.

It may not be possible to make the White Mountain Forest a game refuge without action by the state legislature and also by congress, so that this suggestion looks rather to the future for fulfillment than to the present.

The general principle upon which the White Mountain National Forest is being established and to be developed has here been stated, and some of the lines along which this development is to take place have been sketched. The forest will undoubtedly be largely used by the public. It is desirable, therefore, that a spirit of friendly co-operation be fostered between the public and the forest service which will be responsible for the care and management of whatever lands the government shall acquire within the White Mountains for national forest purposes.

Speaking for the forest service, I desire to request such co-operation in large measure from the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, from the American Forestry Association, from the Appalachian Mountain Club, and from all organizations which similarly have large interest in seeing that the White Mountains serve the public usefully and in the fullest possible way.