

CLEARING THE FOREST OF DEBRIS

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Can Fire Rangers be Used in Winter to Follow Crews and Eliminate the Slash?

The one thing that every fire ranger fears is a large fire in cut-over lands, which, fanned by a high wind, will attain such proportions before help can be obtained that many square miles will be burned over before it can be stopped. Single fires in the past have gone over tracts of 1,000 square miles and with weather and wind conditions favoring, the same thing could possibly happen again. How can we prevent this?

The records of fires for six years past, show that the majority of fires occur in cut-over territory and on old burns. That means that cut-over territory is responsible for the greater majority of the fires, for this burns over and the land so burned catches fire very easily for at least two successive seasons after the first burn. Of the area burned over each year about forty per cent is cut-over territory and forty-two per cent old burn, making a total of eighty-two per cent chargeable to the lumber operations. Practically all of the fires which require labor other than that of the rangers to extinguish start in cut-over or burnt-over lands.

Logging Areas.

The way to eliminate these fires is to burn the debris from logging at the time the logging is done, or shortly after. This will cost some money, but will materially cut down the cost of fire protection, and in time, cut down the cost of patrol so that it is probable the increase in expense would not be large. Then to, the value of the forest lands would continually increase, as now timber left after logging is destroyed by fire, and once burned over, the lands are very liable to burn over again, destroying the seed stored in the soil and postponing the reproduction of valuable kinds of trees for many years. This burning of the brush might logically be left to the logging crews, but it has been shown that anything that adds to the cost of making logs is violently opposed by woods managers and their staffs, as their efficiency is judged by the price

at which they are able to deliver logs and they do not consider that it is their business to do more than cut and haul the logs.

Fire Rangers Available.

If this cleaning up were made part of the fire protection work, it could be done by the rangers in winter, by men who understand how to handle fire in the woods, and who understand the danger of it. These men could follow the loggers and pile and burn the brush, so that when spring came, the danger from the cut-over debris, would be entirely eliminated. Of course it would be necessary to apportion the cost to the different operators on the basis of acreage, but this would not be difficult and the measurement of the amount of land cut-over each year would be of an immense value to the holders. Lands so handled would immediately begin to reforest themselves to the great benefit of the holders and of the country in general. By preventing the burning of these lands they would reproduce the valuable species instead of coming up in poplar and jack pine, as they now do after fires. Many years in the regeneration of these lands would also be saved.

Insect and fungus enemies of forest trees are spreading at an alarming rate and are now probably as serious a menace as forest fires. It has also been shown that burning the logging debris is one of the best possible ways to eradicate these pests so that from every point of view it seems that slash burning should without delay be made a part of our protective work.

It may well be asked if burning is the only way of disposing of logging debris. Taking out logs down to three inches top diameter would help the situation and would reduce the waste. Top-logging has been tried and found to cost about 40 to 50 cents per thousand feet board measure of logs cut, but the fire hazard is very little reduced. The advantage is that the brush rots quicker and so the land is not in a dangerous condition for as long a time as with unlopped tops. This does not do away with