

FUTURE NEEDS FOR FOREST PLANTING
STOCK FROM INTERMOUNTAIN NURSERY'S

by

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One of the most significant problems that has faced this country and one which will become more acute before solutions are found is: how are we going to meet the increasing demands of a society on our forest resource, a resource whose land base has diminished considerably and will continue to diminish through changes in use. Pressures to cut back timber harvest on Federal forest lands in preference for other non-wood values of the forest such as wilderness, recreation, wildlife and scenic values has seriously reduced the productive forest land base. State and private lands as well have been subject to these pressures.

I believe that history will show that the late 60's was the turning point of what was once considered a plentiful supply of timber to what is now a limited supply.

In Montana the impact of the cut back in the harvest of federal timber was an almost immediate increase in the demand for private timber. Trees on forest land in Eastern Montana that was previously considered sub-marginal suddenly were in demand. Industry found willing sellers among ranchers in Eastern Montana, many of whom considered trees as something that got in the way of growing grass. Mills relocated from other states and other parts of Montana to tap this substantially underdeveloped resource.

Industry responded in various other ways to increase utilization of the diminishing resource as well as to increase efficiency and minimize waste. Although built primarily to accommodate a changing construction industry, new plywood and wood particle board plants more efficiently utilize the resource. In addition to the construction of new facilities, developments included the Mini-Beaver and the Ecologizer designed to handle smaller diameter material that was being wasted. Many mills tightened up utilization standards processing dry and cull material sawing what boards they could and chipping the rest for pulp.

With timber production reduced due to the short supply of logs a shortage was created in the chip supply of the pulp industry. In Montana this shortage created an expansion into the area of round wood production for wood fiber. More recently the depressed lumber market brought on by recent sagging economy created an even greater expansion by the pulp industry to utilize round wood. This demand incidentally kept many loggers working that otherwise would have been idle due to the depressed lumber market. At the present time this market again

largely disappeared, a delayed impact of the recession. During this period a few wood processing industries were not able to survive the squeeze and went out of business.

On the other side of the picture, land managing agencies and industrial forest land owners were expanding efforts to increase fiber production to meet the demand over the long term on fewer acres. Research on problems of regeneration and improved growth were being stepped up by the Forest Service, IFRES and some larger industrial forest land owners.

This period also saw the formation of the Inland Ponderosa Pine Tree Improvement Committee with the eventual establishment last year of ten seed orchards and progeny test sites in the Inland Empire.

During the same period the Forest Service and the BLM were engaged in land use and capability studies to determine resource allocation based on public demand, land capability and constraints. These studies have been increased several fold since 1970.

In 1972 the American Forestry Association having long been concerned with the diminishing supply of wood fiber, sponsored a tree planting conference "Trees for People" in New Orleans, Louisiana. The states were polled for needs and plans for reforestation for the ten year period ending in 1980.

It was brought out at this conference that there were 75 million acres (in 1972) of forest land laying idle in the United States. This represented a need of 60 billion, 500 million trees to reforest these lands.

At the then predicted level of planting only 7 billion trees would be planted by 1980 nationwide. If existing nursery's increased production to the limit of their capability it was estimated 12 billion trees could be planted.

At that time it was estimated that approximately 5 million trees annually would be planted for reforestation purposes in Montana based on a poll of industrial and federal agency estimates.

Several agencies and forest industries in Montana were recently contacted as to their current estimated plans. It was interesting to note that almost all had revised plans upward. Several of the contacts indicated specific plans to increase nursery capacity as well as to expand existing green house facilities and build new green houses for containerized stock.

On the national level perhaps the most significant piece of legislation to be passed by Congress in the past 40 years that will have a major affect on future planning for nursery production is P.L. 93-398, The Forest and Rangeland Environmental Management Act of 1974." This act mandated the Secretary of Agriculture to prepare a national renewable resource assessment as of December 31, 1974 and to update it during 1979 and each tenth year thereafter. This assesses the resource needs on all Federal, State, and private lands.

The program element is directed toward the Forest Service. This phase mandates the Forest Service to submit a program for the 5 year period ending 1979 and for the 4-5 year periods to the year 2000. This program will include USFS lands as well as program assistance for State and private forest lands.

The third phase is the statement of policy based on the level of management. This will be presented to Congress by the President in December for review. It will be up to the Administration and Congress to determine the program and funding level.

At this time we can only assume a posture of wait and see as to what Congress will do.

In summary, it is apparent that we will see a crystallization of reforestation plans and efforts by Federal and State agencies and private industries in the next few years. Regeneration inventories are being expanded and priorities are being updated. Seed supplies are being built up to provide more immediate response to planting needs with stock matched to the planting site. It is apparent that there is a solid commitment by the various agencies and industrial organizations to solve reforestation problems on the difficult sites.

There is also a strong commitment to insure that regeneration or reforestation will be accomplished on future harvest areas.