

Conservation in Louisiana

Address Delivered by the Hon. Henry E. Hardtner, before the Yellow Pine Manufacturers' Association in Convention Assembled, New Orleans, January 18, 1911:

Louisiana was the first state to create a conservation commission by legislative enactment, and enjoys the proud distinction of being the first to enact sane and comprehensive laws, tending to conserve, protect and perpetuate the natural resources of the state. This commission was created in 1908, and has been actively at work on the problems of conservation ever since. During the months of February and March the forest service of the United States sent J. H. Foster, assistant chief of operation, to work with the Louisiana commission in making a preliminary examination of the forest conditions of this state. The field work consisted of an examination of the forest regions of the state with reference to the following points: The character and amount of timber on virgin and cut-over lands; the effect of fire, grazing and turpentine; the danger of exhaustion of the timber supply; the attitude of lumbermen and other forest owners toward conservation of the state's resources; the relation between forestry and agriculture; the relative value of land for timber and for agricultural purposes; the taxation of forest lands, and the need of additional legislation in order to maintain a permanent timber supply in the state.

This investigation showed conclusively that notwithstanding the fact that the natural forest resources were probably greater than those of any other state east of the Pacific coast, unless the management, particularly of the cut-over lands, were improved, there would be very little hope for a valuable yield of timber after the present merchantable forests were exhausted. With a total stand of pine of about 42,000,000,000 feet and an annual cut of over 2,000,000,000 feet, the present standing pine will be exhausted in only a little more than twenty years. The commercial supply of cypress will be exhausted in a comparatively few years. The available hardwood forests are more extensive than in any other state, but the cypress and much of the best oak and ash have been culled from the parishes of Northern Louisiana, and the most valuable remaining tracts are in the hands of a few individuals or companies. Much of the great alluvial region will be cleared for cultivation as soon as drainage systems are more fully perfected. These conditions emphasized the urgent need for the legislature to take up the consideration of the problems involved in order that the forest growth on lands chiefly valuable for timber purposes might be perpetuated. The legislature of 1910 took up

in earnest the question of conservation and enacted twenty-nine laws pertinent to the subject, which we believe will assist materially in solving the vexed question. I shall confine myself principally to the forestry laws enacted and now in operation. The following table shows the amount of standing timber in the state and annual cut, according to the best information we could gather:

Table A.

	Standing timber in La.	Annual cut.
Pine	42,555,500,000	2,148,035,000
Cypress	6,214,000,000	619,400,000
Tupelo	14,468,000,000	45,880,000
Oak	8,676,000,000	34,463,000
Other Species	6,197,000,000	66,652,000
Total	78,112,000,000	2,914,430,000

This timber converted into lumber should mean a revenue of over \$1,000,000,000, eighty per cent. of which would go to the people for labor and supplies—therefore every person in this state is interested in seeing that this greatest of all natural resources is not wasted. So much depends upon our forests that I cannot go into the details at this time, but will touch upon some of the problems that we must all face. The following figures show what the results would be of buying an acre of pine containing 14,000 feet at \$4 per thousand, its lowest present value, and holding it for five, ten, fifteen and twenty-five years, with a two per cent or twenty mill tax rate, and money worth six per cent compound interest. There are very few lumbermen whose timber shows a less cost than \$4 and \$5 would be nearer correct.

Table B.

Holding for five years.	Tax	Interest on Taxes to End of Period.
Probable assessed value for five years at \$25	\$2.50	\$0.487
Present value \$56 and compound interest for five years		\$74.92
Tax for five years	2.50	
Interest on taxes for five years48
Total		\$77.90

The stumpage value of pine five years from now must be about \$5.20 in order to pay cost of holding the land.