Integrated Management of Timber, Water, Forage and Wildlife Experience as Practiced by Lumber Companies

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Range management today is part of the responsibilities of all owners and managers of private forest lands. There was a time when a lumberman gave little thought to anything besides how much timber was on the tract when evaluating a purchase. His primary objective was, of course, to cut as many boards as possible from the land. Then, he was through with it. Also, his objective was to make as big a profit from the forest in the shortest possible time and that profit was only represented by timber. Many cut out and got out, made a good profit and that was all there was to it. When that stand was cut, they would get more timber and repeat the process.

In recent years, many lumbermen have come to realize that there are no forest frontiers left in America. If they hope to stay in business and, by so doing, support the towns that have grown up around them and have come to depend upon their industry for their existence, then they must stay in one place, get the most productivity from the ground they own and manage. This happens to be the position of the Pilot Rock Lumber Company.

Many lumbermen have now taken a second look at the timber growing potential of their lands for the first time. They have come to realize that timber could be looked upon as a crop, and economically so, like any other crop. As much of the western forest lands could also grow grass—why not also get the most from the grass potential of those lands. Several lumbermen operate cattle ranches in connection with their lumber business. However, we at Pilot Rock are staying out of the cattle business and sticking to one headache at a time.

We are earnestly trying to get maximum utilization from every tree we cut. We are also retaining the maximum payroll from lumber processing for our community. Our grass and grazing permittees are watched zealously because we know that being lumbermen we are not supposed to know or care much about our grass. To disprove this theory, we have employed an expert with practical grazing and cattle business know-how. For that job, we selected a successful retired cattleman, who learned through experience that it does not pay to overgraze.

While I can't say how many lumber operators are doing exactly as we are, I believe that today most timber operators of substantial size in the Pacific Northwest have grazing programs integrated into their forest management plans.

We are cutting our timber on a sustained-yield basis, leaving thrifty trees to grow the future crop for the future generation of loggers. In this way, we get the maximum in wood growth from our lands. This is economically feasible in view of the collateral value incorporated in our cut-over lands. While consideration has been given to the wood productivity of these lands, up until recently not much thought was given to the grass productivity of the same land. We found that both crops do well together, so we have included grass in our forest management plan.

Our range management starts with seeding our skid trails to a good, locally recommended range grass. We depend upon the Forest Service recommendations to be as near correct as is presently possible in view of the fact that they have a special department set up for range management, and are familiar with our local conditions. Advice on the correct time to seed has also been taken from the Forest Service. In our area, this is considered to be either in late fall before the first snows, or on the first light snow. There is danger in waiting too long, as access to the area may become quite difficult if deep snow comes early. Thus, seeding, like burning brush, is limited sometimes to a very short period.

We realize that overgrazing is contrary to range conservation, so we have put a large portion of our holdings under the jurisdiction of the Ranger Station at Dale, Oregon. The ranger treats our lands exactly as he does Forest Service lands. In view of the fact that much of the land is integrated with national forest lands, this system works very well. This range is leased directly to a range association and a few private individuals, but the number of cattle they may run on these lands is decided by the ranger in charge. The area
just referred to is in the John Day River country and is inside the national forest boundaries served by the Dale Ranger Station. Approximately 30,000 acres are involved in our private forest lands in this area.

Outside the boundaries of the national forest this cannot be done so we have employed a range manager to handle the grazing on some 60,000 company owned acres that lie outside the forest boundaries. His responsibility is to control size of herds that the various permittees wish to run on our lands. Also, it is up to him to decide range disputes. If a permittee persists on slipping in more cattle than the range will stand, then our range manager has the unpleasant job of cancelling his permit.

All of our range leases are so written that if overgazing is practiced, then the next year’s lease will not be renewed. All leases with few exceptions are written for only one year with a promise of renewal at our company’s option. We have no trouble getting takers on that basis.

In our business, we are using large numbers of forest weed trees for chips. These chips are converted to pulp and eventually fibreboard. Removal of these trees is of value in promoting better saw-timber growth, the major crop of the area. This also aids in securing better snow compaction and thus creates a better watershed while conducting a sound logging program. Better forest watersheds aid much in controlling streamflow and thus contribute toward stabilization of our great hydroelectric plants now being built on the great river systems of the Northwest.

I would like to point out here that we believe that it is the duty of all conservation-minded people to protect the watershed value of their lands. It is my firm belief that the future economy of this country can be maintained as it now is for the longest possible time only if we give serious consideration to maximum conservation and utilization of the water that falls on our forests from the skies through rain and snow.

Our forests comprise much of the area in which we live. They are the source of the water supply of the Columbia River and its tributaries. Agriculture is basically fully developed. The lumbering business will have to decline to some extent as soon as all private forests are cut. There is not enough wood now growing in the western forest to maintain all mills now operating on their present annual cutting basis. Substitutes will have to be found to take the place of wooden boards. These substitutes will be made because of available power from the river. This country’s population is mushrooming rapidly. The potential of the river is the only remaining frontier to be claimed by the present and future population of the area. The water from the forest can play and will play an important part in their future standard of living.

As I have tried to point out, the forests have multiple uses. There is one important use yet that I have not mentioned, but it most certainly should be.

The rightful heritage of all red-blooded Americans is the recreation incorporated within these forests. This can also be considered as an important factor in our present economy. Much of our present business is based on equipment and supply needed for recreation. It is the policy of our company to contribute toward this use of our private lands by allowing free use of our logging road system under fair and wise control. Written permits are granted upon request. Keys to our locked gates are also issued without charge. We know that the recreational use of our forests would be wasted if not used. We do not wish to see waste of any kind. Thus, we have cooperated with our neighbors in this respect and I know of no fair request for such use that has been denied. Better public relations are our reward.

About 5,000 acres of our lands in the lower John Day river country were found to be ideal for a winter refuge for wildlife. Upon request by the Oregon State Game Commission, we made this land available for its best use, a big game winter refuge since 1950. This was our major contribution toward wildlife protection and as I understand from recent reports, it is proving to be all the Game Commission expected. Thus, I have endeavored to point out that timber, cattle, watershed, wildlife and recreation are all an integrated part of a private forest, and can be managed without one interfering with the other.

In closing, I wish to add that we at Pilot Rock are not alone in this sort of private forest management; many other substantial lumbering industries in this country are considering carefully all of those once hidden values that lay within their forests and have set up wise multiple purpose use of their lands. There are no new forest frontiers left to capture in America. We can only settle down and make the most and best use of what we have.

Any owner of private natural resources has a grave responsibility to be worthy of that ownership. He cannot take it with him when he dies but must pass it on to someone else. He has no right to leave his lands in poorer productivity than when he found them. It was God given and he only has the right to use just so long as he lives. A hundred years from now this earth will still be the source of all life. To destroy its productivity is to destroy human life.