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COMMERCIAL POLE PRODUCTION IN THE NORTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAIN AREA IN 1962

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ABSTRACT

The latest survey of commercial pole production in Idaho, Montana, and northeastern Washington showed that nearly 310,000 poles were produced in 1962. This figure is 29 percent below the output for 1960 (the latest year for which comparable data are available). Production declined considerably between 1947 and 1962; most of this decline occurred prior to 1955.

Commercial pole production in Idaho, Montana, and northeastern Washington totaled 309,889 poles in 1962, according to results of the latest survey.¹ Compared to production in 1960--the most recent year for which fully comparable data are available--this reflects a decline of 29 percent (127,273 poles). Production for 1962 was estimated to have been 16 percent (60,535 poles) below the output of 1961.²

¹Sponsored in northern Idaho (north of the Salmon River), Montana, and northeastern Washington by the Rocky Mountain Pole and Treating Association, Spokane, Washington. The Association contacted all pole companies known to operate in this area. The Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station made additional contacts to obtain reports for operations in southern Idaho and compiled data from the reports furnished by all companies that participated in the survey.

²Several companies did not furnish reports in the survey for 1961 production but reported in the surveys of 1960 and 1962 production. To obtain estimates for 1961, interpolations were made between the 1960 and 1962 quantities reported by these companies and are included in the statistics shown here. Data for both 1960 and 1962 are based on reports from all known pole companies that operated within the northern Rocky Mountain area or received poles from this area.

Table 1.--Poles produced in Montana, Idaho, and northeastern Washington, by species, 1962

Species	Montana	Idaho	Northeastern Washington	Total	Percent of total
	Number				
Western redcedar	4,962	131,068	23,852	159,882	52
Lodgepole pine	105,328	9,245	0	114,573	37
Western larch	11,795	9,286	14,209	35,290	11
Douglas-fir	144	0	0	144	(¹)
Total	122,229	149,599	38,061	309,889	
Percent	40	48	12		100

¹ Less than 0.5 percent.

Table 2.--Pole production in Montana, Idaho,¹ and northeastern Washington, by species, 1947-1962

Year	Species					Total
	Western redcedar	Lodgepole pine	Western larch	Douglas- fir	Other ²	
Number						
1947	230,872	351,310	221,990	6,473	6,557	817,202
1948	212,785	138,099	90,879	5,419	804	447,986
1949	286,116	186,262	121,214	5,720	0	599,312
1950	217,049	92,338	71,651	9,070	0	390,108
1951	192,271	136,628	126,332	10,116	0	465,347
1952	217,721	110,621	152,761	19,049	0	500,152
1953	191,551	128,523	90,245	3,516	0	413,835
1954	138,624	101,842	36,938	768	0	278,172
1955	131,860	95,027	61,688	5,941	0	294,516
1956	193,393	246,947	111,268	36,334	0	587,942
1957	280,764	142,361	82,209	13,559	0	518,893
1958	127,039	173,331	37,152	2,709	0	340,231
1959	140,410	244,015	42,796	1,360	0	428,581
1960	204,894	177,200	50,727	4,341	0	437,162
1961 ³	188,922	135,983	41,567	3,952	0	370,424
1962	159,882	114,573	35,290	144	0	309,889
Average, last 5 years	164,229	169,021	41,506	2,501	0	377,257

¹ Data for 1952, and 1956 through 1962, are for the entire State; data for other years are for northern Idaho only. For the years of record, southern Idaho's annual output (all from lodgepole pine) did not exceed 6.2 percent of the State's total in any year; output ranged from 6,000 poles (1952) to a high of 10,292 poles (1956).

² Mainly ponderosa pine.

³ Based in part on interpolations from 1960 and 1962 reports. See text footnote 2, page 1.

Table 3. -- Pole production in Montana, Idaho, and northeastern Washington, and imported poles, 1947-1962

Year	Poles grown and cut in			Poles imported from Canada and the west coast
	Montana	Idaho ¹	Northeastern Washington	
	Number			
1947	324,734	316,764	175,704	356,643
1948	166,856	205,035	76,095	227,069
1949	221,815	300,808	76,689	311,291
1950	148,473	180,410	61,225	226,159
1951	216,188	193,341	55,818	132,966
1952	181,985	229,777	88,390	379,686
1953	177,130	206,915	29,790	262,017
1954	137,531	131,110	9,531	229,119
1955	138,260	131,281	24,975	77,071
1956	303,635	211,451	72,856	125,569
1957	177,979	252,941	87,973	181,584
1958	181,627	132,054	26,550	126,971
1959	255,264	135,400	37,917	99,821
1960	190,487	188,719	57,956	96,980
1961 ²	147,205	177,638	45,581	58,018
1962	122,229	149,599	38,061	12,592
Average, last 5 years	179,362	156,682	41,213	78,876

¹Data for 1952, and 1956 through 1962, are for the entire State; data for other years are for northern Idaho only. For the years of record, southern Idaho's annual output (all from lodgepole pine) did not exceed 6.2 percent of the State's total in any year; output ranged from 6,000 poles (1952) to a high of 10,292 poles (1956).

²Based in part on interpolations from 1960 and 1962 reports. See text footnote 2, page 1.

These marked declines occurred in all the principal pole species; western red-cedar output for 1962 was down 22 percent from 1960, lodgepole pine was down 35 percent, and western larch was down 30 percent.

Severe declines likewise occurred in each of the northern Rocky Mountain pole-producing areas. Montana's production (principally from lodgepole pine) declined 36 percent from 1960; Idaho's output was down 21 percent, and northeastern Washington's production was 34 percent below 1960. In the same period, imports of poles from Canada and the west coast to yards in the area fell off 87 percent.

Table 4.--Distribution of 1962 pole production in Montana, Idaho, and northeastern Washington, by species, length, and American Standards Association classes

Pole length (feet)	A. S. A. Class										All
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
----- Percent of total -----											
<u>WESTERN REDCEDAR</u>											
25	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.8	1.7	2.6	1.6	0.3	0.6	¹ --	8.8
30	.3	.3	.6	1.3	3.1	3.5	2.2	.2	.1	--	11.6
35	.5	.5	1.7	4.6	9.9	5.8	2.2	--	² 0	0	25.2
40	.6	1.1	3.6	6.3	6.0	2.5	.1	0	0	0	20.2
45	.7	1.4	4.0	4.0	2.2	--	0	0	0	0	12.3
50	.7	1.6	2.8	1.8	.2	0	0	0	0	0	7.1
55	3.2	4.8	5.1	1.7	--	0	0	0	0	0	14.8
All	6.5	10.0	18.2	20.5	23.1	14.4	6.1	.5	.7	--	100.0
<u>LODGEPOLE PINE</u>											
25	--	--	.1	.2	.9	2.1	5.4	1.0	26.6	7.7	44.0
30	--	--	.1	.5	1.7	3.8	4.2	1.1	4.4	--	15.8
35	--	.1	2.7	3.1	6.0	7.5	2.9	--	--	0	22.3
40	--	.1	3.8	2.8	4.0	2.1	0	0	0	0	12.8
45	--	.1	1.0	2.7	.8	--	--	0	0	0	4.6
50	--	.1	.2	.1	--	--	0	0	0	0	.4
55	--	--	--	--	0	0	0	0	0	0	.1
All	.1	.4	7.9	9.4	13.4	15.5	12.5	2.1	31.0	7.7	100.0
<u>WESTERN LARCH</u>											
25	--	--	.1	.1	.1	.1	--	0	--	0	.4
30	--	.1	.2	.6	2.4	2.5	1.0	0	.5	0	7.3
35	.4	.6	1.2	5.3	14.1	8.5	2.7	0	--	0	32.8
40	.9	1.6	5.0	14.6	11.7	2.8	--	0	0	0	36.6
45	.2	.7	3.5	5.2	1.1	--	0	0	0	0	10.7
50	.1	.6	2.1	1.1	--	0	0	0	0	0	4.0
55	1.0	2.8	4.2	.2	--	--	0	0	0	0	8.2
All	2.6	6.4	16.3	27.1	29.4	13.9	3.8	0	.5	0	100.0
<u>ALL SPECIES</u>											
25	.3	.1	.3	.5	1.2	2.1	2.8	.5	10.3	2.9	21.0
30	.2	.2	.4	.9	2.5	3.5	2.8	.5	1.7	--	12.7
35	.3	.4	2.1	4.1	8.9	6.7	2.5	--	--	0	25.0
40	.4	.8	3.8	6.0	5.9	2.4	--	0	0	0	19.3
45	.4	.8	2.8	3.6	1.5	--	--	0	0	0	9.2
50	.4	.9	1.7	1.1	.1	--	0	0	0	0	4.3
55	1.7	2.8	3.1	.9	--	--	0	0	0	0	8.5
All	3.7	6.0	14.2	17.1	20.1	14.8	8.2	1.0	12.0	2.9	100.0

¹Dash (--) indicates production less than 0.05 percent.

²Zero (0) indicates no production.

Over the 16 years of record, production has declined appreciably from the high point in 1947, when pent-up demand from the war years was pushing power and telephone line construction. However, this decline has not been at a uniform rate. An analysis of the trend in output from northern Rocky Mountain forests showed that (1) nearly 89 percent of the overall decline for the 16-year period occurred before 1955, and (2) the tendency in the late 1950's has been for production to level off at an annual output of about 375,000 poles.

A similar production trend--a rapid decline from 1947 to about 1955, followed by a much less rapid decline or a tendency to level off--was found in the analysis of data from each of the three areas.

Prior to 1955, except for a single year, pole imports to northern Rocky Mountain yards exceeded the output from any one of the three areas, but later fell behind both Idaho and Montana. Since 1957, imports have declined steadily and, in 1962, fell below the output of each of the three areas. The continuing and rapid downward trend for imports is in marked contrast to the "leveling-off" tendency found in the production figures of the northern Rocky Mountain area.

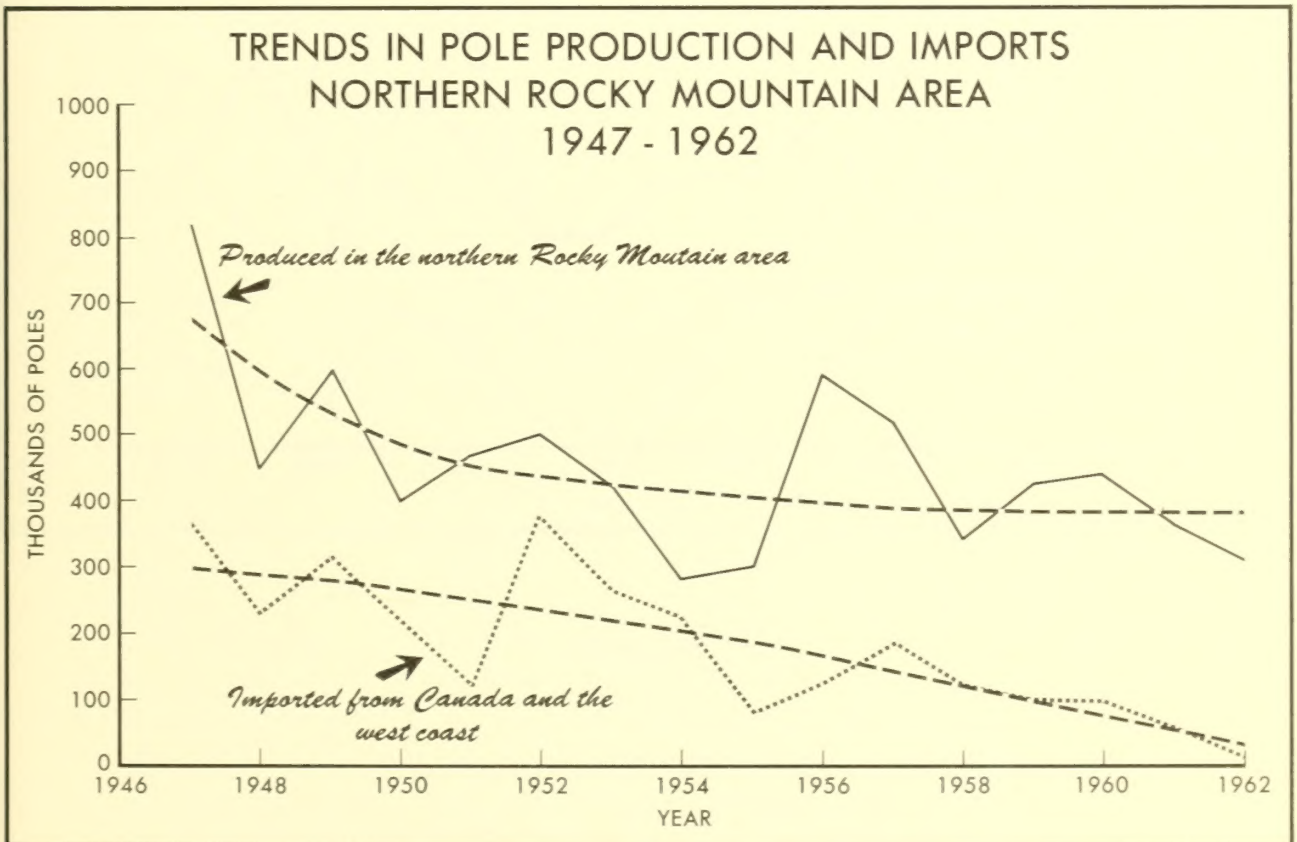


Figure 1

Average annual production was about the same for Idaho and Montana from 1947 through 1962. Idaho is estimated to have produced between 196,000 and 200,000 poles per year³ in comparison to Montana's 193,000. Prior to 1955, production in Idaho was somewhat higher than in Montana. However, for most of the years since 1955, Montana's output has exceeded that of Idaho.

Western redcedar has been the leading species for all but 4 years of the 16-year period. Since 1955, however, lodgepole pine has occupied top place three times (in 1956, 1958, and 1959), and will probably challenge western redcedar with increasing frequency as a source of poles.

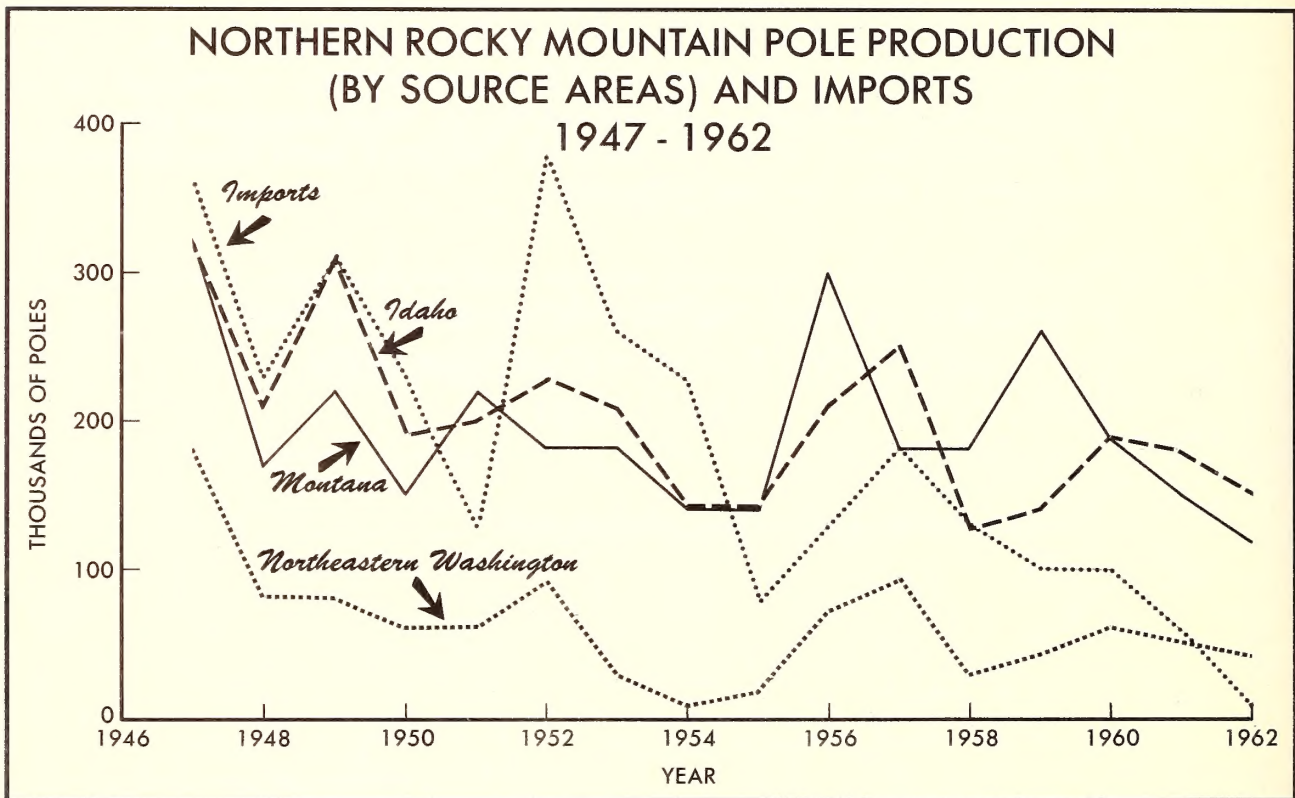


Figure 2

³Data are missing for all but one of the years from 1947 to 1955 for southern Idaho. Estimates based on 1952 and 1956 figures for southern Idaho indicate the actual production probably did not exceed the higher figure shown here.