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Earl S. Peirce

SALVAGE PROGRAMS FOLLOWING THE  
1938 HURRICANE

Edited by  
Amelia R. Fry

Berkeley  
1968

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Resources for the Future



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1902-1906 Attended Phillip Academy, Andover, Massachusetts. Graduated 1906

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July 1, 1910 Entered U.S. Forest Service as Forest Assistant, Bighorn National Forest, Sheridan, Wyoming

1915-1916 Forest Examiner in Black Hills National Forest, Deadwood, South Dakota

1917-1921 Forest Supervisor, Medicine Bow National Forest, Laramie, Wyoming

1922-1932 Director of Extension, New York State College of Forestry, Syracuse, New York

From 1933 to 1951 Held various positions with U.S. Forest Service at Regional Office at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and at head office in Washington, D.C.

From 1936 to my retirement in 1951 Was Chief of the Division of Co-operative Forest Protection, having to do mainly with co-operation with state forestry departments and private timber land owners in protecting forests from fire damage.  
Was assigned to the timber salvage project in New England (administered by the U.S. Forest Service) following the hurricane of 1938.



## PREFACE

This interview was made possible by a grant from Resources for the Future, Inc., under which the Regional Oral History Office of the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley embarked on a series of interviews to trace the history of policy in the U. S. Forest Service. Dr. Henry Vaux, Professor of Forestry, University of California, Berkeley, is the Principal Investigator of this project. Copies of the manuscripts are on deposit in the Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley; also in the Department of Special Collections, UCLA Library; in the Forest History Society, Yale University; and in the library of Resources for the Future, Washington, D. C.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons prominent in the recent history of the West. The Office is under the administrative supervision of the Director of the Bancroft Library.

Willa Klug Baum, Head  
Regional Oral History Office

Regional Oral History Office  
Room 486 The Bancroft Library  
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THE RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE SERIES  
tape recorded interviews on  
THE HISTORY OF FOREST POLICY, 1900-1950

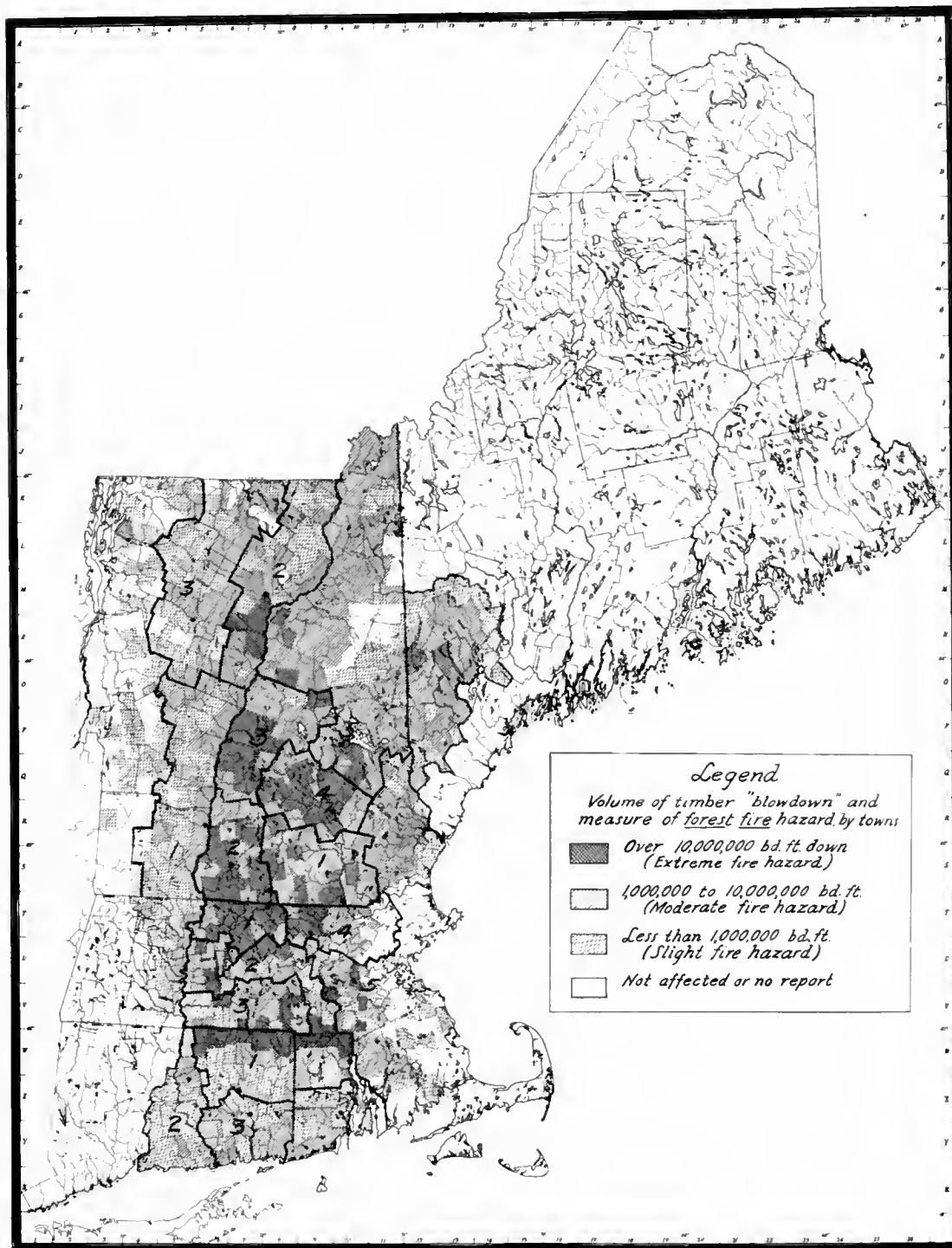
1. Clepper, Henry, Executive Secretary, Society of American Foresters.
2. Dana, Samuel T., Dean, School of Natural Resources, University of Michigan
3. Gill, Tom, Forester, author, head of Pack foundation.
4. Granger, Christopher, Assistant Chief of the Forest Service, national forest administration.
5. Hall, R. Clifford, Director, Forest Taxation Inquiry.
6. Hartzog, George B., Director, National Park Service.
7. Hornaday, Fred, Executive Secretary of American Forestry Association; and Pomeroy, Kenneth, Editor for A. F. A.
8. Kotok, I. E., Assistant Chief of the Forest Service, state and private forestry; research.
9. Kniepp, Leon F., Assistant Chief of the Forest Service, land and acquisition.
10. Marsh, Raymond, Assistant Chief of the U. S. Forest Service under Earle Clapp.
11. Peirce, Earl, Chief, Division of State Cooperation, USFS.
12. Ringland, Arthur, Regional Forester, Region 3; Executive Secretary of National Conference on Outdoor Recreation.
13. Roberts, Paul, Director, Prairie States Forestry Projects;
14. Shepard, Harold B., in charge of Insurance Study, conducted by the Northeastern Experiment Station with Yale University.
15. Sieker, John H., Chief of Division of Recreation and Lands.
16. Swift, Lloyd, Chief of Division of Wildlife Management.



NEW ENGLAND

# "BLOWDOWN" TIMBER AND FOREST FIRE HAZARD

CAUSED BY THE SEPT. 1938 HURRICANE



HURRICANE DAMAGE:				
STATE	NO. COUNTIES AFFECTED	NO. TOWNS AFFECTED	"BLOWDOWN" VOLUME - M	"BLOWDOWN" VOLUME SALVAGEABLE - M
MAINE	4	40	50,000	45,000
NEW HAMPSHIRE	10	259	1,005,000	620,000
VERMONT	14	248	360,000	190,000
MASSACHUSETTS	10	150	1,000,000	600,000
RHODE ISLAND	5	39	85,000	60,000
CONNECTICUT	8	168	150,000	85,000
TOTAL NEW ENGLAND	51	904	2,650,000	1,600,000



## FOREWORD

This historical report was prepared in March, 1965,-- twenty-seven years after the big hurricane in 1938. It is based in part on memory, but mostly on reports and records made during or soon after the completion of the program.

The Federal activities in New England following the hurricane were undertaken in response to urgent requests from responsible individuals, groups, and high officials of all the states involved. The double barreled program, (1) reducing the forest fire hazard and (2) salvaging the damaged timber, was made possible through the cooperation of at least six separate Government agencies. The work involved was most closely related to the Department of Agriculture, so the responsibility for participation by the government was assumed by the Secretary of Agriculture. It was delegated by him to the Chief of the United States Forest Service, and within the latter organization the overall directing job was centered in the "Division of State Cooperation". The writer at the time was in charge of that division.



While the hazard reduction-fire protection program had ample precedent in the annals of Forest Service history, it did provide a test of Forest Service leadership and ability to carry on a big job, demanding a high degree of cooperation with many local, state and Federal agencies. On the other hand, the timber salvage program was something entirely new to the Forest Service, a project without a modern prototype, one so large and hazardous that no individual, corporation, or state could undertake it, and one that demanded the stabilizing influence of a competent and experienced Federal agency. The Forest Service admits some mistakes but offers no apologies for the conduct of the program. Most of the policies which guided the various activities were fundamentally sound and in the best public interest. Purposely no names have been mentioned. To do so would make it difficult to know where to stop. Many persons, mostly regular Forest Service officials, played important roles in the program at one time or another and in various capacities. However, the Project Director located at Boston had by far the most difficult task. It required supervisory ability, sound





judgement and sincere will to cooperate. The success of the entire program was in the hands of the Project Director. Two men shared that responsibility - Leslie S. Bean during the initial fifteen months, and John F. Campbell from there to the close of the Boston office on January 30, 1943.

The hurricane caused a great loss of human lives and tremendous damage to properties of all kinds but the dark clouds had a tinge of silver lining. It provided a huge volume of lumber and other wood products when and where it was urgently needed in the war effort. In that respect, it added some counterweight to the old English proverb, "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good."

Earl S. Peirce

March 29, 1965  
Washington, D. C.



## INTRODUCTION

It was retired Assistant Chief of the U.S. Forest Service Ed I. Kotok who in 1963 first mentioned to me that the federal emergency salvage of the New England hurricane of 1938 was a milestone in federal forestry in the enormity of the effort and in the complex co-operation between federal, state, county, and private timberland representatives.

Sometime later, during an exchange of letters with another retired assistant chief, Chris Granger, the subject of the 1938 blow-down was again approached, this time as a suggested topic to include in a memoir that he was planning for the Resources for the Future series on the history of policy in the U.S. Forest Service. Granger suggested that Earl Peirce was the man to write about the colossal cleanup job, since at the time of the hurricane Granger had been in charge of timber management of the national forests and Earl Peirce was heading Co-operative Forest Protection, a Division that dealt with state and private timber owners. It was he, then, who had been assigned to direct and co-ordinate the emergency protection and



salvage operations.

Mr. Peirce readily agreed to write his account for the Regional Oral History Office at Berkeley, using his records and those available in the U.S. Forest Service office. He received no outlines from me, as such; only suggestions that he try to supplement the information available in the records and emphasize the why and the how of the operation.\* Edee Mezirow, Regional Oral History Office representative in Washington, D.C., where Mr. Peirce lives, was alerted to help him if he needed assistance in checking records and digging out documents. From the Forest Service files and elsewhere, Peirce also collected several photographs and a map of the hurricane area for inclusion in his manuscript.

Working without a typewriter "or the ability to operate one," he wrote out what, in his opinion, were the major activities of the entire fire protection and salvaging effort. Some of "the facets and ramifications," he says, have not been touched, but, fearing that too much detail would make for deadly reading, he avoided

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\* Letter in appendix, Fry to Peirce, January 27, 1965.



anything that might seem trivial and stuck to the broad outlines. "Even so, it is difficult to tell the story without considerable detail," he writes.\*

The manuscript was returned to the Regional Oral History Office in Berkeley for typing, inserting the necessary pictures, indexing, and binding. No editing was done other than checking for errors in spelling and typing.

Amelia R. Fry  
Project Director

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\* See Appendix, March 29, 1965, letter from Peirce to Fry.





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FEDERAL EMERGENCY PROGRAMS FOLLOWING  
THE 1938 NEW ENGLAND HURRICANE

THE STORM AND ITS AFTERMATH

One of the most destructive hurricanes of all times swept through the New England States on September 21, 1938. It left in its wake tremendous damage in loss of human lives and property values. It covered an area of 160,000 square miles, causing varying damage in all six New England states and small portions of Long Island. The hardest hit areas centered along the north shore of Long Island Sound and extensive interior portions of New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

Other great storms had killed more persons, but in terms of property losses this one topped them all. A few statistics will give an idea of the severity of the storm and its destruction: 682 persons lost their lives and an additional 1754 were more or less injured. Destroyed were 8924 dwellings, three-quarters of them summer homes, 9807 other buildings, and 2605 boats. Public utilities were severely damaged with 20,000 miles of electric power and telephone lines put out of service and order. The Bell System then



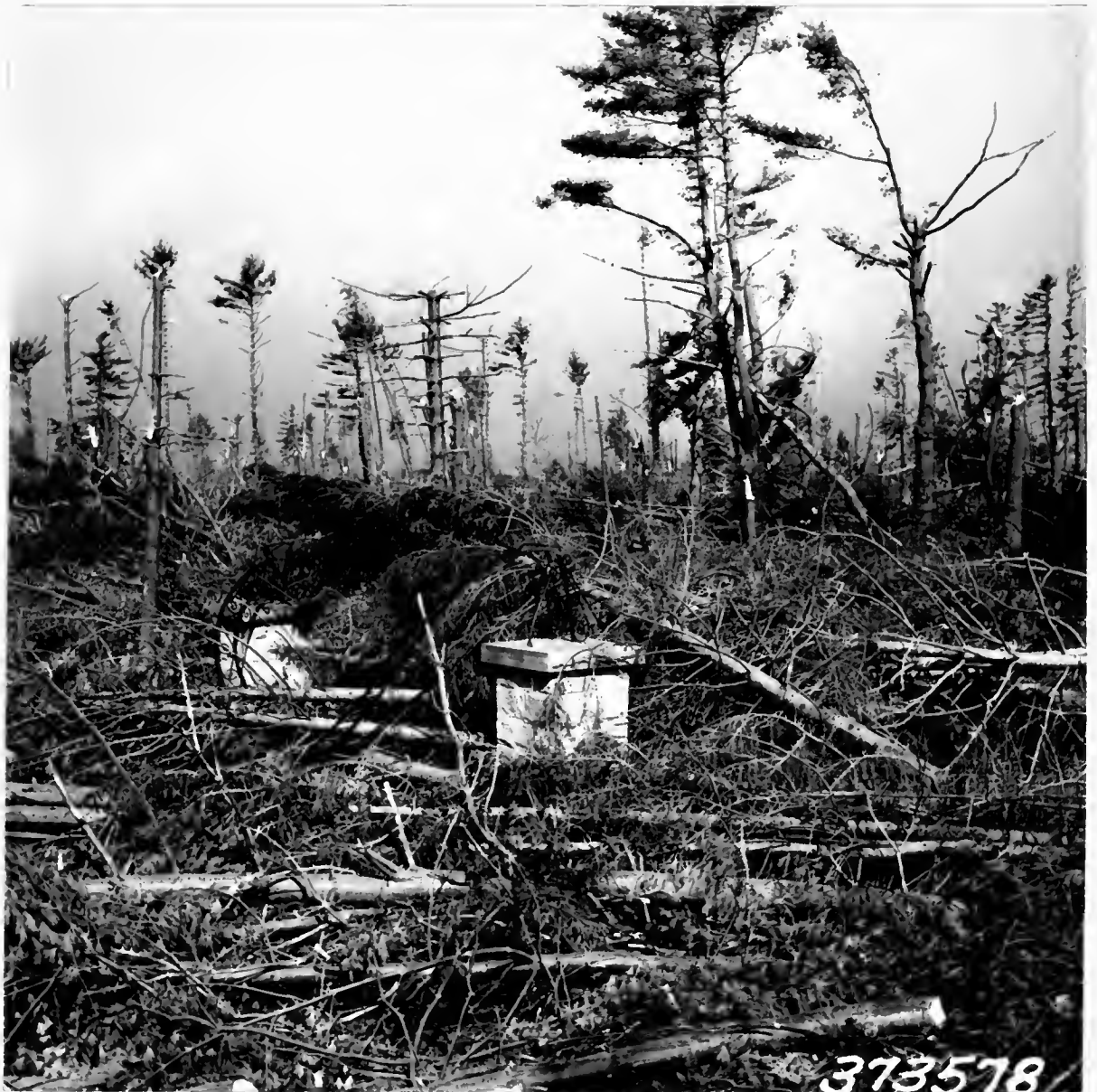
reported 600,000 telephones out of commission and estimated its damages at ten million dollars.

Loss of life and damage, especially in the coastal areas, would have been far greater had it not been for advance warnings by the U.S. Weather Bureau and the U.S. Coast Guard, which enabled some emergency preparations to meet the shock.

An unusual feature of this hurricane was its great damage to shade trees and forests. Literally millions of large trees were toppled over like ten-pins. The capricious storm, contacting the earth lightly in some places, viciously in others, left a tangled mass of debris over extensive areas. Contributing to the heavy tree damage was an abnormally high rainfall during the preceding week which softened the ground and made the trees vulnerable to windthrow. This applied especially to the relatively shallow rooted white pines, which comprised the major tree species.

Throughout the hurricane area there was great damage to valuable shade trees - in city or town parks, bordering streets or surrounding homes and residences. Mostly, they were large and beautiful trees, highly valued by their owners and local residents. Since





Timber Management, Injured Trees, New Hampshire  
No. 3 of a series of panorama photos showing the  
storm damage at Wheelock Park at Keene, New  
Hampshire. This damage was caused by the hurricane  
of September 21.

Taken by B. W. Muir--October 1938





they could not be replaced within 50 years or more, their loss was deeply felt.

Damage to forests involved both extensive tracts of timber and many small woodlots over some 15 million acres or about one third of the total land area in New England. The area of almost complete damage was about a thousand square miles - more than fifteen times the size of the District of Columbia - centered largely in central Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire. As the accompanying map shows it involved 904 townships in 51 counties and comprised 30,000 separate landowners.

The appalling damage over such a large area naturally caused widespread concern which was not limited only to the landowners. It posed two urgent problems: the threatening potential fire hazard, and the immense task of salvaging the merchantable portions of the damaged trees.

How to quickly reduce the fire danger was paramount, for it was generally recognized that, until the damaged fire protection facilities were restored and the highly inflammable debris was removed, disastrous forest fires would surely follow. Local residents felt they were sitting on a powder keg



likely to explode any minute. Concern was understandable and fully justified by the actual facts, but to make matters worse some unduly alarming items appeared in the press and over the radio. For example, one widely circulated magazine predicted that a forest fire could spread over the entire area in less time than it took the hurricane - a matter of some five hours. Incidentally, this demonstrated the need in similiar catastrophes for some central news control, which in this case was undertaken and proved helpful later as an organized hazard reduction program became operative.

The public utility companies began immediately to restore their facilities and the highway departments to clear up the highways and primary roads. Also many landowners, both individually and corporate, commenced clean-up on their lands, but in general the job was too much for them to handle. Most of them lacked the needed labor, equipment, or ability to cope with the situation. In New England, with its long tradition of local government by town meeting, most of the heavily hit towns created special "emergency committees" to coordinate immediate relief measures.

Fortunately there existed in all the states involved State Forestry Departments, whose primary re -



sponsibility was to protect forest lands against fire. Also, as a part of the overall state protection system, many of the towns had local agencies for controlling nearby woods fires. All these state and local protection agencies went to work immediately to clean out woods roads and trails, repair telephone lines and other protective facilities. A small portion of the heavily damaged areas were located on national or state forests and here the responsibility was taken by the respective agencies who began to clear up the debris. Most of the damage, however, was on private land belonging to a large number of owners, most of whom were unable to handle a prompt and adequate clean-up job on their lands. To effectively reduce the overall fire danger the debris had to be cleaned up in whole or partially on all ownerships. How this could be accomplished, before the inflammable material became tinder dry and thus a serious fire menace, was the big problem. And closely related was how the merchantable portions of the damaged trees could be salvaged before rot or insects wiped out all their redeemable value. This phase of the operations will be discussed later under the "Timber Salvage Program". Time was of the essence



in both activities and both problems had to be considered in any practical solution.

Immediately following the hurricane numerous local meetings of interested individuals and groups were held to ascertain the damages and discuss plans for meeting the emergency. The concensus was that, due to the urgency of the needs and the interstate scope of the problem, Federal aid was needed to coordinate and take overall direction of the whole job. The first urgent request for government help came within a few days after the hurricane, directly to the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service from the Director of the Harvard Forest at Petersham, Massachusetts which property had been severly damaged. A barrage of other requests soon followed; some came through New England representatives in Congress and others directly to the U.S. Forest Service; the Secretary of Agriculture received some and at least two went directly to the President. One each came from the Governors of New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

It was quite natural that the U.S. Forest Service would be singled out as the logical federal agency to head up a government aid forestry program. For many years it had been cooperating closely with the

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\*Henry A. Wallace

\*\*Franklin D. Roosevelt





State Forestry Departments in forest fire control and other forestry work under the Clarke - McNary Act of June 7, 1924 ( 43 Stat. 653).

Even before formal requests for aid reached Washington the Chief Forester held several conferences to discuss and determine how the Forest Service could be most helpful. On September 29 a delegation from Massachusetts called on Chief Forester F.A. Wilcox, and with him met with Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace. On the following day the Secretary requested the Chief Forester to coordinate the job for the Department and to assist the States to the fullest extent possible with existing funds and personnel.

Special funds were not then available for an emergency program, and Congress was not in session to appropriate any.

Steps were taken promptly to cooperate with State and local agencies primarily responsible for forest fire protection in the area. On October 3 the Regional Forester, in charge of Federal forestry activities in the hurricane area, met with the New England State Foresters and other interested parties in Boston to discuss and formulate plans. The first



job was to survey the extent of the damages and this task was undertaken in large by the respective State Forestry personnel.

#### REDUCING THE FOREST FIRE HAZARD

Following several days of discussion and conferences in Washington to determine how the Department of Agriculture could be most helpful, a small group of Federal foresters proceeded to Boston on October 7 to set up a Project Director's office and to launch an action program.

#### Organization

On the following day the President, partly in response to a telegram from the Governor of New Hampshire, directed the administrators of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to cooperate with the Forest Service in fireproofing activities. This made available a very substantial and much needed source of labor, in large part well organized and equipped, for woods work.

In the fall of 1938 the country had not recovered fully from the great 1929 depression and fortunately there were still in operation 50 CCC Camps and some 15,000 WPA workers in the hurricane area. Activities of these agencies were immediately concentrated on



clean-up work and remained so until the hazard reduction program was completed in the fall of 1940. The CCC camps had experienced personnel to supervise hazard reduction work, but this was not the case with WPA. They had the laborers but lacked the supervision required of them by the Forest Service. During the early part of the program the Forest Service was handicapped by insufficient funds and personnel to adequately administer the WPA work. To correct this situation WPA employed foresters and other qualified technicians to assist in directing the work. They were under complete jurisdiction of the Forest Service. Many of these technicians proved to be of high calibre and contributed a great deal toward the success of the program. Although the Forest Service had overall direction of WPA activities on this job, close cooperation existed between the two Federal agencies. The WPA crews were trained in fire fighting techniques but except in emergencies were not considered as a fire suppression force.

Actually, WPA and CCC workers formed the backbone of the labor force used on this phase of the Government emergency operations. There were, however, heavily damaged areas too remote to be reached



by existing camps of the CCC or by WPA commuting crews, so other means were needed to cover such areas.

When Congress reconvened in March, 1939, various bills were introduced to authorize additional Federal aid. These were provided on March 15 by a \$5,000,000 appropriation for work on non-Federal lands and an additional \$500,000 for National Forests in New Hampshire and Maine. By amendment on May 2, 1939 \$60,000 of the original appropriation was to be used on damaged properties on Long Island. Subsequently an additional \$300,000 was made available for the fiscal year 1940/1941.

Unlike the customary Clarke-McNary Law procedure (whereby Federal funds were allotted to cooperating states for expenditure by the states) these Federal emergency funds were for use by the responsible government agency. However, they were to be on a matching basis - in other words, the Federal expenditures in any state could not exceed the state, local and private expenditures for similiar work in that state.

The operations stemming from these Federal funds were known as the "NEFE" ( New England Federal Emergency) program. Up to this time, the small super-





visory force needed for the federal hurricane emergency activities were on loan from the U.S. Forest Service. They had functioned primarily in coordinating the work carried on by the various interested agencies, including the state forestry departments, local groups, private landowners, other Federal agencies and the CCC and WPA. This initial group of Federal Foresters formed the nucleus for the NEFE and additional experienced personnel was recruited, largely from the Forest Service, as needed to carry out the expanded responsibilities.

Two plans were adopted for working areas which could not be reached by existing CCC or WPA workers. First, as far as possible, local crews, generally 20 men each, were hired on a hourly basis, in most cases 50¢, to cover areas within commuting distance from their homes. Each crew was supervised by a capable foreman. Four or more such crews were under the supervision of an experienced District Supervisor.

Laborers were obtained largely through cooperation of the U.S. Employment Service. Local men were chosen, insofar as possible, for work within easy commuting distance of their homes. They furnished their own



transportation and subsistence. Many of these crews were organized and operating by late April. They were given thorough training in the use of hand tools, both as applied to their hazard reduction job and for fire control purposes. High standards of efficiency were required of the men, and if they failed to respond to repeated attempts at training they were dismissed.

Secondly, to cover areas where local commuting crews were not possible or practicable, it was necessary to construct camps to house from 50 to 100 workers. 19 of these so called "DA" (Department of Agriculture) camps were established at an average cost of \$7500 for a 50-man camp and \$9500 for a 100-man camp. Except for laborers and cooks all other employees were taken from Civil Service registers. A large number of the laborers were young men who had served their two years in the CCC. Also many were University forestry students. The camp superintendent was responsible for organizing, planning and accomplishing the work, but to a large degree the practice of self government prevailed and proved effective. Although the primary objectives differed, these camps were quite similar to the Job Corps camps of today. Most "DA" camps operated until the end of 1940, when the last one was closed.





A WPA clean up crew reducing the fire hazard at Lady Wheelock and Lady Parks at Keene, New Hampshire, caused by the storm of September 21, 1938. Taken by B.W. Muir, U.S. Forest Service, October, 1938



It was necessary, of course, to obtain written permission from the landowners before performing any work on private lands. This proved to be no small task due to the large number of cases, and it was complicated further by absentee owners, many of whom were difficult to reach. The responsibility for contacting owners was assumed by interested local citizens and groups. In this endeavor the WPA workers were helpful since they were local citizens, more or less familiar with landowners in their areas. Practically all owners were naturally glad to sign agreements for cleaning up their lands at no expense to them. Strangely enough, there were several cases where permission was refused on the grounds, in their words, that they had "no use for the President".

As the program developed, the Project Director's office was staffed as needed to do the overall supervisory job, and State Directors were appointed in each of the six New England states. In the heavily damaged areas of the states they were divided into districts with District Supervisors made directly responsible for all project activities within their areas. This general supervisory type organization was followed throughout most of the program, but





revisions were made as needed to meet changing needs, as major objectives shifted from "hazard reduction" to "timber salvage."

#### Accomplishments

The combined accomplishment on fire control activities of the three Federal work agencies, WPA, CCC, and NEFE, was 10,121 miles of roads and trails cleared and 214,902 acres of debris disposed of on roadside strips, near villages and homes, and on "breaker strips" for controlling fires in large "blow down" areas. In addition substantial assistance was given state and local fire protection agencies in restoring damaged fire control facilities (such as 15 toppled-down lookout towers and 563 miles of telephone lines) and in locating and constructing many water holes for fire suppression use. A grand total of 4,876,519 man-days of labor were spent on Federal fire proofing activities.

The Agriculture Adjustment Administration (AAA) provided a \$4 per acre benefit payment to individual landowners for cleaning up their lands. However, little use was made of this aid, since in most cases the cost of the work required would far exceed the allowance.



The Federal hazard reduction project was completed by the fall of 1940 and on November 25 of that year the Congress authorized the transfer of the government purchased tools and equipment to the New England state forestry departments for forest fire protection by the states. Distribution was made on the basis of their respective needs as a result of the hurricane. Under this authority a substantial amount of fire control equipment was given to the states, including 25 trucks, 9 station wagons, 22 fire pumps and 47,120 feet of fire hose.

### Benefits

The benefits resulting from the Federal assistance in the fire hazard reduction operations cannot be precisely evaluated. The major accomplishments were headed by the help given in cleaning some 600,000 acres of inflammable debris, which, if left untouched on the ground, would have created a potential fire hazard of catastrophic proportion. The protection taken certainly was instrumental in preventing any major fire losses.

But how can the value of prevention be measured against the uncertainty of what might have occurred? An old proverb tells us that "an ounce of prevention



is worth a pound of cure". Disastrous forest fires following in the wake of this hurricane would have raised this ratio many fold. Undoubtedly, the intangible but nonetheless greatest benefit was psychological - the lessening of local apprehension over threatening or possible danger in the knowledge that substantial protective measures were being taken.

Another immeasurable benefit was the widespread public appreciation, stemming from the hurricane, of the urgent need for proceedings against forest fires. A benefit which could pay good future dividends to both was the training and experience in fire control techniques acquired by the many hundreds of young men who participated in the program.

A more measurable yardstick is the financial benefit to many thousands of landowners whose properties were cleaned up, most of whom were unable to perform or finance the work themselves. This benefit could be conservatively assessed at the actual cost of the Federal contribution, roughly estimated at 25 million dollars.

Another measurable benefit for future forest fire protection was the substantial amount of tools and equipment turned over to the states, at the completion



of the federal program.

Still another immeasurable but possible benefit is the experience acquired in this program in the event of similar catastrophes which might occur within the not too distant future.

From a conservation standpoint the removal or reduction of vast amounts of dead or rotting trees was beneficial, for such material left on the ground would have provided breeding places for destructive insects and disease. Also large accumulations of debris, if left on the ground, would retard natural tree regeneration to a greater or less extent.

Possibly one of the greatest public benefits resulting from the hazard reducing program was its vitalizing influence on forest fire control thinking and planning in New England. It provided the basis for a unity of effort along these lines never before experienced in the Northeast, and its effects will become more and more apparent as time goes on. The value of these effects became manifest early in the program through needed forestry legislation and in the development of improved fire control practices.

The Forest Service, in carrying out its coordinating responsibilities, acknowledged and appreciated the valuable assistance and cooperation of the many interested agencies, local, state and federal. Splendid cooperation was







Timber Management, Injured Trees, New Hampshire,  
White Mountain National Forest  
W. P. A. workers piling brush tops and slash  
cuttings from devastated trees in the Gale River  
Experimental Forest along the side of the Gale  
River State Road.  
Taken by B. W. Muir--October 15, 1938



obtained from those most interested - CCC, WPA, and the various State Foresters and their organizations, as well as town committees and the lumbermen of the Northeast.

#### SALVAGING THE DAMAGED TIMBER

It was estimated that the trees which were uprooted or otherwise damaged contained about two and one-half billion board feet of merchantable lumber or other usable forest products. Further, that nearly 70% of it, or 1,600,000 board feet (enough to build half a million dwellings) could be salvaged - provided it could be processed before the values were wiped out by decay or insects. Unless the logs could be put in water storage this might be only a matter of a few months, so as in reducing the fire danger, time was the important factor. A major portion of the trees were eastern white pine, a species valuable for lumber and box boards. By many owners they were considered their major asset.

The problem was, first how the salvaging could be accomplished, and secondly, what organization could best handle the job. Both problems were widely discussed at numerous meetings of interested persons and groups, both locally and in Washington.

To initiate an adequate salvage project was more complicated than was the case in reducing the fire damage.



There were a number of important reasons, among them:

- (a)- There was no existing organization equipped to handle a job of this magnitude.
- (b)- There was no ready local market for such a large amount of forest products.
- (c)- There were not sufficient experienced labor or suitable equipment in most areas.

Again, and largely for the reasons mentioned previously the local concensus pointed toward the Federal Government and pinpointed the Forest Service as the most logical agency to coordinate, direct and handle the project. Numerous requests were received from the New England states for Federal action.

Unfortunately, there were no Federal funds currently available and the Congress was not in session to provide the needed legislative authorization and financing. Neither the Secretary of Agriculture nor the Forest Service had authority to borrow funds. However, the Surplus Commodities Corporation, a corporate agency in the Department of Agriculture did have such authorization. Consequently, the SCC created a special subdivision NETSA (Northeastern Timber Salvage Administration) for the sole purpose of meeting the emergency and conferred upon it all necessary authority to do the job. An initial loan was obtained from the Disaster Loan Corporation - a division of the Reconstruction



Finance Corporation (RFC) - to launch the project. The procedure was to be a business transaction and in no way a "grant-in-aid." The logs to be purchased and the material to be processed were to comprise collateral. Both principal and 3% interest were to be repaid from the proceeds from sales, to the fullest extent possible.

The Chief Forester was appointed a vice-president of the SCC and made administrator of NETSA, with full responsibility for all Federal operations. The formal authorization of November 14, 1938, gave him "authority to use all facilities and personnel of the U.S. Forest Service and of such Federal, state, local and private agencies as may be willing to cooperate, and to employ such additional personnel as needed and to assume full responsibility for the procuring, handling, processing, exchanging, storing, transporting and sale of all inventories of the corporation, acquired in connection with the timber salvage program and shall execute contracts in connection therewith and to designate field agents of the corporation to carry out the last named functions, pursuant to his direction." He was further authorized "to establish state offices and such administrative units and offices as he may deem necessary to the





efficient effectuation of the salvage program, to negotiate with the Disaster Loan Corporation and to obtain a loan to be made to the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation in an amount not in excess of \$15,000,000." He was "to report, directly to the Secretary of Agriculture on all matters arising in connection with the program".

#### Policy Development Within the Program

Although the authority granted the administrator was broad and included logging operations on lands of cooperating owners and also the purchase of sawn lumber, the policy was early adopted of not undertaking either of these activities. The reasons were: (1) enough private loggers were available locally or could be recruited from other areas to perform logging work under direct contract with landowners, (2) Federal funds were limited to hurricane damaged material and it would be impossible or difficult to determine the original source of purchased sawn lumber. As regards logging, considerable help was given to private land owners in locating and obtaining loggers and also in drawing up suitable contracts and, wherever necessary, in obtaining loans from local banks.

A logical question, raised by persons unfamiliar



with the situation, was Why was not the government-owned lumber utilized by the government itself? This possibility was fully explored with the lumber experts of the National Defense Advisory Commission and of the War and Navy Departments. A number of orders were received and filled for the Navy by NETSA, but in general its direct use by government agencies was limited. This was due to a number of reasons:

In 1939 and 1940, when most of the logs were sawn, the lumber business was in the doldrums and there was little demand for wood products from any source. This was especially so for "rough" sawn lumber, which in general, required further processing to make it usable. Other government agencies were not interested in "rough" lumber and NETSA had no remanufacturing facilities. The original sawing was done by many small portable mills, which were not equipped with planers. In fact, the underlying action was that NETSA would salvage the logs and convert them into rough lumber for storing and seasoning; the material would then be available for local wood-using industries, to be reprocessed to suit their wood needs or the requirements of the established lumber market.

Another factor was that all NETSA lumber was "random" piled in hundreds of lots scattered throughout New England



and in nearly all cases would require grading and sorting before orders for specific items could be filled. With one War Department inquiry for camp construction material, which required a high degree of large lumber and heavy timbers, it would have been necessary to tear down piles in 32 yards to obtain the required stock. Even then, the lack of "dressing" facilities would have prevented delivery of the lumber on time.

Another reason was that the salvaged material had been either sold and delivered or was under contract a year or more before the demand for wood for war purposes began. Eventually, however, almost all of the hurricane lumber was used for military needs. If the hurricane had occurred two years later or could subsequent war demands have been foreseen, the operations could and would have been revised to meet military requirements. No doubt this would have resulted in a substantial savings to the government. On the otherhand, it might have been at the expense of local industries whose needs for wood products to fill government contracts came largely from NETSA lumber.

The primary objectives in disposing of the lumber and other forest project products was, first, to provide for the needs of local industries and, secondly,



to sell the surplus in an orderly way so as not to disrupt local markets. In the early meetings and discussions with lumber industry representatives, both national and local, it was apparent there was apprehension. Many thought that the government might intrude unduly in the retail lumber trade. To allay that concern, various discussions were held with responsible and interested local individuals and groups. On September 9, 1939 NETSA officials met with 23 representatives of various lumber associations and wood-using industries to discuss policies and procedures. This was followed up on September 27 by a meeting at Winchendon, Massachusetts with a committee representing ten of the major lumber associations. At this time the committee unanimously approved a sales policy, drafted by NETSA, which was believed to reflect the majority opinion of the industry and the government. This statement was released to the press on October 4, giving assurance to the interested lumber associations that the government had no intention of going into the lumber business. In short this policy provided:

(a)- To a maximum degree, logs in water storage





will be disposed of to existing industries with the view of maintaining stabilized employment for the maximum period.

(b)- Lumber owned by NETSA will be sold in foreign markets to the fullest degree.

(c)- Preference in the sale of lumber to governmental agencies will be granted prior to sales within the local market.

(d)- So far as possible, pine lumber disposed of in the domestic market will be distributed through the regularly established New England distribution channels. The governmental requirement, that the product must be advertised before sale, will be followed; but lumber will not be disposed of in small lots, the usual practice being to require the purchase of entire yards or none at all.

This policy was followed generally throughout the program but changing conditions necessitated some revisions, which were made only after discussion with interested local groups. Close contact with interested groups was maintained throughout the operations, and especially with the Secretary of the Northeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association, located in Boston.



In many instances, particularly in the salvage operations, it was necessary to employ workers with little or no experience in the kind of work involved - scaling and grading logs, grading lumber, sawmill operations, fire prevention and suppression and the like. Therefore, extensive training courses were needed and carried out. One of the most interesting was the training of women for sawmill work. Male workers became very scarce with the increasing activity of local wood-using industries to meet military requirements. Consequently, it became necessary to employ women to help operate several mills where NETSA had to do the sawing. At one site in New Hampshire nine women were used. The experiment proved successful, for after adequate training the women did a good job and proved very useful at a time when help was urgently needed and hard to find.

### Operations

The salvage program embraced three main activities: (1) purchasing the logs; (2) sawing the logs into lumber; and (3) selling the lumber. These operations will be briefly discussed in their chronological order.





Turkey Pond Sawmill located near Concord, N.H.  
Mill operated by NETSA and run by 9 women and  
3 men.

Taken by W. K. Williams--August, 1943  
U-Saw Prod., Lbr., Mills & Log Stor.--N.H.



**PURCHASING LOGS:** Three necessary determinations had to be made before undertaking the purchase of logs. First, what log scale should be used; secondly, what price or prices should be paid, and thirdly, where should the logs be received.

Several different log rules were in use in the area. After a careful study of their relative merits it was decided that the "International Log Rule" was the most equitable for the material involved and so this rule was selected.

The establishment of the log prices was governed by the desire to allow the hurricane stricken landowners the maximum benefit for the sale of their logs, but at the same time to provide for repayment of the loan which made the salvaging project possible. Obviously, the success of the whole enterprise would depend on purchase prices which would interest the timber owners. The government had no desire to make a profit for itself, but NETSA was committed by the loan agreement to recover the public investment if at all possible.

A carefully prepared analysis, based on the best available data, indicated prices of \$18, \$14 and \$10 per one thousand board feet for white pine





logs of grades 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Other comparable prices were determined for the relatively small amounts of other species and for pulpwood. These appraisal prices seemed to be generally satisfactory. They provided reasonable logging and hauling costs and left the landowners a fair salvage value for their damaged timber. However, they represented values of logs at the time they were received; if the appraisal values were paid in full, there would be no allowance for the cost of administration and for any depreciation in log values until such time as they could be processed and marketed. In private practice such allowances ranged from ten to twenty-five percent. The question of how much to allow for the hurricane timber was the subject of much discussion and controversy.

Subsequently, the original loan agreement provided that logs should be purchased at 80% of their appraised value, with the understanding that the vendors would receive additional payments in the event the program could be operated at a profit. A few purchases were negotiated on that basis, but it soon became apparent that an 80% initial payment was not attractive to most owners. This applied



mainly to the price established for grade 3 logs, the category which covered three-fourths of the "hurricane" timber. A great deal of protest ensued because of the desire of vendors for full or at least 90% payment. Various bills were introduced in Congress calling for appropriations, and in one case stipulating an additional bonus of \$2.50 per thousand board feet. None of these bills were passed. However, by Executive Order the appraised price for grade 3 white pine logs was increased by \$2. In effect, this was a subsidy, for in the final outcome it about equalled the amount by which the government failed to recover its investment.

Then early in January, 1939, authority was obtained to increase the initial payment to ninety percent of the scheduled prices, with the provision that the government would take full title to the logs. It was also decided that the log vendors should understand that ultimately they would receive their prorata share of all excess net receipts, if any, derived from the program within their state. These changes were made retroactive to the few contracts already made and were incorporated in all new sales agreements. The increased payments and



the added benefits provided the impetus needed to get the program moving. Purchase agreements were more readily negotiated and logs began to arrive at the various receiving stations at a rapid rate. NETSA officials believed the amounts actually paid for the logs represented fair prices and provided the owners reasonable salvage values for their damaged timber.

Locations where logs would be received were based upon the availability of suitable sites at reasonable rental rates and upon the expected volume of timber to be received at each site. They were established at strategic sites withing practical hauling distances from the lands involved. To the extent possible they were placed near ponds, lakes or rivers so that the logs could be temporarily stored in water to protect them from destructive insects and decay - until they could be either sold as logs or sawn into lumber, after the land stored logs had been processed. Two hundred and forty-six of these, so called "wet" sites, were set up throughout the area. Where water storage was not possible "dry" sites were established. Where possible, they were located at existing sawmills, but these were



few, so mostly open fields were selected. An essential requirement for the site was suitable space for a sawmill and for the storage of lumber. The ultimate disposal of sawdust and other refuse was also considered, as were the relative risks of fire and theft. Altogether, over 800 receiving sites were selected, but only 721 were actually used, of which 461 were "dry". At fourteen other locations both water and land storage were available.

Agreements for purchasing logs were on a state-wide rather than an overall basis, chiefly because of the provision for distributing possible benefits. In other words, there could be an excess of resale receipts in one or more states and not in others, so a final audit by states was deemed most equitable to the log vendors.

The more important contract provisions were that only logs from blown down or substantially injured trees, resulting from the hurricane, would be delivered; that all damaged timber would be included; that the vendor would deliver at a specified receiving site and within a stated time, not to exceed an agreed-upon volume. The administration agreed





to pay the seller, within 10 days, 90 per cent of the scheduled price. The vendor's share of any net profits was to be paid within 90 days after all timber salvaged in that state had been resold. This profit-sharing right was personal and could not be assigned.

As the logs were delivered at the various receiving sites they were scaled, and where necessary, graded by a NETSA-trained scaler and were put in storage either on land or in water or both, depending on the storing facilities. The vendors were given "purchase receipts", which were recorded and served as a basis for payment. Payment by government check was expedited as much as possible, but in many cases where operating funds were needed immediately, the vendors could generally use their delivery statements as a basis for loans from local bankers. They became almost legal tender in the area.

The first logs were received at two sites in New Hampshire on November 21, 1938 - one week after NETSA was created and two months to a day following the hurricane. The peak of deliveries was during the spring and early summer of 1939, after which deliveries dropped rapidly. By June 1940 most of



the logs remaining in the woods showed signs of deterioration and also the deliveries dwindled to a point where administrative expenses were becoming excessive. Consequently the purchasing of logs ended June 30, 1940.

A total of 660,555 M (thousand) board feet of logs was bought, of which nearly 90 per cent was white pine. \$7,860,813 was paid to log vendors in twelve thousand separate invoices. In addition 59,586 cords of pulpwood were purchased at a cost of \$464,500, making a grand total of \$8,323,313 paid to thirteen thousand landowners, mostly farmers, for their hurricane-injured timber. Of this amount almost 59 per cent went to landowners in New Hampshire, 18 per cent and 12 per cent to Massachusetts and Vermont owners, respectively; 7 per cent went to Maine and the remaining 4 per cent was expended in Connecticut and Rhode Island, in that order. A large part of these payments was, of course, to cover the cost of cutting the logs and hauling them in between the cutting and receiving sites taken by the timber owners, but in most cases, they included a reasonable stumage value.



SAWING THE LOGS INTO LUMBER: The government did not want to get into the manufacturing business anymore than was absolutely necessary. It believed that activity could best be performed by private industry. The original hope was to store the logs in water, where they would be relatively safe from deterioration, then to sell them over a reasonable period of time to local wood-using industries in amounts sufficient to meet their normal needs. However, early surveys showed there was not sufficient water storage available, which made it necessary to convert the logs into lumber as rapidly as possible. This applied to about 87 per cent of all the logs purchased. An important factor was the knowledge that logs stored on the ground were perishable and warm weather would lead to infestation off the ground from borers in the white pine logs and to a general spread of fungus diseases in all species.

The method of sawing naturally was determined by the anticipated market and this, in turn, had been decided at the September 27, 1938, policy agree-



ment with lumber industry representatives: namely, that the lumber will be sold outside of New England to the fullest extent possible. This meant that the logs should be converted into "square edge" construction lumber.

Although it was necessary for NETSA to have the dry-site logs sawn, it was hoped that milling by the government directly would not be necessary. Every effort was made to contract this work to established operators. There were a few stationary mills in the area, but in general small portable sawmills were brought in from other sections - mostly from Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Sawing contracts were solicited through advertisements and other means and were administered by the lowest qualified bidders.

The maximum acceptable prices were set at \$7.50 per thousand board feet for sawing and piling one-inch square edge softwood and \$1 more for the relatively small volume of hardwoods. To stimulate the production of high extra quality lumber and to compensate operators for the higher expense of "grade" sawing, a bonus of \$1 per thousand board feet was granted for No. 2 common and better grades of soft-





wood lumber. For hardwoods it was No. 1 common.

In all, contracts were made with 275 sawmill operators, who processed the logs at most of the sites. However, a few locations were left where, for various reasons, it was not possible to contract the sawing and where NETSA had to perform the work by so called "force account". Fifteen portable mills were purchased and operated by the government. This was during the late stages of the program when qualified local labor could not be found. It was at several of these mills where women were employed and trained for sawmilling operations.

Milling got underway in January, 1939, at a number of dry sites and expanded rapidly under pressure to complete sawing of all land-stored logs within a six-month period. Some "wet" logs for various reasons had to be removed from ponds and were earmarked from the the "wet" sites for early sawing. Until early in 1940, it was still the hope to sell most of the logs in water storage to local industries in the form of logs. A few such sales were made, but it was still a year or more before preparations for war began stimulating



the markets. The question of disposal of logs in ponds was given careful consideration and was fully discussed with local wood industry groups. It was decided they should be converted into lumber and be added to the inventory aimed for "foreign" consumption. Consequently, early in the spring of 1940 sawing of the water-stored logs began. At each milling site NETSA stationed one or more men to tally, and where necessary grade the boards as they were made; also to enforce compliance with contract requirements, such as proper piling of lumber, adequate protection against fire and the like.

SELLING THE LUMBER: At the time of the hurricane all business was at a low ebb and this applied particularly to the lumber industry throughout New England. For many years the limited production and consumption of white pine in that region was in the form of "round edge" (sawn on two sides) material for use as box boards or crating. The total consumption for these purposes had dwindled to 125 million board feet in 1937. Most local requirements for construction material had long been supplied from western and southern states and the normal lumber business followed that general pattern.



To suddenly dump large quantities of white pine lumber on a slow market presented a difficult problem. How could it be accomplished, within a limited time, and without seriously disrupting the normal lumber business, especially in the New England states? The most logical answer still seemed to be the original policy as announced in September of 1938: To dispose of the material as far as possible in a broader market. It had in mind consumption in states north of the Potomac and east of the Mississippi River. This seemed sound logic at the time and up to late in 1941, when war effort activities completely changed the picture. From then on the entire volume of salvaged timber would have been sold locally as "round edge" lumber, which would have been advantageous to the government. However, no "crystal ball" could foresee the events of the future.

So NETSA undertook and carried out an extensive selling campaign through advertisement, circulars, personal contact, etc., to interest prospective buyers. As soon as sawing at a site was completed it was advertised for sale in the local press, national trade journals and other mediums. In conformity with established policy and also for practical operational



reasons, sales in general included all merchantable material at the site.

One of the first sales was to the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad. Several lots of softwood and hardwood lumber were advertised and sold on a market appraisal basis during the early part of 1940. By the summer of 1940 it became clear that relatively small sales to local industries were progressing too slowly, and in order not to unduly prolong the NETSA program some faster means of disposing of the bulk of the timber was needed. Again the problem was thoroughly discussed at various meetings with industry representatives and also with interested government agencies, including the military. A number of proposals were considered; most of them centered on one large sale embracing all unsold logs and lumber - beyond the needs of local industries. Local needs were estimated at about one-third of the total, but the definite amount had not been fixed.

One of the proposals showing early promise involved the creation of a "Cooperative Organization" made up of local wood users who would raise ten million dollars to purchase and market four hundred million





board feet of NETSA lumber. For various reasons, principally the lack of subscription, this proposal was dropped.

By early fall of 1940 agreement had been reached to advertise a proposal to sell approximately 425 million board feet of white pine lumber. About half of this amount had already been sawn and was on "sticks" at some 340 sites. The other half was in ponds and could be sawn to suit any reasonable requirement of the purchaser.

In response to wide advertisement in the press and trade journals, negotiations were finally consummated on September 25, 1940, in a sale to the Eastern Pine Sales Corporation - a concern formed specifically to purchase the salvaged lumber. Shortly after the contract was signed the company began removing lumber from the various sites included in its contract. The company was incorporated in Delaware but during most of its life was controlled and operated by Grossman and Sons of Boston. The contract provided for the purchase of up to 425 million board feet of rough square-edge white pine lumber at an initial price of \$21 per thousand board feet. Among its provisions was a price-adjusting





Earle H. Clapp, Acting Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, signs the agreement selling 425,000,000 feet of salvaged logs and lumber to the Eastern Pine Sales Corporation, represented by Mr. Harry Joseph, in center. Time is September 25, 1940, the consummation of two years of an intensive salvage program directed by Earl S. Peirce, Acting Chief of the branch of State and Private Forestry of the U.S. Forest Service, after the 1938 New England hurricane.  
Photo by U.S. Forest Service.



formula, to be computed at three month intervals, which was designed to stabilize the market value of NETSA lumber. The index correlated the contract price with both Boston and New York markets for various comparable items of pine lumber from western states. Under the index the price for each quarter varied somewhat, but gradually increased to around \$25 in line with general lumber trade.

The original contract provided for the purchase of square-edge lumber only but it was later amended to the advantage of both parties concerned, to include round-edge lumber and also the logs in water. In the former case the price would be \$3 less, and, for logs, \$10 less than the current contract price for square-edge lumber.

Up to the time the EPSC sale was made, 35 million board feet of white pine logs and 48 million board feet of sawn lumber had been sold - roughly one-eighth of the total volume salvaged. In November, 1940, the lumber associations of New England were informed that NETSA still had about 225 million board feet of logs stored in ponds of which 120 million were reserved for the use of local industries, the balance having been committed to EPSC. It was the



intent to give New England industries the first choice of the various ponds so they might purchase those logs nearest to their mills and best suited for their use. At the same time, it was only fair to inform EPSC officials what specific ponds were to be sawn for them, so they could make plans and negotiate contracts for establishing planing mills and concentration yards.

Accordingly, in agreement with interested local industry committees, March 1, 1941, was set as a deadline by which time the industries were to indicate which ponds they wished to purchase. Logs in ponds not then reserved were to be included in the EPSC contract. At the time there were about 89 million board feet of logs in water that were eventually sold in the form of logs - 60 per cent to local industries directly, and 40 per cent to EPSC under its contract.

Although all the salvaged timber had now been either sold, reserved, or contracted, the end of the government's task was yet far away. Most of the water-stored logs had to be sawn or sold in the "rough". In the latter case, the purchasers generally accepted them on the basis of the original





scale made at the time they were received at the site, thus saving the expense of rescale. Some purchasers, however, fearing possible loss from sinkage or the dangers present, were not willing to accept the accuracy of the initial tally. In those cases a second scaling was necessary. Where the "wet" logs required sawing, NETSA personnel had to enforce the contract requirements, tally and grade the lumber etc. - the same as was done at the dry sites. The many lumber piles, scattered over a wide area, presented a serious protection problem. Fire was the greatest danger, but also theft always was present. Until the lumber was sold and removed it was government property and collateral under the loan agreement. Insurance was considered but given up due to exorbitant premiums.

Upon completion of the sawing program, NETSA still had the responsibility for carrying out the government obligations under the EPSC contract and for enforcing satisfactory performance by the company. With such a large contract, comprising material at hundreds of widely scattered locations, it was inevitable that many unforeseen problems would crop up. In some instances differences of opinion



between government and company personnel arose as to how they should be handled. In general, they were minor and were readily resolved. The real marvel was that there were not more disagreements and some of a serious nature. That this did not occur can be attributed to the willingness of both contract parties to cooperate in good faith in working out problems in the most practical way and the desire to get on with the job.

The company established three concentration locations to which the rough lumber was hauled for planing or otherwise processing for reselling. Three or more NETSA employees were stationed at each concentration yard to tally the lumber - by grades where that was needed. During the final stages practically all the lumber was used for military purposes, largely in the construction of training camps.

The salvage program was nearing completion by the end of January 1943, at which time the Project Director's office was closed. The responsibility for ending all Federal activities in New England relating to the hurricane was turned over to the Regional Forester at Philadelphia. Understandably, this was probably the least rewarding phase of the



entire program, for it involved a wide variety of cleanup jobs. They ranged, for example, from placement of personnel to sawing out the last ponds, closing of contracts, cleaning up storage and saw-mill sites, including the disposal of sawdust piles, terminating leases and disposal of miscellaneous equipment. The closing out job in itself was no small task. The entire program was terminated on December 31, 1943.



SUMMARY

-- A summary of the NETSA program showed that a little over 651 million board feet of wood products had been salvaged from the hurricane-damaged timber. Of this total, nearly 89 million board feet were sold in the form of logs; 533 million board feet were sawed and marketed as lumber (77 per cent "square-edge" and 23 per cent "round-edge") and almost 30 million feet of pulpwood were sold.

-- Over eight million dollars were paid to thirteen thousand landowners, mostly farmers, for the logs from their damaged trees.

-- The total cost of the salvage program was \$16,269,300, of which almost \$15,000,000, or 92 per cent, was recovered by the government.

-- Altogether, 640 persons, exclusive of day laborers, worked on the program at one timber site or another and in varying capacities. Almost all of the supervisory force was on loan from the regular United States Forest Service organization.





-- The benefits resulting from the salvage program cannot be evaluated accurately. Unquestionably they were substantial. The objectives for which the program was undertaken--namely to help landowners dispose of their damaged timber and at the same time not disrupt the local lumber markets--already have been shown to have been accomplished. It is safe to say that, except for the program, most of the two-thirds billion board feet of merchantable wood products would have been left on the ground to rot. Its removal left the woodlots in better condition for growing future crops of timber and helped materially in the overall hazard reduction work--the benefits of which have been previously outlined.

-- The most direct beneficiaries were the thirteen thousand timber owners who participated in the program and received about eight million dollars. A large part was used for labor and provided jobs for many persons other than the landowners.

-- Altogether, over sixteen million dollars were spent on the salvage work, which gave the economy of New England a boost at a time when business was at a low ebb.



-- There were other benefits, such as: stabilizing the local lumber, providing raw material to local wood-using industries, (giving employment either directly or indirectly to hundreds of persons when jobs were scarce and training many young men in various lines of forestry and allied activities).

-- As events turned out, probably the greatest public benefit was providing a huge amount of seasoned lumber, which was urgently needed and used in the country's preparation for war.

-- The salvage operations were performed at a net cost to the public of a little over one and one-fourth million dollars--certainly a small sum when compared to the overall benefits.



**APPENDIX**



REGIONAL CULTURAL HISTORY PROJECT

January 27, 1965  
Room 486

Mr. Earl Peirce  
3738 Huntington Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20015

Dear Mr. Peirce:

Mr. Christopher Granger has written that you were closely connected with the salvage operations that followed the New England hurricane of September, 1938, and that he has talked with you regarding the possibility of your writing a statement which could become a part of a series on the history of policy in the Forest Service.

Such a statement would be deposited in the University's Bancroft Library which is an archival depository used by serious scholars. You would retain all publication rights if you so desire; in any event, quotations can be used only with your permission.

I assume that Mr. Granger has summarized for you the forestry project that is underway. Operating under a grant from Resources for the Future, this project is attempting to gather as much first-hand information regarding the development of policy in forestry as can be made available to us through tape recorded interviews or, as in your case and Mr. Granger's, written statements of what happened.

In government archives and documents can be found the statistics of such things as the 3,000,000 board feet in the blow-down, the \$5,000,000 plus \$500,000 appropriations, the 11,000 employed CCC boys, and the rather confusing network of agencies that worked with the Forest Service. Perhaps your main contribution would be the story of why these things occurred as they did: how the decisions were made, why other decisions were not made, examples of reactions among the general public, the lumbermen, and others with whom you worked. Personal anecdotes are valuable in that they, too, cannot be found elsewhere, usually; and of special importance would be your evaluation of the operation--in terms of conservation, of economy of the forest industry, of the value in terms of government expenditures (92% of the loan repaid from the sales, I believe), and in terms of human values.

Do you have time to prepare such a statement? It would be a welcome assistance to the project by filling





in a sequence of events where otherwise a gap would be left.

If you need someone to run errands for you, such as helping you gather resource materials, we have an able assistant in Washington whom we have hired part-time for that purpose. Feel free to call her; I will write her to expect this. Her name and address are:

Mrs. Jack Mezirow  
3326 Prospect St. N.W.  
Washington 27, D.C.

Telephone 338-0409

Thank you very much for considering this proposal; we hope it works out.

Sincerely,

(Mrs.) Amelia R. Fry

CC: Mr. Christopher Granger



Answered/acknowledged  
Part 5

pictures asked for,  
and request for arrangements  
for final draft - tipping here or there?

EARL S. PEIRCE  
3738 Huntington Street, N. W  
Washington 15, D. C.

Zeroving with one  
sent to him?

Feb. 2, 1965

Dear Mrs. Fry.

Referring to your letter of Jan. 29,  
I will be glad to prepare a statement covering  
the salvage operations following the New  
England hurricane of Sept 21, 1938

As Mr. Granger mentioned, I was closely  
associated with these operations, especially  
those relating to salvaging and marketing  
the damaged trees.

The entire project, as you probably know,  
was a 2 part program - first; reducing  
the great fire hazard caused by the  
hurricane and second; salvaging and  
marketing the large amount of damaged  
timber

The former was primarily a cooperative  
effort between interested land owners, local  
groups, State and Federal agencies, with  
the U.S. Forest Service, functioning as overall  
Coordinator. On the otherhand, the  
latter, altho involving a certain amount  
of needed cooperation, was the sole  
responsibility of the U.S.F.S. as far as  
field operations <sup>and overall management</sup> were concerned.

Also, there were wide differences between  
the two major projects in respect to  
the problems involved and in the needs and



in the methods used. Also, as regards  
the duration of the activities, <sup>and methods of financing</sup> and, also,  
of course, in the benefits and evaluations  
of the results accomplished.

The figures you mention apply only to  
the "Hazard Reduction" part of the job, but  
I assume you have in mind the entire  
picture. That would be my  
suggestion and unless you advise to the  
contrary I will proceed on that basis and  
cover both the fire hazard and salvage  
portions.

As you suggest, I have already contacted  
Mrs. Mezrow and will do so again. First  
I want to refresh my memory a little for  
25 years is quite a long time and "a lot  
of water has gone over the dam" since Sept 21, 1938.

I retired from the U.S. Forest Service in 1951  
and so have not been in very close touch  
with its activities since then. However,  
I recall seeing and, in fact, preparing various  
reports on the N.E. hurricane operations,  
which are available here so obtaining  
enough factual data should not be a problem.

Mrs. Mezrow tells me that there is a  
time limit of March 31.

I think I know about what you want  
and should certainly be able to complete  
the statement before then.

Sincerely  
Earl Sturice  
1



EARL S. PEIRCE  
3738 Huntington Street, N. W.  
Washington 15, D. C.

March 29, 1965

Dear Mrs. Fry:

Here is my opus on the Government emergency activities in New England following the 1938 hurricane.

I would have preferred to submit it more finished form but I do not have a typewriter - nor the ability to operate one. Mrs. Menzow suggested I send it to you, in the rough.

Altho my writing is not too good I believe it is sufficiently legible to be read by a stenographer.

I hope the report is not too long or in too much detail.

The program was really a sizable one, having many facets and ramifications - many of them have not even been touched. An attempt has been made to cover the major activities. Even so it is difficult to tell the story without considerable detail.

As you suggested, I have included a map and pictures - undoubtedly more than you had in mind - so you can select the ones you want. All of them relate to the program. Some of the best are in the combined printed reproductions. The original photographs or negatives are not available, due to lack of numbering or where numbers are given, they do not check with the V.S.F.S. filing records. According to T.V. ads. there are now available copying machines that can make copies of almost anything, so maybe some of all the plates can be used.

I have tried to make the report objective, in spite of my association with the project. Like all others who had a hand in the job, I have considerable pride in the manner in which the program was operated and in the accomplishments.

Sincerely yours

Earl S. Peirce

P.S. I would appreciate it if you will return the 7 printed plates when they have served your purpose and also can you furnish me a copy of the finished report?





September 22, 1967

Mr. Earl Peirce  
either Florida  
or Washington

Dear Mr. Peirce:

I am not sure whether you are with Mr. Scoville in Winterpark or back in Washington, so I am sending a copy of this letter to both addresses.

We are coming in on the home stretch on the entire Forest Service series, and I have taken inventory of your typed manuscript today. It reads well, is happily quite factual and informative. We realize what a great amount of time and effort must have gone into something that was put together with such care.

Everytime I go over that story, it strikes me what a unique moment of history it is.

To complete the manuscript and get the copies bound, we need a few questions answered. Copies will be deposited in our Bancroft Library, in Yale's Forest History Society, in the Resources for the Future Library, in the UCLA Department of Special Collections, in your home, in our office collection, and possibly in the Forest Service and also at Denver. If you wish to order additional copies for special colleagues or relatives, they can be had at cost--usually \$10.00 to \$15.00 per copy, depending on the amount of inserts, etc.

Here are the questions:

1. The pictures are just great. We are using all the losses, and having reprints made of all we can get under our budget. You wrote me that you want the plates, which are printed on magazine paper, back; I doubt that we can get reproductions made of that type of picture. Do you have any other copies--or do you think you know where you can wangle any other copies?

2. I need a sheet showing your employment record in the Forest Service, or (much better), a personal chronology showing where you went to school (beginning with your birth date and place), what you studied, and then your employment record. Do you think you can devise such a sheet?

3. We have two types of contracts. One gives you all publication and quotation rights. The other gives them to the University, but before anything can be published from the MS, we have to get your permission. In both cases all royalties go to you, in case the whole shebang is put in book form. (This has never happened yet, but it might someday.) Which type of contract do you want?

I hope you can get this information back to us right away. We are trying to meet a bindery deadline. Thanks for all you've done.

Sincerely,



Earl S. Peirce  
3378 Chiswick Court  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20906

Sept. 30. 1967

Dear Mrs. Fry:

Both the original and the carbon copy of your letter of 9/22 (mailed to Florida) reached me here at the above address, on the same day, Sept 27.

I am glad that my opus, re the New England hurricane of 1938 and its aftermath, is nearing completion and that the pictures turned out so well.

Now, as to your questions:

- 1 - You need not return any of the pictures. I will be able to obtain other copies, if I need them.
- 2 - The enclosed sheet will, I believe, give you the personal data you mention
- 3 - I would prefer the type of contract which gives all publication and quotation rights to the University

If you desire any further information I will be glad to furnish it.

Sincerely

Earl S. Peirce



Regional Cultural History Project

Room 486  
April 5, 1965

Regional Oral History Office  
Room 486

October 20, 1967

Mr. Earl S. Pierce  
3378 Chiswick Court  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20906

Dear Mr. Pierce:

One more service from you we must request. Please initial all copies at the deleted section, then return them once again to our office. We must keep our legal eagles happy. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Amelia R. Fry

Enclosures  
Agreement (5 copies)  
Return envelope

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Regional Cultural History Project

Room 486  
April 5, 1965

Mr. Earl S. Pierce  
3738 Huntington Street  
Washington, D.C. 20015

Dear Mr. Pierce:

Your manuscript arrived last week, just as I was about to bury myself in the Wilderness Conference in San Francisco. Mr. Ed Crafts was able to find time to hold an interview for our series during the Conference, but his and other taping sessions kept me so busy I did not get back to my office to notify you that your one-of-a-kind manuscript had indeed arrived safely.

Your mention of having to cut down on the detail makes me hope that you were not under pressure to omit anything which you deem important as part of a historical record. It seems to me that you did a great deal of work in a short time, and when we get it typed up for editing, perhaps you will want to include some details which you have left out of this version. We have written Resources for the Future for an extension of funds in order to finish the typing and editing, and I will let you know what happens.

Meanwhile, what you have sent will certainly keep us busy. The pictures can be reproduced here, and you can receive the plates when we are through; your own personal copy of the manuscript will probably include them. Thank you for amassing the charts and photographs--it will be a much more vivid story. I think that it is important that the extent of the entire effort be presented as graphically as possible. Even in today's era of Big Everything, it is still difficult to realize the enormous task that was undertaken and accomplished so successfully. Thank you again for writing it out systematically for us and future generations.

As soon as I have time to read over this, and have it retyped (your writing is quite legible, by the way), you will hear from me again.

Sincerely yours,

Amelia R. Fry





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