

## *Legislative Report on State's Forest Situation*

Legislative activity on forest conservation measures during the 1945 Regular Session came as a result of a prolonged intensive study of the forest situation in California conducted by an interim commission known as the California Forestry Study Commission and created by the Legislature on May 8, 1943. This commission's origin stemmed from two proposed bills before the 1943 Legislature, one calling attention to the need for reforesting a large area of nonproducing cut-over forest land, and another providing for the acquisition of State Forests and the restoration of forest growth on such lands. Because reliable information on these subjects in consolidated form was not available to the legislators, the measures were not favorably considered. The potential gravity of the situation was realized, however, and an amended version of these bills was passed calling for a study to be made of California's present forest situation. The amendment provided for a Forestry Study Interim Commission, to be composed of two members from the Senate, two from the Assembly, the Director of the Department of Natural Resources, and the Chairman of the State Board of Forestry. The commission, composed of Senator George M.



Old growth timber—a major forest problem. That remaining must be harvested in such a way as to maintain the productivity of the forest land.

Biggar, chairman, Senator Oliver J. Carter, Assemblyman Paul Denny, Assemblyman Jacob M. Leonard, General Warren T. Hannum, Director of the Department of Natural Resources, and Mr. William S. Rosecrans, Chairman of the State Board of Forestry, was organized in March of 1944. During the next 10 months, 17 public hearings were held by the commission at various locations throughout the State where advice on forest and watershed conditions and problems was obtained from foresters, lumbermen, water conservationists, livestock men, agriculturists and others. In addition, the commission made four six-day field trips into the timber and watershed areas of the State. Stops were made on these field trips to study old growth forests, second-growth stands, cut-over land, brush fields, fire scarred areas, insect depredations, reforestation problems, fire protection stations, logging and milling operations and other details affecting the continuity of forest production. Conclusions formed by these men as a result of their intensive 10-month study indicated that unless immediate and suitable action was taken to correct many forest problems, California would face a shortage of home-manufactured lumber, an important industry would be lost, and the recreation and scenic values of the forest lands would be jeopardized. Convinced that early legislative action was necessary to keep privately-owned forest lands of the State productive, the commission pointed to four major forest problems in need of immediate attention :



A new forest crop will spring up if the land is left productive.



Of the fires occurring on timber and watershed lands protected by the Division of Forestry, over 90% are man-caused, 35% stemming from careless smokers. California people must recognize their responsibility when using these lands, if losses from forest fires are to diminish.

- (1) The cutting of old growth in such a way as to maintain productivity of forest land, and the prolongation of the life of the old growth supplies.
- (2) The reforestation of as much as possible of that part of the vast area of cut-over land that seems reasonably certain of favorable response to planting or seeding.
- (3) The reduction of losses by forest fires, insects and disease both in old growth timber and second growth, and of further damage by fires to the growing capacity of nonreforested cut-over lands.
- (4) Provision for a continuity of State forest policy.

To fulfill the purpose of the legislative resolution creating the Forestry Study Commission, the commission prepared, with much effort and the best technical advice, a comprehensive report of California's present forest situation. Precise, accurate information was obtained for the publication in order that the 1945 Legislative Session could base action on a true report of forest conditions in California. Recommendations for legislation included the following five bills, all of which were adopted by the 1945 Legislature:

- (1) A bill designed for self-regulation of forest practices by private industry to provide for future productivity of cut-over forest lands, and to prolong the State's remaining virgin timber supply.
- (2) A bill providing for the acquisition of forest lands for demonstration areas and State Forests.
- (3) A bill providing for State cooperation in the control of tree killing forest insects.
- (4) A bill providing for staggered terms of membership of the State Board of Forestry.
- (5) A resolution for continuing the Forestry Study Commission.

These, and other bills adopted by the Legislature are discussed at length in the following pages.



**Insects! The forest's enemy! Wild-fire is a constant threat to treating timber as a crop, but each year in California forest insects kill six times as much merchantable timber as does fire.**