

Forest Acquisition and State Forests

Indicative of their recognition of California's forest problem is the people's interest in acquiring forest lands as demonstrational areas of proper forest management and protection practices. This interest, coupled with concern for the need of reforesting cut-over lands which private industry has left unmanaged, is a gauge of public opinion relative to present and future supplies of timber to California markets. It is well to quote the opening paragraph of this State Forest Act as it expresses the present forest problem and the legislative policy concerning it. "It is hereby declared to be in the interest of the welfare of the people of the State of California and their industries and other activities involving the use of wood, lumber, poles, piling, and other forest products, that desirable cut-over forest lands, including those having young and old timber growth, be made fully productive, and that the holding and reforestation of such lands is a necessary measure predicated on waning supplies of original old growth timber. It is further declared to be the policy of the State to acquire by purchase, exchange, lease or grant: (1) such cut-over lands, the reforestation of which is not assured under private ownership, and to reforest such lands during periods of unemployment and at other times; and (2) virgin and other timber lands deemed suitable by the State Board of Forestry for use as areas for the demonstration, protection, and management of cutting and logging practices designed to promote reforestation, and to protect and manage such lands to the end that they will produce as nearly as possible their maximum yield of useful forest products on a basis of continuous production."

The act provides for:

(1) The State Forester to prepare maps and data relative to possible purchase areas, and to make necessary surveys and appraisals of lands offered for sale.

(2) Acquisition of forest land will be made on the approval of a State Forest Purchase Committee composed of the Governor, the Director of Finance, Director of Natural Resources, and the Chairman of the State Board of Forestry. The committee's approval will be guided by, but not limited to the following factors: (1) the lands are suited primarily to timber growing; (2) the lands represent growing capacities not below the average for the timber region; and (3) they are favorably situated for multiple use and economical administration, management and utilization. The committee will not approve the acquisition of lands unless it receives a resolution recommending such action adopted by the Board of Supervisors of the county in which such lands are situated.

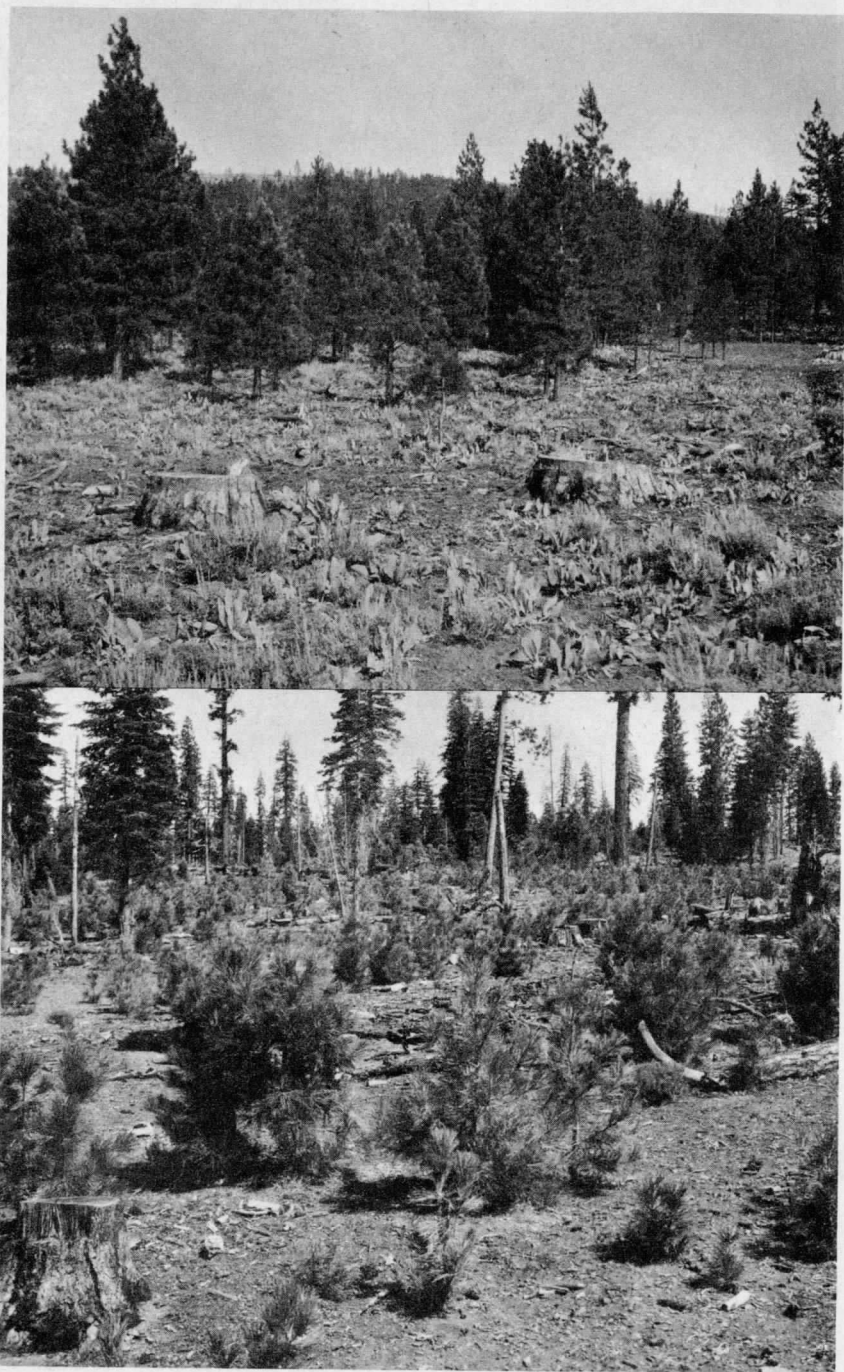
(3) The State Forester will administer the act and will engage in the management, protection and reforestation of State Forests. The forests will be reasonably used on a multiple use basis, and grazing and mining will be permitted under regulations of the State Board of Forestry.

(4) Each county in which lands acquired are situated will be paid each year an amount equivalent to taxes levied by the county on similar lands. Determination of what constitutes similar land will be made by a committee consisting of the County Assessor, a representative of the State Board of Equalization and a representative of the State Forester.

Although this was an enabling measure and carried no large appropriation, it did allow \$40,000 for the preliminary field survey work necessary to determine forest areas available as State Forests. When the Legislature met in an extraordinary session in January of 1946, sufficient data had been compiled to outline a tentative forest acquisition program. The legislators favorably considered this information, and commensurate with the immediate need appropriated the sum of \$2,000,000 for acquisition purposes.

The Board of Forestry's attitude on State Forest purchase is that far more good can be accomplished toward perpetuating the lumber industry by first acquiring areas on which sound demonstrations of practical management principles can be shown, rather than attempting a widespread program of acquisition of denuded land that will be of little immediate use in the furtherance of sound forestry practices. Initially, the Board wishes to devote Division effort and expend public funds on areas containing virgin and second growth timber as well as cut-over lands. On these lands silvicultural practices applicable to the area and type will be developed and the experience and knowledge gained in stand improvement, sanitation, and other management principles vital to sustained yield production will be at the disposal of forest landowners. In this way the Division can be of immediate benefit to these landowners in demonstrating practical as well as financially sound forest operations.

Because of initial treatment and subsequent fires, productivity of vast areas of cut-over lands which once represented California lands best suited for timber production, has been reduced to sustain only the less desirable brush vegetation types. Some of this land is beyond practical reforestation, but much of it can be nursed into production through years of work and at considerable expense. The Board feels that the most productive of these seriously denuded lands should be acquired second only to the demonstrational areas. Progress based on this policy of first obtaining forest areas to be used as demonstrational units, and second, acquiring cut-over lands that will provide after many years of management future lumber supplies to California markets, has been made this year, and it is hoped that at least 75,000 acres of forest land will be under State management by the end of 1946.



Productive cut-over lands will be purchased by the State when reforestation is not assured under private ownership.



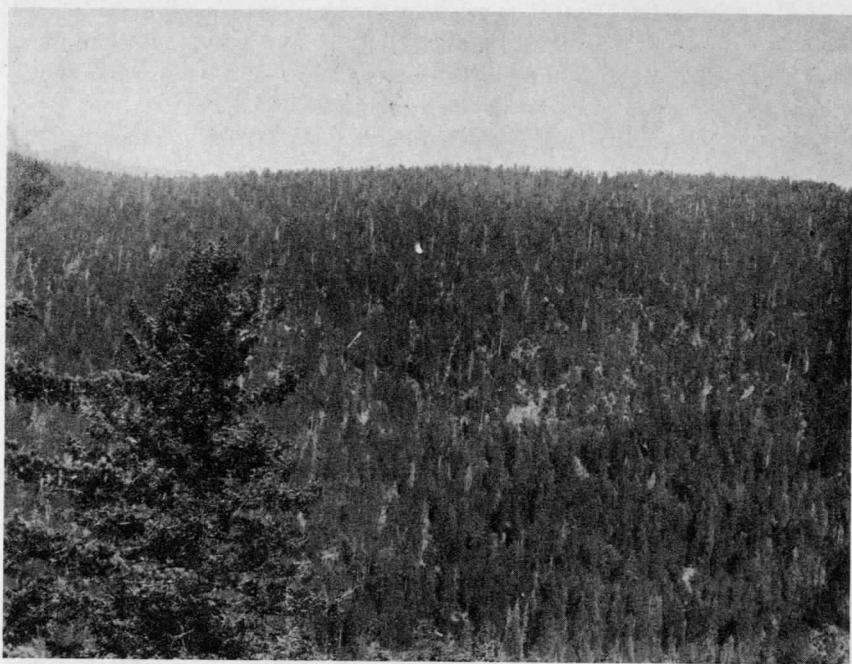
Virgin and second-growth Coastal Redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*). The State will acquire such forest lands on which sound silvicultural, management, and utilization practices will be demonstrated.

Augmenting this acquisition program, the Legislature has this year placed two forest areas of moderate size under Division administration. Nine thousand one hundred and seventy-three acres of forest land in Shasta County, known as the Latour Forest and formerly controlled by the State Lands Commission, was transferred to the Division, and \$600,000 was appropriated for the purchase of 4,590 acres in Tulare County, known as the Mountain Home Tract. California, up until this year, has had only three small areas designated as State Forests, but at best they were never of State Forest caliber. Two were acquired as gifts to the State, and one was purchased as an administrative site for a county ranger district. Their total area covers but 1,104 acres of forest land.

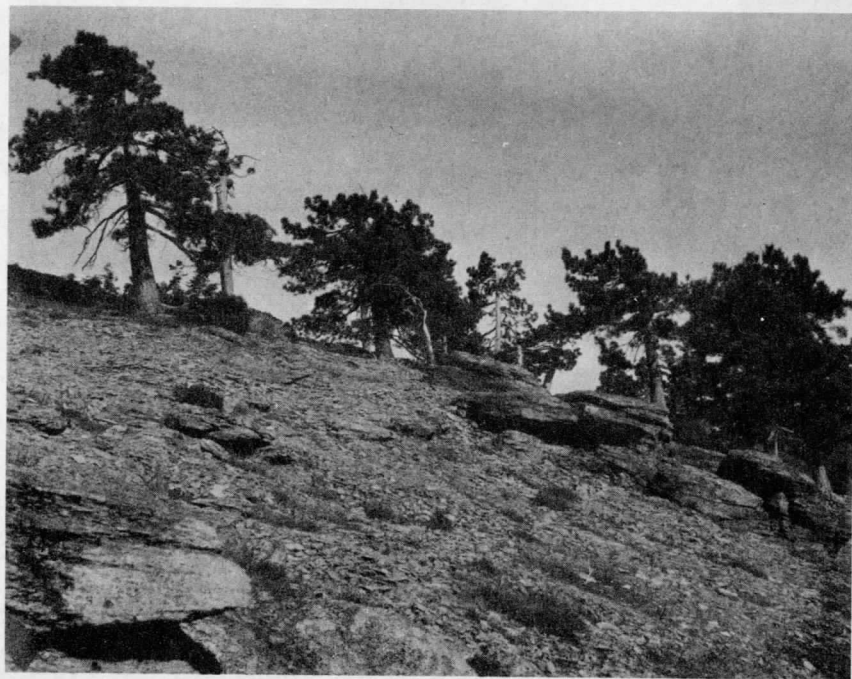
With the addition of the Latour Forest and the Mountain Home Tract, the Division is now administering 14,777 acres of forest land which is a start of the State Forest system.



Typical grove of medium-large Sierra Redwoods (*Sequoia gigantea*) in the newly acquired Mountain Home State Forest. The tract contains about 3,000 trees of this size.



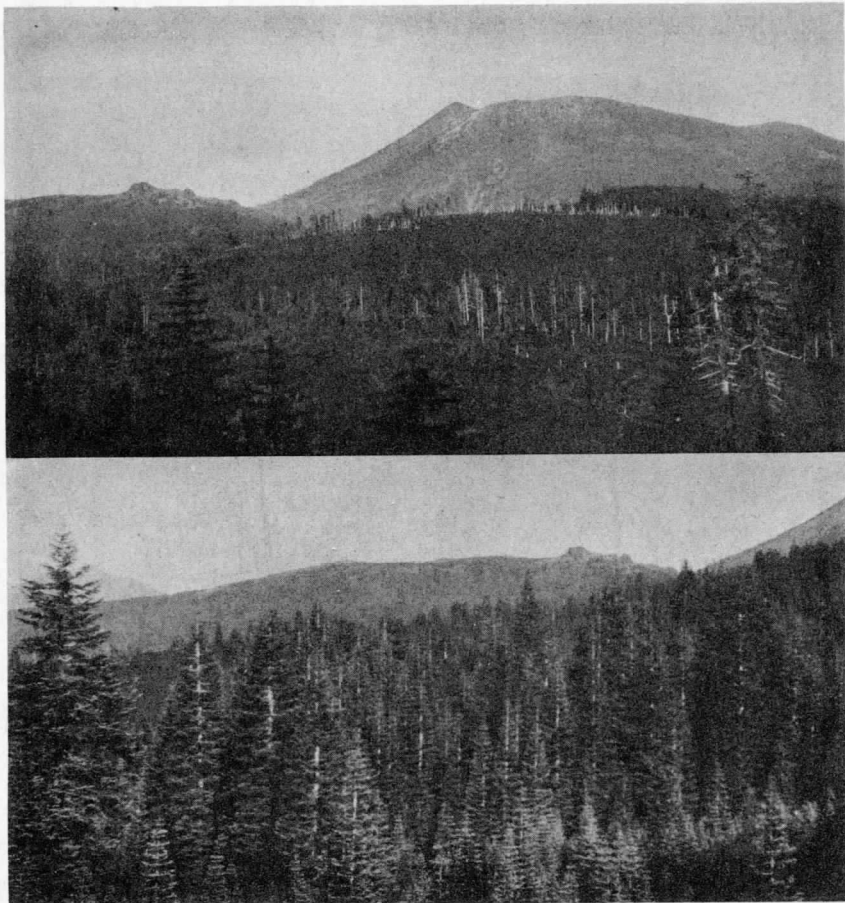
A mixed conifer stand of timber on the Latour State Forest.



Alpine forest area in the upper regions of the Latour State Forest.

The Latour Forest is primarily important for its timber value, containing in excess of 97,000,000 board feet of mixed conifer commercial timber. Forest management has never been practiced on this area but the Division has protected it from fire for many years. The silvicultural condition of the timber is an all age stand with excellent stands of poles and reproduction. Much of the virgin timber is overripe and will be logged under sound management plans affording protection to the young, thrifty trees. The upper region of the forest is a subalpine type and has very little value for lumber production but is ideal for Christmas trees. The forest has potential recreational importance when made accessible as it affords picturesque mountain scenes and contains abundant wildlife.

The Division will develop this forest into a practical demonstration area and it will be the center of our State Forest system in Northern California.



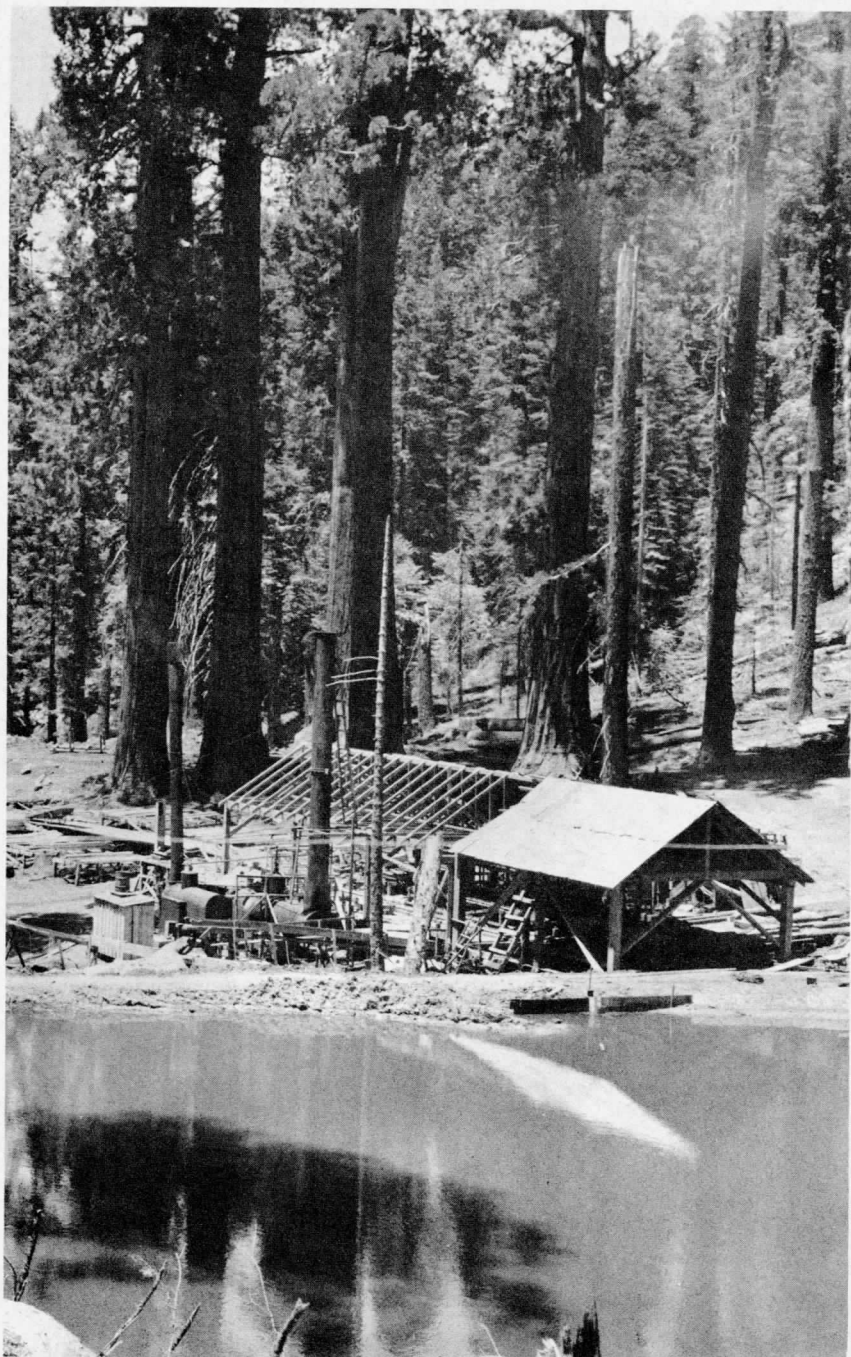
Extensive brush fields in the Latour State Forest area indicate the effect of repeated fires. The dense stand of poles and young thrifty timber, below, shows what can be expected in 20 to 30 years if fire can be kept out.

The Mountain Home Tract, purchased from the Michigan Trust Co., lies just south of Sequoia National Park in Tulare County. The tract contains magnificent groves of California's historical tree, the Sierra Redwood (*Sequoia gigantea*) or Big Tree, and will be primarily important as a scenic recreational area. There are approximately 4,869 "Big Trees" on the property in association with over 58,858 Sugar Pine, Ponderosa Pine, Douglas Fir and White Fir trees. A total board foot volume of all species is estimated at 244,314,000 feet. Many decades ago, a few of the Sequoias were logged off for local use and a section of one giant, measuring 21 feet in diameter 14 feet above the ground, was sent to the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876. In recent years a small portion of the tract was logged for the pine and fir lumber but no extensive damage was done to the groves of "Big Trees."

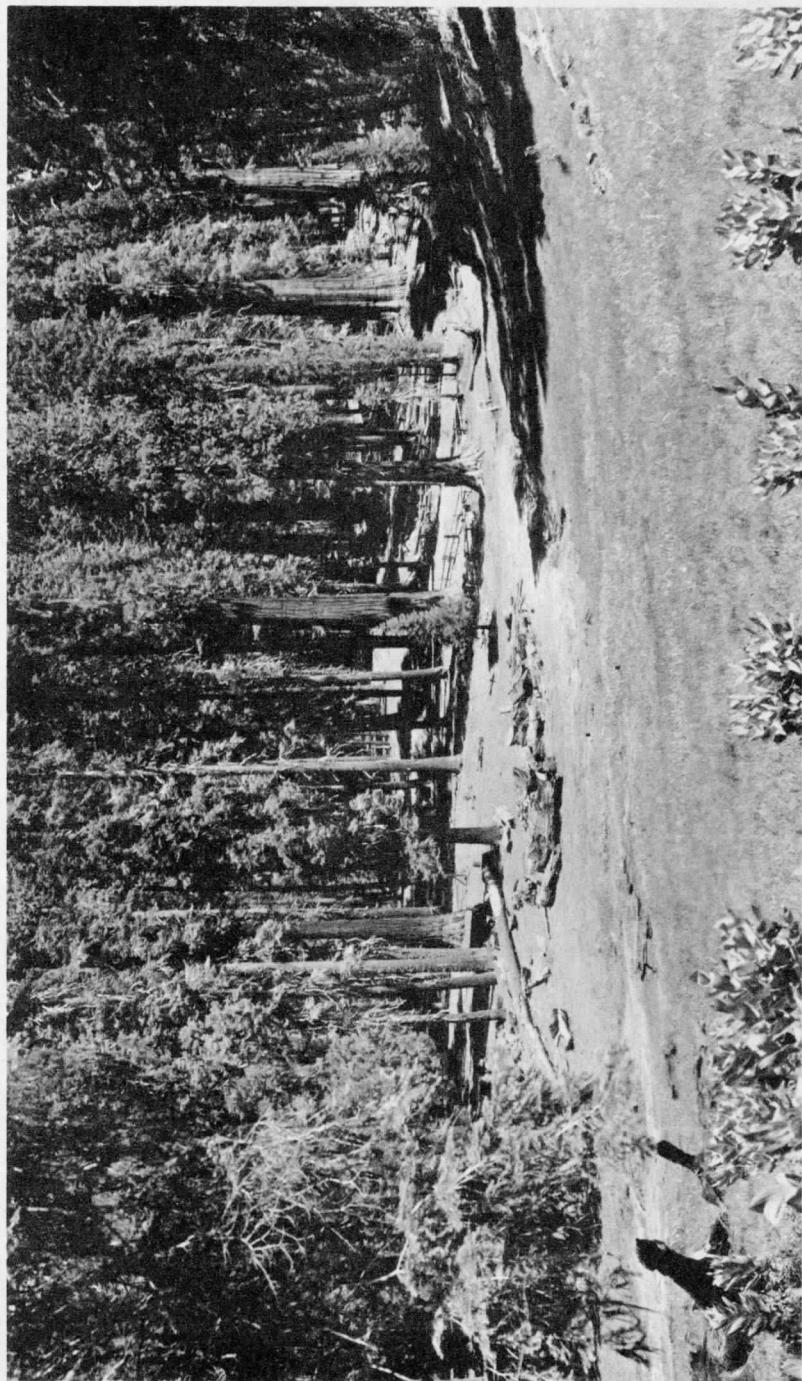
Presently the Division's forest technicians are busily engaged in drawing up management plans for both State Forest areas. Preliminary work will begin on the forests during the coming year.



Centennial Stump—Indicative of resource waste and misuse that has plagued American forests since early in the 19th century, is this huge tree stump in the Mountain Home State Forest. The tree (a Big Tree—*Sequoia gigantea*) was cut down for the sole purpose of sending a section of it to the centennial exposition in Philadelphia in 1876.



Small saw mill now in operation on the Mountain Home State Forest. In recent years a small quantity of the Pine and Fir timber has been logged. Under Division management no logging of the Big Trees (*Sequoia gigantea*) will be permitted.



Looking across a mountain meadow into a grove of medium-large Sierra Redwoods (*Sequoia gigantea*) on the Mountain Home State Forest.