

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

### WATER POWERS.

The state conservation commission represent to the Governor the great importance of the subject of the regulation of franchises for water powers. They call attention to Commissioner Birge's report, submitted herewith, and its suggestions. They approve the recommendations of the report and urge the following recommendations as especially important:

1. That franchises for water powers be granted under a general statute.
2. That the issuing of such franchises be placed in the hands of the rate commission, or similar board, under conditions to be provided by a general statute.
3. That such franchises be in the nature of leases for a long term of years. Such leases should be renewable on equitable terms. Rentals should be low and should be applied to the extension of the state forest reserve.
4. That a reasonable conservation charge be levied on all developed water powers on rivers, the head waters of which are protected by forest reserve lands, the income from such charge to be applied to the extension of the state forest reserve.
5. That the survey of the water powers of the state be completed in cooperation with the United States Geological Survey.

### FORESTS.

1. The state conservation commission deem it of the utmost importance that the state forest reserve located about the head waters of the more important streams of the state be greatly extended. At the present time the opportunities to make such extensions are much more favorable than they will be in the future and therefore the commission recommend that immedi-

ate action be taken to secure such extensions. The commission suggest that funds for the extensions of the forest reserve may be secured by issuing certificates of indebtedness on the forest reserve lands owned by the state to the extent of an amount not to exceed \$1,000,000. As an alternative suggestion, a one-tenth of a mill tax may be levied for a period of ten years for this purpose.

2. The state conservation commission recommend to the Governor that in view of the large increase in the area of the forest reserves since the last session of the legislature, and the probability that in the future such holdings will be materially added to, that the annual appropriation of the state board of forestry for administrative purposes should be largely increased.

3. The state conservation commission approve of the plan to request Congress to grant to the state of Wisconsin all unsurveyed and unattached islands in lakes north of town 33.

4. The state conservation commission recommend to the Governor that the timber land owned by the state in the Menomonie Indian Reservation be made a part of the state forest reserve. These lands include 16,378 acres, which were patented to the state many years ago, but the possessory rights and the timber of which were until recently claimed by the United States government. The state rights, both as to possession and as to timber, have been fully recognized by a decision made last summer, which decision was secured through the vigorous presentation of the case of the state to the secretary of the interior by the state board of forestry.

5. The state conservation commission regard it as of the utmost importance to the timber producing industries of the state that the proposed laboratories of the United States Forest Service, which are to carry on an elaborate series of investigations upon all kinds of timber with reference to adapting each kind of timber to its best use, and to utilizing timber now wasted, including stumps and refuse, be located in Wisconsin. They strongly recommend that a building be provided for this purpose at the university, and be furnished with power, light, and heat, it being understood that the United States Forest Service will furnish and install all the necessary machinery, worth not less than \$14,000, and will pay for the men in charge of the laboratories, the expense of these being about \$28,000 per annum.

6. The state conservation commission approve the principles adopted at the Lake State Forestry Conference held at Madison, December 10, 1908, as embodied in the resolutions given below, and they recommend the enactment of these principles into law. These resolutions are as follows:

*Resolved*, That all persons cutting and exploiting timber in any part of the lake states here represented should be obliged to dispose of the debris in such manner that it shall not be a menace to the forests; that failure to do this should be punished by a fine commensurate with the extent of the operations and consequent possibility of damage; that the timber cut or standing, as well as the land, should be held to secure the payment of such fines imposed, and that full authority be given to the proper authorities to carry out and interpret the law providing for this disposal of debris or "slashings."

*Resolved*, That forest fires, being one of the greatest enemies of the state, and thus akin to riot and invasion, the Executive Power of the state should be employed to the utmost limit in emergencies, in their suppression and control for the protection of the lives and property of the people.

*Resolved*, That we advocate the patrol system as the only satisfactory method of preventing forest fires, and the commanding factor in fighting them.

*Resolved*, That we recommend the retention of the fire warden system with the county, rather than the town, as the unit, as being essential in securing interest and responsibility among the people most affected.

*Resolved*, That in all districts covered by state fire patrol a reasonable portion of the expense for such patrol should be placed upon the unoccupied, unimproved, or wild lands, whether forest or cut-over land, preferably in the form of an acreage tax.

*Resolved*, That the expense of the local fire warden service, and the help called out for the suppression of fires, should be borne wholly or in part by the county or town, but the payment should first be made by the state to insure promptness.

*Resolved*, That all officials, including public prosecutors, charged with the enforcement of fire protective measures, should be subject to severe penalty or removal from office for non-performance of duty.

*Resolved*, That the successful prosecution and a commensurate punishment in case of conviction often cannot be secured in the

locality where the offense has been committed, and in order that the law shall be enforced, in the interest of justice, and under authority of the attorney general, a change of venue should be permitted.

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of this meeting that lands containing forests should be taxed in the usual manner so far as the land is concerned, said land to be assessed as if it contained no timber; but the forest products should be assessed and taxed only when they are cut and removed, and then in an appropriate manner; that the harvest timber tax should be based on a stumpage value determined by the value of the forest product at the place where it is assessed less the cost of placing it there.

### SOILS.

1. The state conservation commission recommend to the Governor that a soil survey of the state be undertaken and carried on at such a rate as will give a general view of the soils of the state in about five years. The commission call especial attention to the immediate need of such a survey in the central and northern parts of the state, the soils of which are now coming rapidly into agricultural use; and also to its necessity on lands which may be included in a forest reserve and which should be devoted to forestry or agriculture, according to the nature of their soil.