

*One national forest in northern Michigan predates the Weeks Act and two others were created thanks to the Clarke-McNary Act of 1924. Nevertheless, the Weeks Act has proven immensely important to northern Michigan's forest.*

# TRANSFORMING THE CUTOVER

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTHERN MICHIGAN

The Weeks Act of 1911 should have had little consequence for northern Michigan. Since the legislation was intended to protect headwaters and its implementation focused on mountainous tracts—of which northern Michigan has none—the federal government initially purchased only a few acres

under its authority in the Great Lakes region. And yet the act was critically important to the state's forests. Understanding the paradox requires first a brief history of timber harvesting and conservation efforts in Michigan and then an appreciation for how the hard times of the Depression gave the state reason to cooperate with federal authorities in reforesting its cutover lands.

### **MICHIGAN'S LUMBERING ERA**

Lumber from Michigan's Lower Peninsula dominated national and international markets from the 1860s through the 1890s. Michigan produced more than 1.7 billion board feet of white pine in 1869—nearly 30 percent of the national total. Output more than doubled by 1879 to just less than half the national production but then began a slow decline. By 1904, Michigan had slipped below 1 billion board feet of white pine a year and no longer led the nation in production. Michigan's production of softwoods continued to fall, and in 1931, the state cut only 67,420 board feet—an irrelevant figure in the total national harvest of lumber.<sup>1</sup>

Lumber production and its decline caused both ecological and economic damage in the region. Lumbermen had cut the largest

and best pines, and the remaining small pines were either too immature to produce seeds or were of a deficient stock that did not reproduce well. Heat from wildfires sterilized the soil and destroyed the roots of grass and seedlings. Natural regeneration for these burned-over areas would take decades.<sup>2</sup> Regional boosters, lumbermen, and state political leaders proclaimed that the plow would follow the ax, encouraging homesteaders throughout "the cutover" where fire had cleared the land of slash,<sup>3</sup> but farming thrived only in select areas. Where agriculture was tenable, intensive farming methods quickly depleted the soil. Homesteaders abandoned much of the land, leaving it susceptible to more fire and erosion while undermining the local property tax base.<sup>4</sup>

### **CONSERVATION COMES TO MICHIGAN**

The growing national conservation movement inspired a reforestation movement in Michigan at the beginning of the twentieth century. Banker and horticulturalist Charles Garfield and botanists William Beal and Volney Spalding organized political support for a state forestry commission. With Garfield as its president, this commission established the first state forest reserve near Higgins

BY JOSEPH J. JONES

Lake in 1901. Attendees of an August 1902 American Forestry Association meeting at Lansing who visited the tract provided the necessary expert opinions to bolster the case for the reserve in the state's uncertain political climate.

The forestry commission received broad support for reforestation from the state's progressive civic groups, including sportsmen, women's clubs, lumbermen's associations, and farmers' groups. In 1905, Garfield organized these supporters into the Michigan Forestry Association to create a large, united voice on conservation issues. Garfield also lured Filibert Roth from the U.S. Division of Forestry to be the first forestry professor at the University of Michigan and the first state fire warden.<sup>5</sup>

The reforestation movement stalled, however, as Republican machine politicians wrested power away from party progressives. The forestry commission was dissolved, leaving the new Public Domain Commission to address all state land issues. A division between the new commissioners and forestry association members developed during the destructive fire season of 1908 over the enforcement of game protection and fire prevention by the same employees. Because of changes in fire prevention policy and wet weather, the 1909 season saw only one severe fire, but the rift between commissioners and reforestation advocates was never completely mended.<sup>6</sup>

The estrangement from state organizations pushed reforestation advocates in Michigan to put their faith in the work being done by the U.S. Forest Service. Whereas state bureaucrats stressed local solutions and control of conservation, the Forest Service embraced centralized institutional management by scientific experts. Michigan foresters had a close relationship with this model. Roth had worked for Chief Gifford Pinchot, and Garfield and other state leaders had received assistance from Pinchot, his predecessor Bernhard Fernow, and President Theodore Roosevelt in their early forestry work. Hence, while most Michiganders were skeptical of experts and large state expenditures for conservation, reforestation advocates courted such activity in the state.

The Forest Service had previously offered expert advice to the forestry commission; its first independent foray in the state was the Michigan National Forest. Republican Congressman George Loud, the son of a prominent Saginaw lumberman, requested that President Roosevelt create a national forest from the idle federal lands in the region. Established in 1909 from lands withheld from sale as early as 1902, the Michigan National Forest comprised "scattered areas of the poorer timberlands which were considered worthless by private timberland buyers" in the northeastern Lower Peninsula and the eastern Upper Peninsula. Most of the forests were either cedar swamps or pine barrens of scrub jack pine that had already burned. Roosevelt made the area a national forest to remove the land from the market and to begin permanent fire and timber management.<sup>7</sup>

The Forest Service did little replanting in the Michigan National Forest and relied heavily on the state for fire protection. However, the passage of the Weeks Act in 1911 established a framework for cooperative fire control and the means to purchase and exchange land to protect watersheds. It created the National Forest



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*Fire damage in Alpena County, Michigan, seen after the particularly bad 1908 fire season. As with elsewhere, the threat of forest fires galvanized conservation groups to take action. The big cork pine on the ground measured 51" in diameter.*

Reservation Commission (NFRC)—the secretaries of War, Interior, and Agriculture, two senators, two representatives, and a permanent secretary—to manage the purchasing process. The Forest Service contacted potential sellers and negotiated prices, and NFRC determined whether to accept proposed purchases. Although a purchase unit would not be created in Michigan until 1926, the aggressive purchase and management activities of the Forest Service under Pinchot's successor, Henry Graves, impressed reforestation advocates in the state enough for them to urge state leaders to follow this model. When the state did not, however, advocates began to look to federal action as the solution to the region's land problems.<sup>8</sup>

### REFORESTATION RENEWED

Tourism served as an acceptable compromise for advocates of reforestation and boosters of agricultural use of cutover land. Outdoor recreation expanded in the 1920s because of the automobile. For Michiganders, the joys of fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, and other forms of outdoor recreation were as close as an afternoon drive. The popularity of these activities increased throughout the decade as members of all socioeconomic classes began to participate.<sup>9</sup> The Forest Service sent Michigan National Forest Supervisor Robert Schreck around the state in 1925 to promote reforestation and tourism. Conservationists endorsed the recreational use of reforested and rehabilitated lands, and boosters saw it as a different form of regional economic development.<sup>10</sup>

Reforestation, then, was the goal for the cutover, but many Michiganders interpreted the lack of natural regeneration to mean that the ecological damage was permanent. Small-scale success in state forest reserves provided insufficient evidence that large-scale plantings would be more than an expensive, foolhardy endeavor. Led by Raphael Zon, researchers from the Lake States Forest Experiment Station sought conclusive evidence. To further research capabilities, Zon established regional stations throughout



*Reforestation efforts in Michigan predate the Weeks Act land purchases in the state. These Norway pines, seen in 1916, were planted in 1911 on what would become the Huron-Manistee National Forest.*

Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan while collecting data from state and private plantations.<sup>11</sup>

Forest Service silviculturist Joseph Kittredge summarized the initial findings, which supported reforestation, in a June 1929 Department of Agriculture bulletin. Though he reviewed the science and methods of replanting, most of his arguments were economic. Kittredge asserted that the state tax code was too punitive to encourage private reforestation. The resulting reversion of land to the state meant lost stumpage revenue, fire prevention costs, and lost property tax revenue for local governments. He concluded that planting provided work, fire prevention improved stands, and eventual timber harvests would reap huge economic benefits if the state would invest in it. However, the legislature did not fund public forestry at adequate rates. Even though the public had accepted reforestation as the future of northern Michigan, the lack of money and manpower delayed the realization of this vision.<sup>12</sup>

Federal conservationists used state inaction to justify federal action. Republican notions of conservation had shifted to stress more cooperation between the government and private landowners to expand the role of forest management in the country. Forest Service Chief William Greeley wanted private landholders to see the agency as an ally that would help them manage their lands. Toward that end, more fire lines were cut, fires were fought wherever they started, and more trees were planted.

During the 1920s Congress built on the Weeks Act foundation by passing four important forestry laws. The Clarke-McNary Act of 1924 expanded the Weeks Act by establishing cooperation between the Forest Service and state agencies regarding fire control and reforestation, with federal money to pay for these improvements. The act also authorized the purchase of land, including cutover and burned-over land, for timber production. The McSweeney-McNary Act of 1928 enhanced forestry research by appropriating money specifically for research stations throughout the country. The McNary-Woodruff Act of 1928 authorized \$8 million over three years for land purchases. Although this initial

amount solidified holdings only in existing forests, it would serve as a trial run for larger purchase appropriations during the New Deal. Finally, the Knutson-Vandenberg Act of 1930 appropriated money to improve nurseries and tree planting in national forests. Cooperative practices resulted in less fire and increased forests on private lands, and increased purchasing power created the context for the vast expansion of public land holdings in the 1930s.<sup>13</sup>

Federal legislation was critical to the rise of federal forestry involvement in the Michigan cutover. The state had already removed the only impediment to land purchase with its passage of the

National Forests Enabling Act of 1923, which authorized the federal government to acquire lands within Michigan for the purpose of establishing, consolidating, and extending national forests.<sup>14</sup> The Clarke-McNary Act, passed the following year, created the means for further federal landownership in Michigan. NFRC created the Tawas Purchase Unit in the Michigan National Forest in 1926. The Forest Service bought and exchanged 75,000 acres in two years, with another 75,000 acres still pending acquisition. Because of this rapid expansion, the agency separated it from the Upper Peninsula unit and renamed it the Huron National Forest in 1928.<sup>15</sup>

### A NEW DEAL FOR MICHIGAN

The real resolution to the cutover issue started with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which eventually sent 2.5 million men to federal and state lands throughout the country to complete conservation work. The program's rapid growth forced President Franklin Roosevelt to expand the national forest purchase program. He allocated \$20 million in executive branch funds to NFRC with the goal of consolidating holdings in existing national forest purchase units.<sup>16</sup> Sensing an opportunity, Forest Service leaders immediately petitioned the president to allow the creation of new units where conditions were favorable.<sup>17</sup> NFRC sought to purchase submarginal farmland in addition to denuded and eroded land. In the commission's view, these farms constituted a waste of human and material resources and should be purchased and reforested. Thus, land purchases would reform both landownership and the economy.<sup>18</sup>

The Midwest and the South saw immediate expansions in the number and size of purchase units: of the 28 purchase units created during the second half of 1933, all but two were in these regions. In the first six months of 1934, NFRC purchased more than 4.2 million acres. NFRC then designated 24 more purchase units during 1935, mostly in the Upper Midwest and the South, and expanded 19 existing purchase units, creating immediate work for the CCC.<sup>19</sup>

It was in this context that NFRC created the Manistee National Forest Purchase Unit on August 30, 1933. The original purchase unit covered 390,000 acres over four Michigan counties, of which 66,120 acres were cutover or burned-over land and 351,000 acres needed to be replanted. Only 3,000 acres were being used for commercial timber at the time. Given these conditions, the agency determined that the average price would be about \$2 per acre and that the area could support 12 CCC camps. The commission's long-term hope was to create sites for recreation, game management, and commercial timber production that would stabilize the local economy and improve living conditions for local people.<sup>20</sup>

Acquisitions in the new purchase unit and in the Huron National Forest began immediately. Michigan sold all its tax-reverted land in the new purchase unit to the federal government—68,329 acres, at \$1.25 an acre. The sale's approval on October 30, 1933, established a strong federal presence in the region. About 83,000 acres were purchased from private owners during 1934, so within a year and a half, the federal government controlled nearly 40 percent of the land in the purchase unit. Since delinquent taxes had to be paid on these purchases, the four counties in the purchase unit collected \$22,000 in back taxes from these initial purchases. This successful land acquisition encouraged NFRC to double the size of the Manistee purchase unit south of the original holdings.<sup>21</sup>

### REFORESTATION FOR RECREATION

Generally, any land offered for sale was approved for purchase. Forest Service representative Leon Kneipp would present purchase summaries to NFRC, and if the funds were available, its members would approve the purchase. Some purchases met the requirements of the Weeks Act that watersheds be protected. It was accepted that other lands would fall under the Clarke-McNary authorization of land for timber production. But before long, owners of other lands within the purchase unit started to offer their properties for sale as well. These lands were primarily recreational areas—a purpose not covered in either law.

Since these lands were much more costly, their purchase was debated by NFRC members. Kneipp argued that they would increase the value of the whole forest and ensure its long-term viability as public land. Secretary of War George Dern and Representative Roy Woodruff (R-Mich.) quickly agreed that recreation was an important consideration. Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, however, argued that recreation was the responsibility of the National Park Service and that replicating such a function in the Forest Service was both costly and unnecessary. He further posited that forest management and recreational management were different and that the Forest Service was unprepared for such work.<sup>22</sup>

The debate would determine what land could be purchased in the eastern national forests and its role in the federal conservation agencies' turf wars, and NFRC was the battleground. Ickes sought to limit the function of the Forest Service, a part of the Department of Agriculture, in an effort to expand the role of the Park Service, which was under his direction in the Department of the Interior.<sup>23</sup> The argument that the Park Service had sole



*Severe gully erosion is easily visible in a pasture near Croton, on the Lower Michigan National Forest. The Civilian Conservation Corps was kept busy restoring abused farmlands like this in Michigan and throughout the country.*

FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY PHOTO COLLECTION 404246; U.S. FOREST SERVICE PHOTO R\_404246

authority over recreation was not accepted by other members of the commission. Since there were no national parks anywhere near the purchase unit, such purchases could be completed only by the Forest Service. Representative Wall Doxey (D-Mississippi) suggested that the jurisdiction issue should be determined later. NFRC decided to proceed and established prime recreational sites in eastern national forests.<sup>24</sup>



*Signs like this one on the Michigan National Forest were posted to help teach the public about the value of reforestation. Undated photo.*

FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY PHOTO COLLECTION 253339A; U.S. FOREST SERVICE PHOTO R\_253339A



*Tractors with Baldwin plows prepare the ground for a new plantation in 1938. Mechanization accelerated the rate of replanting considerably.*

### TRANSFORMING THE LAND, BOOSTING THE ECONOMY

Residents of the cutover embraced the opportunity to sell land during the Great Depression. Local officials were concerned about the federal government's involvement in issues they considered to be local affairs but were struggling to address the economic, social, and ecological problems of the region on their own.<sup>25</sup> During this economically difficult period, job creation and land management by the federal government trumped all other concerns.

The purchases from private owners were completely voluntary. No land was condemned unless such proceedings were necessary to perfect the title. Five types of private owners accounted for the bulk of the land sales. Companies and wealthy landholders sold large blocks, sometimes whole townships. Company executives undoubtedly seized the opportunity to sell land that was denuded, had little resale value, but still required the payment of property taxes. A third group consisted of charitable organizations that had received the land as a donation. These organizations had little use for the land, and its sale offered them much-needed cash. The sellers of smaller parcels were generally wealthy urbanites and poor farmers. Many of the former held the land as a real estate investment for speculative or recreational purposes. The latter wanted to escape financial ruin and move off marginal land.<sup>26</sup> The cash that buyers received allowed for the payment of debts and the stabilization of corporate or personal finances. In this way, the purchase of land by NFRC served as an indirect economic stimulus, creating new sources of capital in the flagging economy and offering relief far beyond the purchase unit boundaries.<sup>27</sup>

The situation for poor landowners, however, was dire. Often the sale of the land was barely enough to cover back taxes.<sup>28</sup> Their property tax payments were a huge boost to states with purchase

units, and undoubtedly, the tax revenue was a major reason for their support of federal purchases. But having paid most or all of the proceeds to the state for property taxes, the farmer and his family were left not only poor but landless as well. Many moved to cities for employment, but other farm families resisted, hoping to avoid the humiliation of being dependent on the state. Clearly, poor farmers struggled to decide between these two unfortunate alternatives.<sup>29</sup>

### STATE-FEDERAL LAND SWAPS

In addition to the normal land sales, NFRC entered into a unique partnership with Michigan in 1934 regarding land exchanges. Michigan was a cash-poor state during the Depression, but its leaders wanted to increase the amount of land in state forests and parks by exchanging state-owned acres within national forest purchase units for land purchased by NFRC. Because the federal government would administer the sales, the transactions would not cost the state, and the federal government would get the land it wanted. Even though the exchanges were based on the value of the land and not the acreage, the system essentially allowed for a doubling of public land. If the state had instead been paid for the tax-reverted land that it was providing to NFRC, that money might not have been used for its own land procurement.<sup>30</sup>

The fact that land sales were voluntary had a lasting effect on the nature of the national forests, with parcels of public land interspersed with privately owned land. This fragmented ownership meant that the federal government needed to develop new management methods for eastern national forests. Likewise, private owners had to reconceive their own land uses in the midst of the national forests that attracted numerous recreational users. Some

landholders used their properties as a base for their own recreation; others provided services to turn a profit from the tourist traffic. Regardless, the newly planted forest quickly became important to the local economy.<sup>31</sup>

Reforestation advocates funded numerous plantations and memorial forests on the newly purchased land. From the start of major forest purchases in 1926 until the end of World War II in 1945, civic and school groups found the money and manpower to plant tens of thousands of acres. The Kiwanis Clubs of Michigan created the largest plantation near Oscoda. Clubs from all over the state helped plant more than 10,000 acres for the Forest Service. In a 1936 speech dedicating a monument to the program, Assistant Chief Edward Sherman confirmed the central tenet behind this effort: conservation was the job of citizens as well as government. This sentiment manifested itself in plantations established by chambers of commerce, women's clubs, and public schools as acts of conservation and education done in the memory of conservationists who promoted reforestation of the cutover. Hundreds of trees were planted along the old Thompson logging trail on the Au Sable River in the memory of the men who logged the forests of Michigan. On the high rollaway of the Au Sable near the trail, the descendants of the lumbermen dedicated a statue in their honor in 1932. The statue by Robert Aitken depicts a timber cruiser, a sawyer, and a river rat sitting on a pedestal with the names of Michigan lumbermen. This juxtaposition of shanty boys and lumbermen reflected the complexity of Michigan's forest history.<sup>32</sup>

Land purchase and exchange continued throughout the 1930s. By World War II, NFRC had purchased almost 250,000 acres in the Manistee Purchase Unit. Additionally, more than 200,000 acres purchased for Michigan state forests had been exchanged for more than 300,000 acres in the state's five national forests. The sum of the land purchased and exchanged pushed the federal ownership in the Manistee Purchase Unit above 300,000 acres.<sup>33</sup>

As a result of these land purchases and exchanges, on October 25, 1938, President Franklin Roosevelt designated this land the Manistee National Forest by presidential proclamation 2306: "Whereas it appears that it would be in the public interest to give such lands, together with certain intermingled public lands, a national forest status," land purchased within these boundaries was reserved for national and public use. This designation, long anticipated by local officials, gave the forest a permanence that it had before lacked. The proclamation cemented the long-term

role of the federal government in northern Michigan land-use policy with a second national forest.<sup>34</sup>

By the 1940s, reforestation was no longer at the heart of civic duty in Michigan. In 1945 the administration of the Huron and Manistee national forests was consolidated, with the headquarters in Cadillac. Despite the decline in man-hours and dollars dedicated to northern Michigan's reforestation, the work continued as the trees grew year after year. Tourists enjoyed the outdoor recreation opportunities of the region, and the constant threat of wildfires and soil erosion receded. Memorial forests grew, but the men they memorialized fell from memory. The legacy of the Weeks Act and other land purchase acts in Michigan is that the denuded and burned cutover landscape has become one of living forests that residents and visitors view as eternal. □

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## NOTES

1. Henry Steer, *Lumber Production in the United States, 1799–1946*, USDA Miscellaneous Publication 669 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1948), 25–31; and R. V. Reynolds and A. H. Pierson, *Forest Products Statistics of the Lake States*, USDA Statistical Bulletin 68, no. 2 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1939), 5–8.
2. Stephen J. Pyne, *Fire in America: A Cultural History of Wildland and Rural Fire* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 183–211; and Norman Schmaltz, "Cutover Land Crusade: The Michigan Forest Conservation Movement, 1899–1931" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1972), 393–406.
3. George Steele, "Experiences in Northern Michigan," in *Michigan and Its Resources* (Lansing: W. S. George & Co., 1881); and Joseph J. Jones, "The Making of a National Forest: The Contest over the West Michigan Cutover, 1888–1943" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2007), 39–52.
4. S. S. Walker, "The Problems of Waste Lands and Pine Plains of Michigan," *1892 State Board of Agriculture Report* (Lansing: Thorp & Godfrey, 1892), 445–49; Mark Neithercut, "The White Pine Industry and the Transformation of Nineteenth-Century Michigan" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1984), 320; and Joseph J. Jones, "Good for a National Cemetery: Questions of Land Use and an 1888 Botanical Expedition across Northern Michigan," *Agricultural History* 83, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 174–200.
5. Jones, "The Making of a National Forest," 77–124.
6. "An Abject Failure," *Michigan Roads and Forests* 5, no. 9 (March 1909): 7; and "Only One Severe Fire," *Michigan Roads and Forests* 5, no. 16 (October 1909): 4.
7. "Michigan's National Forest," *Michigan Roads and Forests* 4, no. 8 (February 1908): 14; H. O. Stabler, "Report on the Proposed Michigan National Forest," April 1908; and U.S. Department of Agriculture, *National Forests in Michigan* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1941), 15–21. The Michigan National Forest was the second federal forest in the Great Lakes. The Minnesota National Forest (now the Chippewa National Forest) was created earlier that year.
8. William Shands, "The Lands Nobody Wanted: The Legacy of the Eastern National Forests," in *The Origins of the National Forests*, ed. Harold Steen (Durham, NC: Forest History Society, 1992), 19–44.
9. Warren Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910–1945* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979); Cindy Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 156–77; and Marguerite Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880–1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 130–68, have discussed the rise of camping as a form of tourism that extended across socioeconomic boundaries.
10. "Believes State Should Plant More Trees," *Grand Rapids Herald*, January 11, 1925; "Mr. Shreck's (sic) Contribution," *Grand Rapids Herald*, January 17, 1925; and Jones, "The Making of a National Forest," 215–23.



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*Lumbermen's Memorial (now Lumbermen's Monument), seen in 1934 before the Civilian Conservation Corps landscaped the area.*

11. Field offices in Michigan included the Upper Peninsula Station near Dukes, the Huron Planting Station, and the Forest Fire Research Station near Roscommon. Michigan had forestry schools at the University of Michigan and Michigan State College. The state abolished the Public Domain Commission and established the Conservation Commission in 1921 to streamline the management of public resources.
12. Joseph Kittredge, Jr., *Forest Planting in the Lake States*, USDA Bulletin 1497 (June 1929); Joseph Kittredge, "Deferred Timber Taxes," *Grand Rapids Herald*, March 13, 1925; and Charles Hansen, "Doubling Yearly Timber Tax Raising Havoc with Commercial Reforestation," *Grand Rapids Herald*, March 18, 1928.
13. Donald Swain, *Federal Conservation Policy, 1921–1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 12–20; Samuel Dana and Sally Fairfax, *Forest and Range Policy: Its Development in the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 121–31; William Robbins, *American Forestry: A History of National, State, and Private Cooperation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985); and Harold Steen, *The U.S. Forest Service: A History*, centennial ed. (1976; Durham, NC: Forest History Society, 2004), 173. Much of the federal conservation legislation of this era was shepherded through the Senate by Charles McNary (R-Oregon); however, Republican Congressman Roy Woodruff of Bay City and Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Grand Rapids were two Michiganders who sponsored forestry legislation. Woodruff later served on NFRC.
14. Donald Osborn (R-Kalamazoo) introduced Senate Bill 89, which became Public Act 312. Governor Alex Groesbeck signed it on May 25, 1923. "Michigan Public Lands–National Forests, Enabling Act" Michigan folder, Box 9, USFS Records of the State and Private Forestry Divisions, 1913–49, 95–98, National Archives and Records Administration; and National Forest Reservation Commission, *Review of the Work of the National Forest Reservation Commission, 1911–1933* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1933), 3.
15. For a review of land purchases and management in the region before the Franklin Roosevelt administration, see David Conrad, *The Land We Cared For: A History of the Forest Service's Eastern Region* (Milwaukee: U.S. Forest Service, 1997), 51–66.
16. Purchase units were designated areas with precise boundaries where the Forest Service could attempt to secure purchases of land from private owners. If enough land was procured within a purchase unit, usually about 20 percent of the total acreage, the area was recommended to the president for designation as a national forest. If 20 percent of the land was not obtained, purchase units could be abandoned and the land resold. The \$20 million for land purchasing authorized by FDR came from money budgeted as part of the National Industrial Recovery Act. Steen, *U.S. Forest Service*, 217.
17. Letter from Robert Stuart to Henry A. Wallace, April 18, 1933, Forest Service Apr–May 1933 folder, Box 8, Forest Service File (1-C), Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library (FDRL). To this letter Stuart attached a map of the eastern United States on which he marked the existing purchase units and perspective purchase units. At this point, a new purchase unit in northern Michigan was not even under consideration.
18. NFRC, *Report of the National Forest Reservation Commission for the Year Ended June 30, 1933* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1934), 1–3.
19. NFRC, *Report of the National Forest Reservation Commission for the Year Ended June 30, 1934*; and NFRC, *Report of the National Forest Reservation Commission for the Year Ended June 30, 1935* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1935–36).
20. Minutes, August 30, 1933, Binder 26, Records of the National Forest Reservation Commission, 1911–1958, 95-27, NARA; and H. P. McConnell, *Historical Summary of Land Adjustment and Classification, Region 9, 1929–1962* (Milwaukee: U.S. Forest Service, 1962), 38. A series of editorials in the Grand Rapids Herald urged Michiganders to support the creation of the Manistee National Forest. "A New National Forest," *Grand Rapids Herald*, August 11, 1933; "National Forest Advantages," *Grand Rapids Herald*, August 18, 1933; and "The Manistee National Forest," *Grand Rapids Herald*, September 1, 1933.
21. Summary of Lands Recommended for Purchase—Manistee Purchase Unit, Binders 27–43, Records of the National Forest Reservation Commission, 1911–1958, 95-27, NARA; "National Forest Land Purchases Bring in Back Taxes to Counties," *Manistee News-Advocate*, February 13, 1935; and Carl Saunders, "Vast Project Spreads over Four Counties," *Grand Rapids Herald*, August 31, 1933.
22. Minutes, January 21, 1935, Binder 45, Records of the National Forest Reservation Commission, 1911–1958, 95-27, NARA.
23. Ickes attempted to consolidate the Forest Service with the National Park Service and other Interior agencies into a Department of Conservation that he would head. His effort failed and the two services remained in their separate departments. Dana and Fairfax, *Forest and Range Policy*, 151–55; and Steen, *U.S. Forest Service*, 238–45.
24. Minutes, January 21, 1935, Binder 45, Records of the National Forest Reservation Commission, 1911–1958, 95-27, NARA. Ickes would argue this point whenever it came up. It was at issue again in the Manistee National Forest in 1939. Minutes, June 1, 1939, Binder 87, and Minutes, July 6, 1939, Binder 93, Records of the National Forest Reservation Commission, 1911–1958, 95-27, NARA. For a summary of NFRC's logic, see NFRC, *Report of the National Forest Reservation Commission for the Year Ended June 30, 1934*, 3.
25. Louise Armstrong, *We Too Are the People* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1938), 179–89, contends that the problems with the local officials were either greed or incompetence. She attributes their resistance to federal programs to either fear that they would lose power or an inability to milk the programs for their own financial gain.
26. This categorization of the land sellers is from my own analysis of NFRC purchase summaries in the Manistee National Forest Purchase Unit. Records of the National Forest Reservation Commission, 1911–1958, 95-27, NARA.
27. NFRC, *Report of the National Forest Reservation Commission for the Year Ended June 30, 1933*, 1.
28. Occasionally the land was not even worth enough to pay the property taxes as was the case with a purchase from Earl Tyler of Muskegon. On May 25, 1938, NFRC approved a purchase of 80 acres in Newaygo County's Beaver Township (T 15 N, R 14 W) for \$180. On January 26, 1939, it approved paying an extra \$12.63 because the property taxes that Tyler owed were in excess of the purchase price by that amount. Minutes, May 25, 1938, Binder 79, and January 26, 1939, Binder 81, Records of the National Forest Reservation Commission, 1911–1958, 95-27, NARA.
29. NFRC, *Report of the National Forest Reservation Commission for the Year Ended June 30, 1933*, 3. NFRC considered such submarginal farms a waste of human and material resources. The commission encouraged residents to work on building the forest or to relocate to nearby cities and look for industrial work. This vision of the purchase program conforms to Sarah Phillips's analysis that New Deal conservation sought to conserve human as well as natural resources. Sarah Phillips, "FDR, Hoover, and the New Rural Conservation, 1920–1932," in *FDR and the Environment*, eds. Henry Henderson and David Woolner (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 107–52.
30. "Minutes, May 10, 1934," Binder 33, Records of the National Forest Reservation Commission, 1911–1958, 95-27, NARA and NFRC, *Report of the National Forest Reservation Commission for the Year Ended June 30, 1935*, 2–3. This exchange had a dramatic effect on state forests and parks in Michigan. Probably the most significant purchase by NFRC for exchange with the state was with Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company, for 2,285 acres in the Upper Peninsula. This purchase became the Tahquamenon Falls State Park. In exchange, NFRC received 83,000 acres from the state. Minutes, September 30, 1936, Binder 69, Records of the National Forest Reservation Commission, 1911–1958, 95-27, NARA.
31. Dennis Lynch and Stephen Larrabee, "Private Lands within National Forests: Origins, Problems, and Opportunities," in *The Origins of the National Forests*, ed. Harold Steen (Durham, NC: Forest History Society, 1992), 198–216, offered a preliminary consideration of this issue when the first forest reserves were established from the public domain. Their focus was on the western United States, where private lands were much more isolated than in eastern national forests. In the East, the purchase of land, rather than its designation as reserved from the public domain, created more scattered federal holdings.
32. Plantation Files, Huron-Manistee National Forest; and Lumbermen's Memorial, July 16, 1932, Box 44, William Butts Mershon papers, Bentley Historical Library.
33. NFRC, *Report of the National Forest Reservation Commission for the Year Ended June 30, 1940*, 12, 18, 28. A series of tables indicated the amount of land purchased and exchanged by the state and the counties as well as the cost for the land in dollars and per acre. The national exchange program was summarized in Table 6. NFRC attempted exchanges with 15 states, but Michigan was the primary player in these exchanges. Exchanges with Michigan totaling 325,145 acres represented more than 85 percent of state land exchanges with NFRC. Mississippi had the second-highest total of

acres exchanged, with 40,853. At the time of the presidential proclamation naming the Manistee National Forest, Al Miller stated that the U.S. Forest Service owned 314,224 acres. "Manistee Forest Reality Since October 25," *White Cloud Eagle*, November 10, 1938.

34. Presidential Proclamation 2306: Manistee National Forest—Michigan, Presidential Executive Orders and Proclamations microfiche, Law Reading

Room, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. See Memo from Henry Wallace to FDR, June 20, 1938; Memo from Acting Secretary of the Interior to D. W. Bell, October 14, 1938; Memo from D. W. Bell to Homer Cummings, October 19, 1938; Memo from Cummings to FDR, October 24, 1938; and Memo from M. H. McIntyre to Wallace, October 31, 1938, Forest Service 1938 folder, Box 10, Forest Service File (1-C), FDRL.

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