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DATA ON FORESTRY LOSSES AND FOREST-CONTROL MEASURES IN CHINA

[Comment and Summary: The following information is taken from a monograph entitled Chung-kuo Lin-yeh Lun-wen-chi (Collected Documents and Essays on China's Timber Industry, 1950-1951, pages 91-140, published October 1952 by the China Forestry Editorial Committee, Central People's Government.

Serious forest fires in Northeast China in the spring of 1951 resulted in the burning over of almost 2 million hectares of forest land and severe damage to about 7 million cubic meters of timber, as well as in loss of buildings, grain, and human life.

Progress has been made in North and East China in sealing off hill and mountain areas for afforestation.]

Fire Losses in Northeast in Spring of 1951

According to incomplete statistics, 2,685 forest fires in the Northeast in the spring of 1951 resulted in the burning over of 1,820,916 hectares of forest, damage to 6,726,483 cubic meters of timber, and the destruction of 4,897,228,694 saplings and of 9,865,311 trees 5-15 years old. Fire fighting required 946,820 man-days of labor and resulted in loss of life to 47 persons and injury to 232. A total of 1,199 carts and 84 motor vehicles were mobilized. In addition to timber loss, 607 room units of buildings and 590,000 catties of grain were burned. Forest fires resulted from brush and stubble fires, burning of ceremonial paper on graves, locomotive sparks, and [failure to extinguish] cigarettes.

From 1 April to mid May 1951, 25 forest hsiens in Sungkiang Province had almost continuous fires. The burned-over area totaled 1,212,483 hectares, and 4,694,744 cubic meters of timber were damaged, or 70 percent of the total area damaged in the Northeast.

In Heilungkiang Province, a strip 150 li wide and 250 li long was burned over in one place and a strip 200 li wide and 500 li long was burned over in another. The total area involved was 500,000 hectares and the amount of timber damaged was 2 million cubic meters, involving 671,608,375 trees of all sizes. In Liaosi and J. ol provinces, 1,093 fires destroyed 6,631,559 trees.

In Liaotung Province, where the local forestry authorities were very alert, only 8,663 cubic meters of timber were lost; in Kirin Province the loss was still less. This was the result of widespread education and organization of local authorities by the provincial forestry authorities.

Progress in Forestry Practice in Hopeh

According to statistics gathered in mid-April 1951 from five hsiens in Hopeh, 80,503 mou of hills had been sealed off for forest growth and 154,511 trees had been planted thus far in 1951.

Mountain Forestry Experience in Shantung

Shantung Province has an area of 202,955,000 mou, over 30 percent of which is mountainous. Of this mountain area, 23 percent or 0.7 percent of the whole area of the province is forested.

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Many of the forested areas have been considerably eroded because of indiscriminate cutting and slope cultivation. The authorities have adopted a plan of sealing off forests entirely except for two periods of 7-10 days each year; when the people are permitted to enter the mountains under strict control to cut grass; even then, all live trees and shrubs are carefully protected.

After the mountains were sealed off, the undergrowth developed rapidly. In the Lao Shan range (near Tsingtao), about 11 million red pine and ash saplings were protected for growth. Other forestry control areas achieved similar results.

Forestry and Soil Conservation in East China

The land area of East China (excluding Taiwan) is 888 million shih mou [one shih-mou equals 667 square meters]. Of this area, 63 million shih-mou or about 7 percent is forested.

In 1949, 52 million mou were flooded. Twelve million mou of this area were in Shantung. The resulting crop loss was 500 million catties. In 1950, 30 million mou were flooded in North Anhwei. These floods were largely the result of denuding mountain slopes of forests by poor management in the past. Even during 1949 there was still forest destruction. In one timber area east of Nanking, the people denuded an area of 1,200 mou by cutting over 200,000 trees.

In Chekiang 540,000 horsetail pine trees were cut in one area and 600,000 in another area. On one mountain in I-shui Hsien, Shantung, only 300 trees were left out of 600,000. In the Feng-hua, Chekiang, forest area in April 1950, 3,000-4,000 mou of horsetail pine and other trees were destroyed by fire. Through the machinations of recalcitrant landlords and the greed of unscrupulous timber dealers, other vast quantities of timber were wasted. Present policies are gradually reducing these losses.

Directive of GAC on Forest Control

In April [1950], the Government Administration Council issued the following directive: Where land reform has been completed, all forests of a minimum area, according to local conditions -- 75 shih mou in area in Liaotung, 500 shih mou in the Southwest and 540 shih mou in Shansi -- should become national forests. In areas where land reform is not completed, all sizable forest areas should be immediately declared national forests and placed under special administrative district or provincial government control.

Scattered areas of woods near buildings and villages, especially those belonging to landlords or those who cut timber wastefully, should be taken over and administered by local authorities or peasants' associations until legal disposition shall be made in connection with land reform.

In areas where land reform has been completed, large forest areas should be declared national forests and scattered wooded areas should be assigned by hsien authorities to various individuals, according to local situations, and certificates of ownership should be issued.

In minority-nationality areas of the Northwest, Southwest, and Central-South, no changes should be made from local customs but authorities should aid in instituting better methods of forest protection.

Exchange adjustments should be made in the cases of small, privately owned wooded areas within larger areas declared national forests in order to protect the interests of the owners.

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