

# *Land Classification*

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The people of the Philippines, in response to the policy of the Government to raise the standard of the country to a higher plane of self-sufficiency, have gone about acquiring tracts of agricultural public lands which they can call their own. While this response on the part of the people is indicative of the salutary resurgence of land-consciousness, it is, however, to be admitted that it has resulted in the indiscriminate clearing and occupation in advance of several large forest tracts which are more valuable to be kept for forest purposes. This is especially true in congested regions. And it is feared that the predominance of this country in agriculture tends to bring about the constant pressure on the part of the people to clear lands which are still covered with valuable forests. It is likely they will even go to congested regions to do away with forests in favor of just a few insignificant agricultural crops. The proper disposal of the soil for farm use, pasturage or timber production has, therefore, become now one of the primary concerns of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources of which the Bureau of Forestry is a component part.

The Bureau of Forestry, by law, has supervision over the demarcation, protection, occupancy and use of all public forests and forest reserves of whatever character and over the granting of licenses for the taking of forest products therefrom.

The authority of demarcating what portion of the public domain should ultimately remain under forestry control carries with the execution of the enunciated sound forest policy that lands chiefly valuable for agri-

cultural purposes should be so segregated, classified and certified as not needed for forestry in order that they can be released for the landless. Only those parts of the forest which knowledge and experience indicate to be fitted for permanent agriculture will be segregated and certified as such. Therefore, if it turns out later that mistakes have been committed in making the decision, the cause should not be attributed either to ignorance or to what is commonly known as "honest mistakes". For such is an error in judgment, but not in principle. So then, if the process of land classification is properly carried out and the people will only occupy those regions which have been classified and certified for agricultural purposes, we will have more land than is needed by modern agriculture to supply our domestic and export requirements and sufficient land for forestry for the continuous use of the forest without impairment of future productivity.

In a country like ours with regions of timber surplus as well as regions of timber shortage, problems are numerous. There are obstacles in the prosecution of the main objective which is the final segregation of the areas that are absolutely needed to be retained for forest protection and forest production. It is now of common knowledge that the forests protect soil from erosion; they conserve water and moderate extremes of run off; they have direct influence in maintaining high water level in the neighborhood or even many many miles away; they furnish food and shelter for game; they produce woods and numerous minor forest products for domestic and industrial use;

they furnish employment; they beautify the landscape and offer opportunities for healthful recreation, or in other words, their values are protective, economic, and social.

As no individual is devoid of concern for his own posterity, or devoid of desire to leave the world a better place for his posterity to live in, the author will try to explain the importance of the role of the forests in the building up and in the strengthening of our economic structure.

Let us take as an example an area of 1,000 hectares of commercial forest having a very conservative estimate of 100 M/3 of timber per hectare. The total stand then of this area is 100,000 cubic meters represented by the very common commercial species found in the forest—as white lauan, apitong, red lauan, mayapis, tangile, palosapis, yakal and guiyo. At the present rate, the total forest charge due to the Government on this timber is approximately ₱100,000.00. If stumpage appraisal is practiced here as in the United States, the Philippine Government would collect on this timber growing on 1,000 hectares about ₱500,000 instead of ₱100,000.00. From this timber there may be produced approximately 4,750,000 board feet of fourth group lumber, 20,000,000 board feet of third group lumber, and 250,000 board feet of second and first group lumber from which the lumberman will realize ₱5,000,000.00 and at the prevailing local prices of mill run lumber, a higher sum of ₱6,250,000.00 may be realized in the lumber trade.

The commercial forest of the Philippines covers an area of about 11-1/2 million hectares valued at eight billion pesos. This huge sum is hypothetical. However, suffice it to say that this sum of ₱8,000,000,000.00 is an invested capital from which the government is deriving a yearly interest in the form of forest charges. Last fiscal year (1950-51) the amount of forest revenue was ₱5,873,060.00 and during the period of 1945-1951, the total forest collection was ₱22,386,244.00.

Having these values in hand, it is evident that in order to prevent or minimize the wanton destruction of our forest resources, the Bureau of Forestry has to concentrate its efforts, within the limited means at its disposal, toward expediting the delimitation and segregation from the public forest, lands which can be classified and certified as agricultural, so that the Bureau of Lands may dispose of them to the landless and home-seekers under the Public Land law.

The Bureau of Forestry has already classified and certified as alienable and disposable land 9,983,665 hectares. The ultimate goal is to classify as not needed for forest purposes about seven million hectares more of public land, of which three million hectares are still covered with commercial forests, two million hectares of non-commercial forests and two million hectares of cogon lands. The release from time to time of the area still covered with commercial forests will largely depend on how fast the people and timber licensees will be able to utilize the valuable timber estimated at not less than ₱6,250.00 per hectare in the lumber trade. In other words, the sum of ₱62,500.00 worth of lumber will have to be destroyed in order to give way right now to the approval of every forest homestead of ten hectares, ₱625,000.00 to every forested purchase application of 100 hectares, and ₱6,250,000.00 for every forested 1,000 hectares for corporation.

In view of the foregoing, a top level policy as to what extent the forest resources be sacrificed in order to give way to the much needed agricultural development, should be adopted. Before destruction be allowed, it is suggested that the fruits—taxes, crops for the farmers, etc., for instances—which may be reaped from making forest land still containing valuable timber an agricultural land, should be taken into consideration. Will the Government realize more taxes? Will the farmers be benefited for long? Will it help build up and strengthen the econo-

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of Forestry. Believing that it is best to see actually the things discussed in the classroom, the class visited the projects in Baguio and in Caniao, Vigan, Ilocos Sur.

Since the forest in the Mt. Province are of almost pure pine, the officers explained to the students the procedure in pine reforestation which is slightly different from the general procedure followed with common trees.

In Caniaw, the students saw how a good nursery could be built even on an unfavorable area. The sloping ground was easily made serviceable by terraces, and an exquisite water system provided with sufficient water for the plants. Brain and brawn solved the problem of a rocky terrain.

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#### FRESHMEN TAKE THREE EDUCATIONAL TRIPS

This year's freshmen rounded up their education with three field trips under their respective professors.

First relief from their monotonous campus routine was the Botany trip to Dalahican Beach on December 16, 1951. The freshies collected marine specimens and visited Perez Park in Lucena and the Sampaloc Lake in San Pablo City.

On December 19, 1951, Professor Jose B. Blando, head of the English department and Miss Thelma C. Balagot, took the Freshies to Manila where they observed various operations in the press room of the "Manila Times", and visited the San Miguel Brewery's Ice Cream and Cartoon plants and Bottle Factory.

Immediately after the Christmas holidays, on January 3-6, 1952, the Freshmen took to the field again, this time under Dendrology Professor Calixto Mabesa. The class entrained for Tagkauayan, Quezon where they studied swampland species of trees as well as the dipterocarp forests deep in the interior. Aside from Professor Mabesa, the freshmen were accompanied by Dr. A. V. Manza and Ranger Rodrigo Valbuena, assistant instructor in Dendrology.

While in Tagkauayan, the students were aided by Forester E. K. Santos, Ranger Ordoñez, Ex-Ranger Panaligan and other personnel of the local forest station.—T. M. MONTOJO

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#### ORATORICAL CONTEST AND SPANISH DECLAMATION TILT WINNERS

In the afternoon of March 29, the ninth oratorical contest and Spanish declamation contest under the auspices of the Makiling Literary Club were held. Winners in the Oratorical contest: 1st, Jose A. Cruz (prize—gold medal from Speaker Perez); 2nd, Raymundo Acosta (prize—silver medal from Hon. Cipriano S. Allas); and 3rd, Feliciano Barrer (prize—

books from Forester P. San Buenaventura). Winners in the Spanish Declamation Contest: 1st, Filiberto Pollisco (prize—book from Forester H. Cuzner); 2nd, Feliciano Barrer (prize—book from Forester F. Assiddao); and 3rd, Pedro Agustin (prize—book from "Forestry Leaves"). Judges for the oration were: For. Felix Franco (chairman), Mrs. M. Sevilla and Miss Balagot, members.

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#### LAND CLASSIFICATION . . .

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mic structure of our country? These are the questions which we should ask ourselves before we sacrifice forest land still containing valuable timber and other important forest products in favor of agriculture.

A little of the future should be sacrificed for the sake of saving the present. Of what has already been set aside by the Bureau of Forestry from these vast forest resources as portions of the permanent forestry heritage for posterity, it is expected that the other government agencies that have something to do in the development of agriculture should so respect the wisdom why they should no longer count these areas in any tentative program of making further sacrificial destruction. Thus, the thought of saving what is left of utility for posterity in this world of growing things is an inspiring hope for those who are coming after us.

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ciency, for which Director Fischer and his associates deserve praise and commendation.

(Sgd.) EULOGIO RODRIGUEZ

*Secretary of Agriculture and Commerce*'

Remember the Bell Mission Report last year which singled out our Bureau for efficiency? We have been keeping up to tradition.—J.D.

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The faith that overcomes every obstacle in the world is the faith that refuses to accept apparent opposition and defeat.

—L. Stevens Hatfield