

# Forest Laws of the Philippines

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Our public forest is the foundation of the economic well-being of our country. The deep concern of our country today is how to perpetuate our forest resources in order to free us from the evil effects of deforestation and to obtain the fullest advantage of its conservation and wise utilization.

The Philippines has established a noteworthy record of achievement in her tendency to value and cherish the heritage of nature. From the Spanish regime up to the present time, this tendency is shown by the trend of various laws relative to the protection, conservation and wise utilization of our forest resources.

The Act of Congress of July 1, 1902, serves as the foundation structure of our Forest Laws. This was followed by various subsequent Acts with a series of amendments, embodying the Forest Law in Chapter 47 of Act No. 2711. Under this Act, the Bureau of Forestry has jurisdiction and authority over the demarcation, protection, management, reproduction, reforestation, occupancy and use of all public forests and forest reserves and over the granting of licenses for the cutting, gathering and removing of timber and other forest products. It has also jurisdiction over the protection and conservation of game and wildlife (Act No. 2590, as amended, and Commonwealth Act No. 73); the establishment and protection of National Parks (Act No. 3915, as amended); the protection of wild flowers and plants (Act No. 3983); the administration of public lands adopted for grazing purposes (Commonwealth Act No. 452); the enforcement of Acts Nos. 2812 and 3572; the control and disposition of timber within mineral lands as provided in Section 1833

of Act No. 2711 in conjunction with Act No. 3822 and Section 89 of the Mining Act; and the establishment and development of cinchona plantations in public forest lands and the disposition of the products derived therefrom. (Commonwealth Act No. 646).

The Bureau of Forestry has in the past a problem of great importance in the reclamation of our waste and idle lands. It is important to note that the most outstanding achievement in the recognition of the importance of reforestation work was the enactment of Republic Act No. 115. The revenues collected under this Act shall constitute a fund, known as "Reforestation Fund" to be used exclusively in carrying out the purposes provided therein.

Another case confronting the Bureau of Forestry is the illegal cutting of timber and other forest products by unlicensed persons. This act constitutes not only a great loss of revenue to the Government but also in the destruction of our public forests. The recent passage of Republic Act No. 460 is of great significance in the solution of this problem. This Act authorizes the Director of Forestry to regulate the operation of sawmills and provides penalty for violation of the provisions thereof. It aims to solve the present condition in the control, disposition, and merchandizing of timber and to increase the income of the Government in the form of forest charges and fees.

At present, one of the serious problems affecting forestry administration is forest destruction caused by illegal *kaiñgin* making and illegal entry and occupation of public forest

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lands. The evil effects of this practice is the gradual disappearance of our vast commercial forests to the detriment of public interests. In order to eradicate the kaiñgin evil, His Excellency, the late President Quezon strongly recommended the enactment of Commonwealth Act No. 447 which provides heavier penalties for illegal forest destruction and illegal entry and occupation of our public forests, the penalty being imprisonment ranging from one to six months, eviction of the offender from the land and forfeiture of whatever improvements made thereon. However, only thru mutual understanding and cooperation shall we be able to accomplish our policy of forest conservation, that is, individual interest and collective interests should team together towards this end.

It is gratifying to note that at present we have adequate Forest Laws for the conservation of our natural resources. It is, however, regretted that at present there is lack of sufficient technically trained foresters and funds to carry out effectively the enforcement of our existing Forest Laws. The Government should, therefore, encourage desirable men to take up the forestry profession and to provide for the graduates reasonable, stable and remunerative positions.

The problem of forest conservation is a national problem. Our country is aware of the unending benefits derived from forest conservation and the irreparable injury to our economic and social welfare if we should be negligent in our duty as trustees for this valuable portion of our national inheritance. It is our prime duty to transmit to our posterity not only our heritage of liberty but also the material resources which are essential to give life and permanence to that liberty. Conservation is the prevention of waste or destruction or in other words, the wise use of our resources.

In this connection, there is quoted below excerpts from a speech of His Excellency, the

late President Quezon, for the guidance of the public.

"You can show true patriotism and love of country by conserving and utilizing wisely our forest resources. I repeat, do not cut and burn trees; otherwise, you deprive our country of the income from forest charges which income means schools for your children and their children's children. We have no right to deprive them of their inherent share of the patrimony of our country—our forests".

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that in order to succeed in all our public undertakings, our slogan should be "One for all and all for the service of the people."

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wait too long, it will be too late. At the rate data for complete working plans are being worked out, it will take years before they can be completed. However, with the application of data on hand the above measures could be undertaken, and such modifications made as experience indicates to be desirable.

It is in the tackling of problems of this type that the special training of the foresters may be made use of. Even the use of trained foresters will not be enough to ensure success unless there is also a thorough and sustained cooperation among the foresters, the lumber companies and the Government.

—MRR

### ERRATA

Page 48 l. 16—"area" should read "are". L. 23 "members should read "remembers."

April issue 1950, p. 41—title of article should read "A Suggestion for a Needed Complementary Measure to Our Forest Protection Laws."