The Clemson Land-Use Project: A Jewel of the "New Deal"

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ABSTRACT The 17,500 acre Clemson Experimental Forest is a natural resource laboratory with a productive forest, abundant wildlife, and ample recreational opportunities. It began about 70 years ago as a land reclamation project under the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Today the Forest is managed on a sustained yield basis, is a certified Tree Farm, and is a licensee under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative program.

KEY WORDS: land utilization program, experimental forest, school forest.

The national depression that started in the late 1920's helped arouse public interest in rural land use problems. In the rush to settle the country little effort was made to evaluate which lands were suitable for cultivation and which lands were not. Besides dooming some rural families to a life of poverty on marginal or substandard farm lands, this resulted in considerable harm to the environment, especially in terms of soil and water conservation.

Congress recognized and addressed the problem of submarginal agricultural lands in the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1929. Various commissions and boards addressed the problem until, in 1934, a submarginal land purchase program was established by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Permanent status for the land utilization program was provided by the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tennant Act in 1937. The act directed the Secretary of Agriculture "to develop a program of land conservation and land utilization, including the retirement of lands which are submarginal or not primarily suitable for cultivation in order thereby to correct maladjustments in land use."

Submarginal lands were purchased from 1933 to 1946. Just over 2.6 million acres were purchased under the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act and nearly 8.7 million acres were purchased under prior authority. Eighty of the land utilization projects, totaling 1.3 million acres, were transferred to State or local agencies. These lands are managed for natural resources; mainly in forests, parks, wildlife refuges, and university experiment stations.

THE CLEMSON COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PROJECT, SC-3

The private lands around Clemson College met all the criteria regarding submarginal agricultural lands. Starting in 1934 more than 200 parcels of land totaling nearly 30,000 acres were acquired as the Clemson Collage Community Conservation Project. In 1939 Clemson College began supervision of the land under an agreement with the federal government. In 1954 the Clemson Land Utilization (LU) lands were deeded to Clemson College reserving to the United States certain mineral rights and subject to the restriction that the lands shall be used forever for public purposes.

A continuous forest inventory (CFI) system was initiated on the Forest in 1958. Table 1 shows the trend of increasing volume from an initial inventory by the federal government in 1938. The CFI data are utilized to evaluate forest health, adjust allowable harvest, and schedule harvest.

Table 1. Trends in sawtimber volume from CFI data.

Year	1936	1958	1977	1987	1997	2002
Bd. Ft./Acre	2155	4500	4914	5355	6828	6922

The Management Alternative Research Project (MARP) was initiated in 1978 to evaluate the long-term effects of three common management strategies on large forest areas. Three management regimes (commercial forest, multiple-use forest, and protection forest) were evaluated in terms of long-term outputs and impacts. Management regime rotation ages ranged from 35 years for commercial pine plantations to 80 years for protection pine plantation, to 100 years for protection upland hardwood stands. Cox and Straka (2002) discuss the details of MARP. Table 2 shows the harvest and mortality by management regime for the period 1992 to 1997.

Table 2. Harvest and mortality for 1992-1997 from CFI data.

Management Regime	HarvestCu. Ft./5 yr	MortalityCu. Ft./5 yr
Commercial Forest	268	90
Multiple-Use Forest	88	202
Protection Forest	164	279

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