

Bulletin 189
of the
Agricultural Extension Service, The Ohio State University

Some Rural Land-Use Activities in Ohio

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Not all land is alike.

Its best use varies — due to its productive capacity, to population distribution, and to the adaptability of the land.

It is one problem to determine the *best* use of land, and another problem to put the land to its *best* use.

The well-being of our people depends on the intelligent use of our land resources.

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THERE are over 26,000,000 acres of land in the state of Ohio, of which approximately 23,000,000 acres lay within the bounds of occupied farms in 1935. The other 3,000,000 acres largely comprised rural land not included within the bounds of the occupied farms in the State, and urban lands.

Ever since the first tract of Ohio land passed into private ownership in 1788 the development of the land resources of the State has been left to the unrestrained initiative of the private owner. More recently, however, there has developed a feeling that the conservation and use of our land resources is vested with a certain public interest. Contributing to the development of this feeling has been several factors, among them the following:

1. The continued depletion of the soil resources in the better agricultural areas of the State.
2. The presence of areas where continuous cropping and erosion have so depleted the land resources that satisfactory crops can seldom be obtained.
3. The appearance of certain areas in the State where the occupants are no longer able, under present conditions, to make a satisfactory living by farming the land, as evidenced by the abandonment of many farm homes, their frequent purchase by others in the hope of making a living, mounting tax delinquency, and the increasing need of state assistance for the financing and maintenance of local public services such as schools and roads in the areas, if they are to maintain the standards which have been set up by the State.
4. The developing interest of the people, both urban and rural, in the relation of land use to water conservation and control, as well as in outdoor recreation.
5. A growing appreciation of the fact that the land is a basic resource, the maintenance of the productivity of which is of vital concern to future generations and, therefore, to the nation, and that the national interest would be best served if all land was guided into that use for which it was best adapted.

It is the purpose of the present publication briefly to describe the work of some of the public agencies which are now active in Ohio in giving direction to the rural land-use pattern of the State. Many of these agencies are of recent origin, and it is essential that the people of the State be aware of these new developments which are concrete evidence that something is being done about it.

State Forestry Division Rebuilds Forest Areas

Buys Land for Forest Use. — The State of Ohio has acquired to date some 65,000 acres of land for forestry purposes. The planting and development of these areas has been greatly stimulated during the past few years by the availability of labor furnished by the Civilian Conservation Corps forestry camps. This land is administered by the State Forestry Division, under Edmund Secrest, state forester. The division also administers within the state forests nine forest parks which are being developed for recreational purposes. In the absence of general legislative appropriations for acquisition since 1931, limited progress has been made in state forest and forest park extension during the past five years.

Under the terms of the Fullmer Act, recently enacted by Congress, the states may obtain non-interest bearing loans from the federal government for the purchase of land suitable for state forests. It is expected that when funds become available from the federal government, Ohio will take advantage of the provisions of the Act.

Protects Forests from Fire. — Organized forest fire control under the Division of Forestry was first established in July, 1922. The woodland area of the State under the protection of forest fire outlook towers as of June 30, 1935, was 1,039,640 acres. All of these outlook towers, with the exception of one on the Mohican State Forest in Ashland County, were located in southern Ohio.

Reduces Tax Value of Farm Woods. — A state law which enables the Division of Forestry to classify lands which bear an adequate stand of timber and which are protected from livestock as forest land, has been in force since 1926. Forest land under this law is entitled to a 50 per cent reduction in tax rate. During the period from 1926 to 1935 a total of 51,400 acres of land has been classified. The State also endeavors to encourage the reforestation of its submarginal agricultural lands through the distribution of planting stock from the two state nurseries. From 1924 to 1935 nearly 35,000,000 trees were distributed from the state nurseries. Of these over one-third were distributed in 1934 and 1935.

The United States Forestry Service Buys Land

In November, 1934, the State Legislature passed an enabling Act which authorized the United States Forestry Service, with the consent of the State, to acquire land for forestry purposes in Ohio.

Soon after the passage of the Act, the Federal Forestry Service established headquarters in Ohio, made a survey of the State, and marked out the areas within which they will confine their purchases. The purchase areas selected comprise 1,300,000 acres in thirteen southeastern Ohio counties, and will be known as the Wayne Purchase Unit. The extent and rapidity with which the land in the areas will be acquired by the United States Forestry Service will depend on the availability of the land at a reasonable price and on the

availability of funds with which to purchase. As of September 16, 1936, options had been acquired on approximately 100,000 acres of land, 41,000 acres had been approved by the National Forest Reservation Commission, and the money definitely obligated for the payment. Some 7,000 acres of this total had actually been paid for.

The development of the areas has already begun. A nursery with a capacity of 10 million trees annually has been established near Chillicothe, approximately 700 acres of land has been planted with trees, 500 acres treated for the prevention and checking of soil erosion, and some 800 acres improved by modern forest practices. It is not the intention to reforest those acres in the areas which are suited for agricultural purposes. Attention will also be given to the development of the recreational facilities and wild life of the areas.

Headquarters are in Columbus, Ohio, with Mr. R. B. McKennan in charge.

The Resettlement Administration Shifts Use of Land

The Resettlement Administration was created as an agency of the federal government by executive order in April, 1935. As of January 1, 1937, the work was transferred to the United States Department of Agriculture. Three divisions of the Resettlement Administration are engaged in promoting or demonstrating better methods of land use in Ohio. These divisions are: Land Utilization, Rural Resettlement, and Suburban Resettlement. The Land-Use Planning Section of the Land Utilization Division maintains at Ohio State University a group of workers to conduct research relating to land use in Ohio.

The Land Utilization Division Buys Marginal Land. — This division has purchased tracts of land in three areas of the State. These tracts, although of low productivity, have in the past been used for farming. The Resettlement Administration, in buying the land, proposed to convert it to uses for which it is better adapted, such as forestry, erosion control, recreation, wild life and game refuges. The present occupants who cannot find employment on the project will be assisted in locating elsewhere. The name, size, and location of the three tracts are as follows:

The Ross-Hocking Forest Area comprises over 13,000 acres, in Harrison and Colerain Townships in Ross County; in Salt Creek Township, Hocking County; and in Eagle Township, Vinton County.

The Zaleski Forest and Rehabilitation Area comprises over 16,000 acres in Brown, Knox, Madison, and Vinton Townships in Vinton County.

The Southeastern Ohio Soil Erosion and Forest Area comprises nearly 5000 acres in Salt Creek and Blue Rock Townships in Muskingum County.

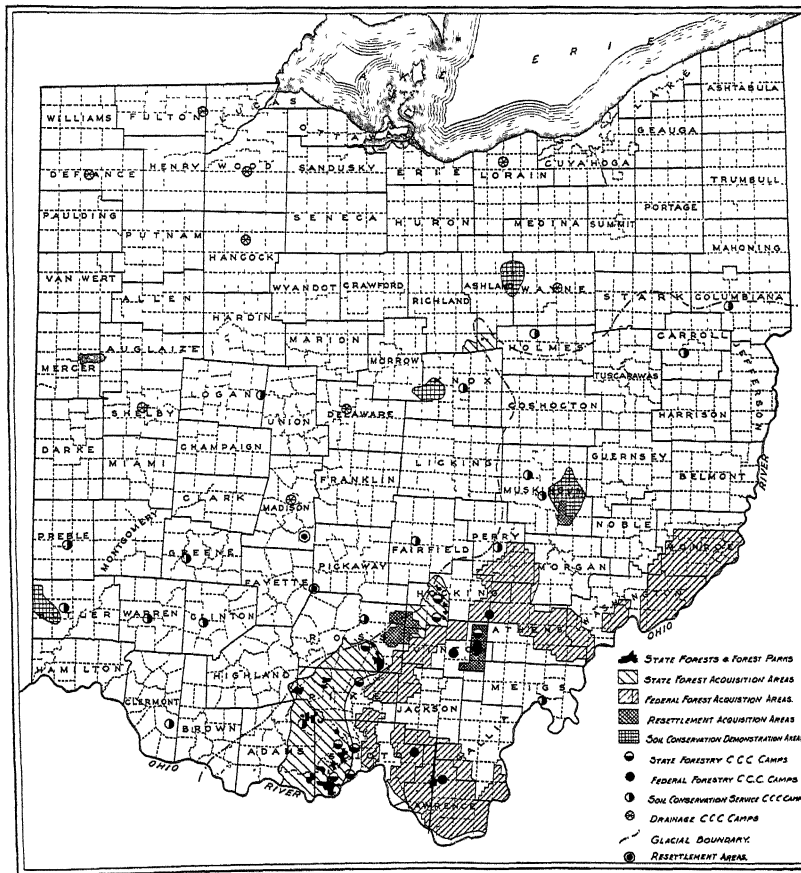
The Rural Resettlement Division Relocates Farm Families. — This division had, by the end of 1936, purchased or optioned between nine and ten

thousand acres of land in the State, upon which it was proposed to relocate some of the families dispossessed in the retirement areas, as well as other farm families whose position would be thereby improved. About 6400 acres of this land is located in Pickaway, Ross and Fayette Counties, and is known as the Scioto Resettlement Project. About 3000 acres is located in Madison County, and is known as the Ohio Farms Project. The tracts purchased were farms of relatively large acreage of productive land which it is proposed to divide into farms of from 40 to 80 acres.

The Suburban Resettlement Division Develops A Housing Program. —

This division has purchased near Mt. Healthy, north of Cincinnati, around 6000 acres of land upon which it is developing a low cost suburban housing project for 1000 families. About 1000 acres will be used for urban purposes, the remainder will be farmed and used as a protective "green belt" to prevent any undesirable development adjacent to the project.

LOCATION OF OPERATIONS OF SOME RURAL LAND USE PROJECTS IN OHIO



Agricultural Adjustment Administration Stimulates Better Cropping Practices

Under the terms of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, approved by the President in February, 1936, it is declared to be the policy of the federal government, among other things, to preserve and improve the soil fertility, to promote the economic use of land, and to diminish the exploitation and the wasteful and unscientific use of the national soil resources. It is under the terms of this act that the Agricultural Adjustment Administration activities have been carried on since the Supreme Court declared phases of the original AAA Act unconstitutional.

In August of 1936, Secretary Wallace stated the objectives of the Agricultural Conservation program for the nation for 1936 to be: (1) To increase the acreage of soil-conserving crops (grass) in the United States to at least 130,000,000 acres as compared with 100,000,000 acres in 1930. (2) To establish, as a minimum, on each participating farm a ratio of soil-conserving crops to soil-depleting crops consistent with good farming practices. (3) To promote the adoption of soil-building practices such as seeding grasses and legumes, turning under green manure crops, growing cover crops, and establishing terraces on farms where such practices are needed.

For the purposes of the Act, the various crops have been classified as soil-depleting and soil-building. Generally speaking, harvested row crops and small grains are classified as soil-depleting; whereas perennial grasses, perennial, biennial, and some annual legumes, and certain other crops if unharvested and used as cover crops, nurse crops, or turned under as green manure, are classified as soil-building.

Two types of payment are available to farmers who apply to come under the provisions of the Act. Soil-building payments will be made for the carrying out of soil-building practices such as the seeding of legumes and perennial grasses, pasture fertilization, or the application of lime. Soil-conserving payments will, in general, be made for the production of soil-conserving crops grown on acreage diverted during 1936 and 1937 from the soil-depleting acreage of 1935.

Soil Conservation Service Assists in Erosion Control

The Soil Conservation Service was legally established as an integral part of the United States Department of Agriculture by an Act of Congress passed in April, 1935. The work which has been developed under the name of the Soil Erosion Service was thus transferred to the Department of Agriculture.

Demonstrates Erosion Control Methods.— Among other things, the Service is authorized to disseminate information and to conduct demonstrational projects relating to methods of erosion control and to carry out preventive measures. The demonstrational work in Ohio under the Act has been carried on in the agricultural areas of the State which are subject to erosion. Thus far, four demonstration projects have been located in Ohio.

They are in Muskingum, Wayne and Ashland, Knox and Morrow, and Butler Counties. These four projects have 1511 farmers and 185,092 acres within their borders. As of September 1, 1936, over 600 of these farmers with 70,845 acres had established complete erosion control demonstrations on their farms.

All these demonstration projects are being conducted on privately owned land in cooperation with the land owner. The program is largely one of starting with the farmer as he now is and in developing with him a more logical land-use and erosion control program for his present farm. Representatives of the Soil Conservation Service make a detailed study of each cooperating farm and then assist the farmer in working out plans, practices, and methods which will help to control erosion and at the same time put the land to its most profitable long-time use. Often a substantial cash investment may be required in the establishment of a demonstration project on a farm. The Soil Conservation Service can share with the farmer the expense of starting the project. Fences may need rearrangement, woodlots may need protection from grazing, lime and fertilizer may be furnished to treat a portion of a pasture, lime and seed may be supplied to establish an alfalfa plot on the farm, bad gullies may be brought under control through the use of labor in building structures and planting trees.

Studies Erosion Problems. — In 1932, the Soil Conservation Service acquired a farm near Zanesville, Ohio, upon which carefully controlled experiments are being conducted as to the means of retarding soil erosion and water run-off.

In 1935 the Service also secured control of a tract of land in Coshocton County upon which a detailed and comprehensive research study is to be made of the effects of agricultural land use on the action of water, from the time it reaches the ground surface as precipitation until it leaves the watershed as surface or underground flow.

Directs CCC Camps. — The Soil Conservation Service also directs the activities of 18 CCC soil conservation camps located in the State. These camps offer labor assistance to cooperating farmers in the establishment of land treatment which will control erosion. They provide no materials. As of August 15, 1936, the camps in Ohio had 978 cooperating farmers with 138,355 acres.

CCC Drainage Camps Drain Land

When the President authorized an expansion of the Civilian Conservation Corps camps in the spring of 1935, nine drainage camps were located in Ohio. They are in the section of the State where the greatest amount of drainage ditches had been constructed, and consequently were in the most productive farm land area of the State. The work of the CCC boys consists in cleaning and excavating legally organized tax ditches, and restoring them to their original specifications. As tax ditches are cleaned, tile drains are being installed, relaid, and replaced whenever needed.

Benefited landowners are required to contribute all materials needed, as well as substantial portion of the money required for the operation of heavy equipment. By the end of 1936, it was estimated that a total of 300,000 acres had been benefited by the work.

College of Agriculture and Agricultural Experiment Station Point Way to Better Land Use

Much of the work of the College of Agriculture and the Agricultural Experiment Station has had to do with the promoting of better land-use in the State. Research and education in methods of maintaining and building soil productivity and crop adaptation has received major attention since the beginning of these institutions. Soil surveys, land-use surveys, social and economic studies having to do with the natural and human resources of the State have been in progress for some time, and are yielding much basic data which are of use in the development of a sound agricultural and land-use program for Ohio. Cooperation is maintained with all the agencies working in the State towards better land-use.

During the past two years a very active research and extension project has been in progress, the aim of which is to develop active thinking on the part of rural people as to the problems and means of soil maintenance and land use in the State. In this connection a group of men in each county, working under the direction of the County Agricultural Agent have been at work formulating a land-use program for their county. First an inventory is made of the present land use in the county, then an appraisal is made of the results flowing therefrom in the way of soil maintenance and the providing of an adequate income. Following this appraisal, it is hoped that objectives may be formulated as to what changes should be made in the present land-use pattern of the county, and finally, the development of means whereby progress can be made toward the attaining of these ends.