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TAXATION AND OTHER FACTORS
AFFECTING PRIVATE FORESTRY
IN CONNECTICUT

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
INTRODUCTION	1
Nature of the problem	1
Purpose of this study	2
IMPORTANT FACTORS BEARING ON PRIVATE FORESTRY	3
Forest-land area	3
Historical changes	3
Present and potential forest land	4
Pattern of forest-land ownership	6
Historical development	6
Present ownership	7
Size of holding	10
Effect of ownership pattern on private management	10
Hazards to timber growing	12
Importance in management	12
Fire	12
Disease	16
Insects	17
Wind	18
Forest industry	19
Historical development	19
Present sawmills	20
Potential possibilities	23
Quantity and quality of growing stock	24
Importance of adequate growing stock	24
Character of growth	25
Volume	26
Age	28
Reasons for present condition	28
Productive capacity	29
Species	29
Site	31
Growth	32
Markets	34
Importance	34
Historical changes	34
Consumption	35
Increasing diversity of markets	37
TAXATION OF FOREST LAND	39
Introduction	39
Historical development	39
During the Colonial Period	39
Following the Revolutionary War to 1861	40

PRIVATE FOREST TAXATION IN CONNECTICUT

	<i>Page</i>
From 1861 to the present	42
Theory of the general property tax	42
Some important forest taxation studies	43
Connecticut	43
United States	45
North Carolina	46
Maine	46
West Virginia	48
Method of study	48
Availability of data	48
Collection of data by personal interview	48
Collection of data by mail questionnaire	50
Land and timber assessment	50
Based on market value	50
Based on productive capacity	51
Methods of assessment	52
Administration	52
Unclassified land	53
Classified land	55
Assessment ratios for land	59
Historical changes in assessed value of land	60
Basic data	60
Changes in actual values	61
Changes in adjusted values	65
Present assessed value of forest land	66
Importance of forest land in the tax base	67
Probable future forest-land values	69
Tax apportionment	70
Setting the tax rate	70
Historical changes in tax rates	70
Present rates	73
Probable future rates	74
Taxes on forest land	75
Historical changes in land taxes	75
Present forest-land taxes	80
Probable future trend of forest-land taxes	82
Tax delinquency	83
FOREST-LAND TAXES AS A COST TO THE	
PRIVATE OWNER	84
The general property tax	84
Stumpage returns	85
Factors affecting the price of stumpage	85
Trend in stumpage prices	86
Determination of the maximum tax showing a positive return	90
Volume yield	90

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Hardwood stands	90
Softwood stands	93
Money yield	94
Hardwoods	94
Softwoods	96
Determination of the rotation	97
Tax ratios	98
The maximum permissible tax	99
General principles	99
Hardwoods	100
White pine	103
Comparison between hardwoods and white pine	104
ATTEMPTS TO ALLEVIATE THE TAX BURDEN	107
Early exemption laws	107
Special forest tax law of 1913	108
Classification Act of 1929	110
SUMMARY	113
REFERENCES CITED	118
APPENDIX	125

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table</i>	<i>Page</i>
1. Forest-land area of Connecticut, by specified years, 1600-1945.	4
2. General land use in Connecticut.	5
3. Forest-land area, Connecticut counties, as a percentage of total land area, 1914 and 1941-48.	6
4. Ownership of forest land in Connecticut.	8
5. Distribution of forest-land area in 3 Connecticut towns as compared with 23 New England towns, by owner's principal occupation.	9
6. Number of private owners of forest land and acreage held (in properties of less than 5,000 acres) in Connecticut, by size of holding.	10
7. Forest fires and area burned in Connecticut, by decades, 1910-1949.	13
8. Number of sawmill operators in Connecticut, 1949, by counties.	22
9. Number of active sawmills in Connecticut, 1947, by size class.	22
10. Commercial forest land of Connecticut, by character of growth.	25

PRIVATE FOREST TAXATION IN CONNECTICUT

<i>Table</i>	<i>Page</i>
11. Volume of timber on commercial forest land in Connecticut, by character of growth, for softwoods and hardwoods, by different units of measurement.	26
12. Volume of saw timber in Connecticut, by species.	27
13. Age classes, Connecticut forests, by percentage of forest land, as of 1945 and 1933.	28
14. Volume of saw timber in Connecticut, by species, as a percentage of total board-foot volume.	31
15. Current annual growth of timber on commercial forest land in Connecticut.	33
16. Average annual drain of timber from commercial forest land in Connecticut, as of 1944.	33
17. Consumption of lumber and wood products in Connecticut by class of business, 1941.	36
18. Number of towns reporting in the forest taxation study, by counties.	50
19. Extent of last revaluation of land by local and commercial appraisers, 134 Connecticut towns, by counties.	56
20. Land-assessment ratios for Connecticut, by counties, 1947; average, range, and coefficient of dispersion.	59
21. Average assessed values of forest land in Connecticut, by counties, 1950.	67
22. Changes in assessed value of forest land at last revaluation, 134 reporting towns, by counties.	68
23. Average, weighted tax rates on forest land, by counties, 1950.	74
24. Number and percentage of reporting towns by forest-land tax classes, 1950.	80
25. Average forest-land taxes in Connecticut, by counties, 1950.	82
26. Average stumpage prices in Connecticut, second growth, 1928-1950.	87
27. Yield of mixed hardwood stands in Connecticut, untreated and managed, average site quality.	90
28. Yield of average and managed pure white pine stands in Connecticut, average site quality.	94
29. Gross money yield of mixed hardwoods in Connecticut, average site quality.	96
30. Gross money yield of white pine in Connecticut, average site quality.	97
31. Mean annual increment of mixed hardwood and white pine stands in Connecticut, average site quality.	97

CONTENTS

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 32. Relationship of taxes to net income for all corporations by major industrial groups, 1944. | 99 |
| 33. Net income and maximum allowable tax for hardwoods and white pine grown under varying degrees of management. | 105 |

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure</i>	<i>Page</i>
1. Number of forest fires in Connecticut, 1910-1949.	14
2. Area burned by forest fires in Connecticut, 1910-1949.	15
3. Lumber production in Connecticut, 1904-1946, board feet.	21
4. Map showing location of towns that reported by interview and mail questionnaire.	49
5a, 5b, 5c. Average assessed value of land per acre, Connecticut counties, 1907-1947. Actual and adjusted for purchasing power of the dollar.	62-64
6a, 6b, 6c. Average tax rates, Connecticut counties, 1907-1947. Actual and adjusted for purchasing power of the dollar.	71-73
7a, 7b, 7c. Average land taxes, per acre, Connecticut counties, 1907-1947. Actual and adjusted for purchasing power of the dollar.	76-78
8. Average forest-land taxes, Connecticut towns, 1950, cents per acre.	79
9. Average sprout-land taxes, Connecticut towns, 1950.	81
10. Average stumpage prices in Connecticut, second growth, 1928-1950.	88
11. Yield of managed and untreated mixed hardwood stands in Connecticut, board feet per acre, by age, average site quality.	91
12. Yield of managed and untreated mixed hardwood stands in Connecticut, total cords per acre, by age, average site quality.	92
13. Yield of managed and average white pine stands in Connecticut, board feet per acre, by age, average site quality.	95

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TAXATION AND OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING PRIVATE FORESTRY IN CONNECTICUT

INTRODUCTION

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

DURING the last 300 years the general economy of Connecticut has changed from one predominantly agricultural to one that is primarily industrial. Although at one time heavily forested, practically three-fourths of the total area of the State was cleared for agricultural use. Industrialization and opening of the West resulted in the greater part of this land becoming idle, most of it slowly reverting to forest growth. Land, at one time the major production factor, diminished in importance. Likewise, many forest industries based on exploitation of timber needed for a growing economy passed out of existence through lack of suitable raw material.

At the beginning of the present century attention was directed toward uncultivated farm land (Jenkins, 1902). A large amount of cleared land could not be cultivated or pastured at any profit to the owners. In addition, repeated overcutting and burning had depleted woodlands until they were unable to yield other than a scant amount of inferior wood of very small size. Many questions arose as to how these unproductive lands could be made to yield some measure of profit to their owners and, thereby, contribute to the over-all economy of the State.

In order to answer these questions the State embarked on a land acquisition program, the areas to serve "as an object lesson in tree planting and in the proper management of woodland." (Mulford, 1902) This program has continued to the present, the State now owning 120,684 acres within 26 State forests. However, after 50 years of concentrated effort on the part of the State to interest private owners in the practice of forestry, there are very few who have taken steps to improve their stands. The U.S. Forest Service (1946b) found that for the small, private holdings in New England (under 5,000 acres), 54 percent of the cutting was "poor or destructive." Why is it that private owners do not avail themselves of the best known methods of forest management? Perhaps there are certain economic impediments to private forestry which tend to influence their de-